

# PORTUGAL SPAIN

TOWARDS THE IBERIAN  
SOCIALIST REVOLUTION



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## CONTENTS

### INTRODUCTION

- Portugal and Spain—A common fate . . . . . 1

### PORTUGAL

- Capitalism in a blind ally . . . . . 3
- The birth of workers' power . . . . . 5
- The Armed Forces Movement . . . . . 8
- Reformists in crisis . . . . . 11
- The way forward . . . . . 14

### SPAIN

- Franco's Spain on the cliff's edge . . . . . 16



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# Portugal and Spain

## - a common fate

The countries of the Iberian peninsula — Portugal and Spain — are today the scene of the most monumental class struggles on the European continent.

In Portugal the working class, following the collapse of the brutal fascist regime that kept it down for so long, is shaking the capitalist system in this corner of the continent to its very foundations. In Spain the fascist dictatorship still survives, but the Spanish working class has placed itself at the head of a vast popular movement which is growing in strength from day to day as both the dictatorship and those capitalist groups who seek simply a liberal facelift prove unable to meet its challenge either through brutal repression or liberal blandishments.

If the great battles of the international class war during the past three decades have been centred in that part of the globe ruthlessly plundered by imperialism — Asia, Africa and Latin America — today they are erupting in the very heartland of world capitalism. In 1917 Lenin tried to explain the apparently ironic fact that socialist revolution should have broken out in Russia, the country least suited for it in terms of its economic development, by saying that 'the imperialist chain broke at its weakest link'. Today the weak links are again starting to buckle, and they are to be found on the Iberian peninsula.

During the 1920s and '30s Spain and Portugal were among a number of capitalist countries whose ruling classes responded to the social and economic crisis by imposing brutal fascist regimes in order to shatter the resistance of the working class movement. Both were among the most underdeveloped of European capitalist nations, and both had known brief and unsuccessful attempts by the capitalist class to rule through the institutions of capitalist democracy (Portugal from 1910—1926 and Spain from 1931—1936).

In each case this period was brought to a sharp end by the only force capable of uniting all the quarrelling factions of the ruling class and taking the decisive action necessary to deal with the working class; the army. In Portugal, where industrial development was very limited and the working class small and inexperienced in political struggle, this was achieved with little resistance. But in Spain, where the workers' movement had decades of experience of political struggle under both military dictatorship and capitalist 'democracy', the reactionary military plot met with an iron ring of proletarian resistance which was only broken after three years of bloody civil war.

The histories of Spain and Portugal have always been closely intertwined — in part because of the similarities of the two countries, and in part through conscious co-ordination. When, 10 years after their Portuguese counterparts had taken the road to dictatorship, the Spanish ruling class plunged into civil war, the conflagration immediately spilled over the border. The opposition to Salazar's dictatorship, who had for five years depended upon the territory of the Spanish Republic as a base for their political work, saw their fate inextricably linked with the anti-fascist struggle in Spain. Portuguese volunteers were recruited to join the international brigades and the Spanish republican army, often using arms which they had been accumulating for use against Salazar. In Sep-

tember of 1936, the crews of three Portuguese warships moored in the River Tagus mutinied and tried to take their ships to join the anti-fascist Spanish fleet. They were only stopped by shelling from Lisbon's shore batteries.

On the other side the Portuguese regime welcomed the fascist rising, which had originally been hatched in the Portuguese seaside resort of Estoril. From the beginning the Franco forces were accorded every facility on Portuguese soil, including the transmission of military supplies from Germany. As soon as it was practical — in early 1938 — Salazar recognised Franco's government as the official ruler of Spain, and as the war drew to an end his police rounded up Spanish republican refugees and dutifully passed them on to Franco's butchers. A special unit of reactionary Portuguese was formed to fight alongside Franco's army — including in its ranks a later faithful spokesman of the Portuguese capitalists, Antonio Spínola.

On the home front Salazar — who for long had tried to avoid the trappings of the fascist states, stressing his regime's 'Catholic' inspiration — felt compelled to create his own storm troopers (the Portuguese Legion) and a fascist-style youth corps (Portuguese Youth) in order to combat the danger of subversion from insurgent Spain.

In March 1939, the fraternity of the two dictatorships was sealed in the infamous 'Iberian Pact' of mutual assistance. During the war they drew even closer, trying to maintain a two-man balancing act between the fascist Axis powers and the 'democratic' Allies. While their sympathy — often expressed in material assistance (provision of facilities for espionage and communications, supply of essential war material) — was unashamedly with the former, the two dictators were too skilful opportunists, and felt too weak in such a clash of giants, to cast their lot with either side until the eventual outcome was clear.

This prudence saved their skins. After the war both regimes gradually made their peace with the 'democratic' powers of Western capitalism, despite the idle hopes of opposition forces that the victorious allies would reject these offspring of defeated fascism. Portugal was admitted to NATO in 1949. Spain, symbol of anti-fascist struggle, whose ties with the Axis had been



Spanish fascists celebrate anniversary of Franco uprising



quite open and direct, had a longer and more difficult haul. But within a few years she too was admitted to the community of the 'free world', the door opened by a military and economic assistance pact with the United States.

Portugal and Spain were both anachronisms in the world of post-war, booming Europe. While economic 'miracles' were being worked in Italy and Germany, and the somewhat less miraculous British economy managed to take some comfort from the growth of world trade and the international capitalist economy, Portugal and Spain remained impoverished backwaters, locked in their isolated cells of fascist 'national self-sufficiency' — much to the chagrin of their respective capitalists.

Portugal was partly insulated from these difficulties by her colonial empire, towards which the growing Portuguese monopolies had directed their energies with good prospects of turning a fast escudo. So it was Spain which was the first to break: in the late 1950s the Spanish economy had to be bailed out of an acute economic crisis by the agencies of international capitalism — the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. But she had to pay a price: the abandoning of her isolationist economic policy, and the opening of her doors to foreign investment and freer foreign trade (a policy opposed by the die-hards of the fascist regime, but supported by the main groups of Spanish capitalists).

With Spain embarking on this new road Portugal could not remain an isolated exception for ever, and by the early 1960s her capitalist class had compelled Salazar to tread the same path. Portugal took part in the formation of the European Free Trade Association in 1960, and other Spanish-style economic policies were adopted by the Portuguese regime shortly afterwards.

Both Spain and Portugal underwent a similar economic growth in the ensuing decade, with the big monopolies and finance capitalists of the two countries eagerly entering into partnership with European and North American capital to launch select industrialisation projects. At the same time the two countries became drawn more powerfully towards the centre of European capitalism — the emerging Common Market.

The political problems facing the ruling classes of the two countries thus moved in step. For both, the extension of the present ties with European capital was a life-and-death matter. In an era of growing crisis, when each capitalist class is turning more and more to tend its own garden, membership of the Common Market is required by both the Portuguese and Spanish capitalists as a guarantee against their industries being frozen out of the European market by new protectionist measures.

But there is a problem here. The Common Market is seen by the European ruling class not simply as an economic measure, but as the first step towards the creation of a new political set-up; a multi-national framework that can better tame the working class of each member country. But this in turn requires some uniformity in the political set-ups of each state. The fascist-style regimes of Spain and Portugal did not fit the common European mold.

This might have been overcome, were it not for the fact that regimes such as these inspire an intense hatred among the masses. For a while their repressive power may drive this underground and prevent mass struggles emerging. But at a certain point the oppression of the masses becomes unbearable, their determination to struggle exceeds their fear of repression, their creativity outwits the most efficient repressive machine, and their struggles erupt into the light of day — in an ever more uncontrollable form. From the beginning of the 1970s, both Portugal and Spain — particularly

the latter — were moving towards just such a situation.

The inclusion of such regimes in the EEC was thus out of the question. The European capitalists might be quite willing to embrace fascist dictators, but the insurgent working class that they would bring with them was totally unacceptable. The example they would set to other European workers, reinforced by the still living memory of the Spanish civil war and the millions of immigrant workers already settled in the EEC, would threaten to infect the working class of the entire continent with their spirit of intransigent class struggle and shake the foundations of European capitalist order.

Thus both the Spanish and Portuguese capitalists had to seek some way by which they could give their regimes a democratic face-lift and create the sort of institutions of capitalist democracy that could absorb and redirect the energies of the working class.

Half a century ago the backwardness of Portuguese capitalism forced its ruling class to take a desperate leap to dictatorship that showed Spain the image of its own future. On 25 April this same backwardness forced the Portuguese capitalists to try another desperate leap — this time to capitalist democracy.

Under the hammer blows of the heroic liberation fighters, the colonies had turned from a source of relief for the Portuguese capitalists into a millstone around their necks. Faced with a deep and deteriorating social crisis, they turned to their old ally the army (which had ushered in the era of dictatorship on their behalf 48 years earlier) to try to launch a new course.

But this was a gamble based on unsound assumptions. The Portuguese capitalists had overlooked the fact that capitalist democracy can only work to defuse the working class struggle for a new social order under certain circumstances: the capitalists must have some leeway so that they can make material concessions to the demands being raised by the working masses, there must be a privileged layer of the population prepared to underwrite the capitalist regime despite its class character, and there must be a bureaucratic leadership over the workers' movement prepared to sell out the interests of their class in exchange for the maintenance of special privileges.

But none of these things existed in sufficient quantity in the societies of the Iberian peninsula to make capitalist democracy work. The Portuguese capitalists' gamble thus had a totally different effect — instead of allowing them to head off the emergence of a powerful workers' movement, it produced an immense explosion that threatens their class rule altogether.

Once again, Portugal has revealed to Spain its future. There is no more a basis for the creation of a stable capitalist democracy in Spain than there is in Portugal. While the situation of the Spanish capitalists is not yet quite as desperate as that of their Portuguese counterparts and they have greater reserves at their disposal (in particular the army is not nearly as affected by the political crisis), the development of a real mass upheaval could quickly sweep away these advantages. What is more, the Spanish working class has a much longer tradition, a much higher degree of organisation, and is a more powerful force throughout society, than was the Portuguese working class before 25 April. Things which the Portuguese working class had to spend precious months learning and developing — like regional co-ordination of their own organs of struggle — the Spanish workers already possess.

What is more, the Spanish working class now have the crucial lessons of the Portuguese class struggle at their disposal. The bankruptcy of class collaborationism, the impossibility of defending democratic conquests through the capitalist state, the necessity



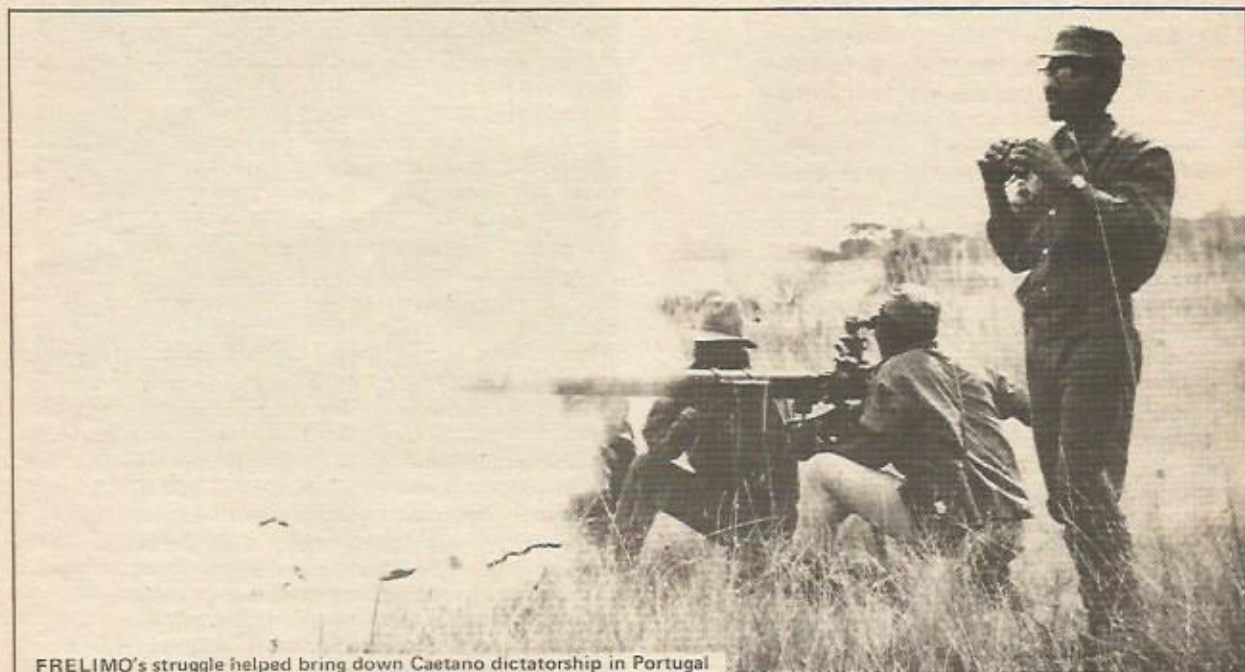
for the working class to take power through its own class organisations to solve the problems produced by the capitalist crisis, have all been hammered home to the most class-conscious Spanish workers by the living experience of their Portuguese brothers and sisters.

Twist and turn as they may in the coming months, there is no way that the Spanish capitalists can forestall the coming explosion. At the moment the Portuguese working class is running into heavy water in its own fight, but if it can prevent the ruling class from regaining the initiative it will soon find the Spanish proletariat marching shoulder-to-shoulder beside it. And if the upsurge in Spain can be set into motion while the Portuguese proletariat is still marching ahead, the strength of the working class on the Iberian peninsula will be invincible. The birth of a Socialist Iberia will be on the order of the day — and such a struggle cannot but herald the birth of a Socialist Europe.

This is what European capitalism fears the most.

It will do everything in its power to ensure as rapidly as possible the defeat of the Portuguese workers, and to hold back as long as possible the offensive of the Spanish working class.

It is this which makes international solidarity so crucial. Just as the fate of the Portuguese revolution is tied up with the development of the class struggle in Spain, so the struggles of the working class in every European country would receive an unprecedented boost from the eruption of a socialist revolution on European soil. At the present moment this makes it essential that we do everything in our power to solidarise with the Portuguese and Spanish working class. We must mobilise the full might of the international workers' movement to block the imperialist and reactionary plots in Portugal, and prevent the unleashing of a brutal repressive drive against the Spanish working class and its vanguard.



FRELIMO's struggle helped bring down Caetano dictatorship in Portugal

## PORTUGAL

# Capitalism on the Cliff's Edge

In a matter of hours on the night of 25 April 1974 the ruthlessly efficient, dictatorial regime which had dominated Portugal for the preceding 40 years was swept away in a surgical operation carried out by the Portuguese army.

How could such a dramatic change take place so rapidly and with such little resistance? There is only one explanation. The army was not acting simply off its own bat, but on behalf of the most important and most powerful sections of the Portuguese capitalists, who had for some time been convinced of the need for major changes in state policy if their interests were to be properly protected, and had finally come to the conclusion that the overthrow of the old regime, and the Government of Marcello Caetano based on it, was the only means of obtaining such changes.

The fascist regime of Antonio Salazar had been born in the years of capitalist crisis of the 1920s when the Portuguese ruling class, along with its counterparts in many other European countries, found itself in too deep trouble and too weak to rule through the institutions of capitalist democracy. Instead it turned to a repressive regime headed by a 'strong man'. Salazar, like his fellow dictator Franco in Spain, was a very clever capitalist politician and was able to exploit the anti-communist drive launched by imperialism after the Second World War to ensure the survival of his regime, despite its association with the defeated fascist Axis powers.

In the years following the Second World War, Portuguese economics and politics were dominated by two factors — the growing connections between Portugal and the then booming economy of capitalist Europe, on the one hand and Portugal's colonial empire, primarily centred in Africa, on the other.

After the war was over the dictatorship sought to



prevent backward Portuguese capitalism falling even further behind its capitalist neighbours by encouraging economic growth through state aid and support. The fascist state actively aligned itself with a number of economically powerful monopoly groups and tried to get them to invest in Portugal's economic development by granting them a wide range of special privileges, both at home and in the colonies. At the same time the dictatorship (as did its neighbour in Spain) tried to keep up a policy of economic nationalism designed to prevent the Portuguese economy becoming dependent on foreign trade and investment, stressing instead economic 'self-sufficiency' and strengthened economic ties with the colonial empire. In order to stave off competition from the industries of capitalist Europe the fascist state assisted the monopolies to concentrate economic production in their hands.

Portugal's economic ties with its colonies were based on the classic colonial relationship of importing raw materials at low prices in exchange for industrial exports. A number of Portugal's export industries were only able to compete on the world market on the basis of this supply of cheap raw materials, particularly the textile industry, dependent on cotton from Mozambique. This gave the colonies an importance in the Portuguese economy out of all place to their importance in the world capitalist market: as late as 1969 about one-fifth of Portugal's overseas trade was with her own empire.

But of course, this set-up had a snag: it dumped the costs of Portugal's limited economic development on the backs of the colonies, and could only be maintained through a policy of ruthless exploitation, backed up by brutal repression of the impoverished colonial masses. Eventually it bore fruit in a mounting wave of popular resistance in the colonies.

Meanwhile, the great Portuguese monopolies were biting the hand that had fed them. Rather than being loyal supporters of the regime's economic plans, the big Portuguese capitalists found themselves attracted far more to the capitalist bonanza of Europe. Instead of loyally underwriting plans for Portuguese 'self-sufficiency' they chose to invest their wealth abroad and grumble about the regime's refusal to allow them to take part in the international capitalist boom. The regime's economic plans thus fell apart from a lack of the capital necessary to carry them through.

Faced with this opposition, Salazar had no alternative but to give in. The door was opened, at least part way, for foreign investment, and a crash economic policy was put into operation with the aim of further strengthening the monopolies and gearing Portuguese industry to resist the increase in foreign competition. After 1968, Salazar's illness and eventual death brought Marcello Caetano to the head of the regime, and this policy was carried even further.

Under the economic policy the great monopolies extended their tentacles over the economic life of the country in close association with foreign capital and the big multi-national companies. An important measure of industrialisation developed in this way, deliberately concentrated in a small number of select zones around the major cities.

What this meant was that alongside the traditional, backward Portuguese economy of farming, fishing and small-scale industry there grew up a new section of large scale industry based on modern technology and highly concentrated production. Thus, while the average Portuguese worker even today works in what is little more than a glorified workshop along with fewer than 10 workmates, the country is also the site of the world's largest ship-repair yards, and sophisticated electronics and petro-chemical industries. Sometimes these contrasts exist even inside a single industry: for example the key textile industry includes both tiny sweatshops making clothing and modern man-made

fibre plants.

Meanwhile, the chickens of Portugal's ruthless exploitation of the colonies were come home to roost. Between 1961 and 1964 armed liberation struggles broke out in each of Portugal's African colonies, and the regime rapidly found itself embroiled in a major overseas war, which began to gobble up more and more of its impoverished economy's resources.

By the time the old regime collapsed in 1974, the colonial wars were eating up about 50 per cent of the total Government budget, and about 8 per cent of the total output of the economy. Some 200,000 conscripts had been dragged off to fight for Portuguese imperialism — and this in a tiny country of just over 8 million people! The casualties sustained by the Portuguese army in the wars — 60,000 killed or injured — was almost as great, in relative terms, as the losses of the British army in the Second World War.



The economic and social effects of these wars dovetailed with the existing problems of Portuguese capitalism to produce a deep-going crisis for the capitalists. The demands of the army for manpower came on top of the siphoning off of large numbers of workers to the booming industries of Western Europe, many of them encouraged to do so in order to avoid the prospect of the bloody slaughter in Africa. There were 1.5 million emigrants from Portugal in this period — and about one third of them left the country illegally.

The upshot of this was to produce an acute labour shortage in the advanced economic sectors dominated by the monopolies, hampering the possibilities for their growth and putting the workers in this sector into a strong bargaining position that allowed them to push up their real wages, despite the repressive fascist order.

The burden of the wars on this already enfeebled economy, already suffering from the contradictions between its modern and backward economic sectors and the effects of monopoly domination, led to a rapidly accelerating rate of inflation, with Portugal attaining one of the worst rates of inflation in the capitalist world.

At the same time Portugal's new economic policy of opening up relations with capitalist Europe was leading to a closer and closer relationship with the European economy. Portugal was a founding member of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) set up in 1960 by those European countries who were outside the Common Market. When many of these — including Portugal's biggest customer, Britain — joined the EEC, Portugal's capitalists were naturally pulled in the same direction. But Portugal's political set-up, born out of the fascist era, was an obstacle to its full integration into the EEC, where the capitalist class maintained its political power through the institutions of capitalist democracy, and a deep hatred of fascism existed among the working class. Despite



Portugal's negotiation of a special free trade agreement with the Common Market in 1972, the main sections of the capitalist class continued to aim for eventual full membership of Portugal in the Common Market.

While the big Portuguese monopolies were being drawn more powerfully into the European orbit, changes were also taking place in their outlook on African affairs. It was becoming increasingly obvious that the colonial wars, far from protecting their interests, were leading towards a massive defeat in which they could be completely wiped out. Moreover, the growing European orientation of the big monopolies, coupled with the fact that they were starting to embark on economic exploitation of the colonies through joint projects with Western imperialism, opened up the possibility of a 'neo-colonial' solution to the wars in which formal political independence would be granted, but imperialist economic exploitation maintained.

Thus for quite some time before 25 April, the main sections of the Portuguese capitalist class were in favour of a change of political strategy towards the sort of political liberalisation at home that would make Portugal acceptable inside the Common Market, and limited measures of independence for the colonies that could make possible an end to the colonial wars. These were the necessary conditions for carrying through Portugal's intended marriage to European capitalism and western imperialism.

At first the capitalists had hopes that the necessary changes could be carried through within the framework of the old fascist machine that had served them so well. The replacement of Salazar by Caetano, who shared many of the monopolists' views on these matters, gave them grounds for optimism.

And Caetano did his best to carry out their programme: he introduced a number of liberal trappings to the fascist state machine, admitting a number of moderate oppositionists close to the monopolists into his Government, a number of moves to stimulate foreign investment, and set in motion steps to grant limited self-government to the colonies.

But Caetano's plan rapidly ran into serious trouble. On the one hand the workers' movement, now stronger than ever before with the new industrialisation that had taken place, took full advantage of Caetano's reforms (particularly the decision to allow relatively free elections for the state-controlled unions for the first time) and mounted a wave of industrial struggle to defend themselves against the spiralling rate of inflation. At the same time the die-hard reactionaries who continued to hold key positions in various parts of the fascist regime on which Caetano's Government was based — the army, the political police, and the ruling party — began to get uneasy about Caetano's 'new course' and started rattling their sabres.

By 1970 Caetano was busy liquidating this little liberal experiment, and any hope that the monopolists would get what they wanted in this way were dashed. This made it clear to them that there was no prospect of serious reform from within the fascist regime.

The problem that they now faced was what force could they turn to carry out the job? Any attempt at a mass campaign to overthrow the Government was out of the question for the capitalists, for even the timid reforms of Caetano had shown the determination of the Portuguese masses to unleash militant struggles if given the slightest chance. Any campaign of mass action would thus rapidly lead far beyond the limited aims of the monopolists.

There was little wonder that the hopes of the monopolists should then centre on the army. The military were the traditional defenders of capitalist interests in Portugal, and its top echelons are both recruited from capitalist circles and often retain close ties with

them, serving on the boards of the big monopolies, for example.

Moreover, they found in the army a first-rate candidate to advance their schemes — General Spínola. Here was a man who shared their views and had great prestige in the armed forces, but who had also proved his ability in the colonies as a ruthless defender of capitalist and imperialist interests. Here was the man to seize on the discontent that was riddling the army and its officer corps and place himself at the head of a movement that could both sweep the obstacle of the old regime out of the monopolists' way, but without threatening to jeopardise their fundamental interests. Or so they thought!

## The birth of workers' power

The downfall of the hated fascist regime was followed by an immense outburst of proletarian energy and creativity which swept the last remnants of this rotten product of capitalist class rule into the dustbin of Portuguese history.

Crowds of irate workers hunted down agents of the brutal secret police, the PIDE, and dished out rough proletarian justice to them before handing them over to the army. Workers in every sector of the economy went into struggle — not just for economic demands like decent wages, paid holidays, and a shorter work week, but for demands which had a political content, such as the dismissal of managers closely associated with the fascist state or known for their brutal treatment of workers' struggles. These struggles were not confined to the factories, but spread into the colleges and school, government departments, the newspapers and mass media, shaking the whole structure of the capitalist state.

At the same time the working class began to forge the instruments of its own power. The struggles in the factories were organised in a thoroughly democratic fashion through mass meetings and elected and instantly re-callable workers' committees. Similar committees were created in the universities and colleges and the workers residential districts to deal with their problems. These committees lived on after the first wave of struggle had passed and after the job of reconstructing the fascist-regulated trade union movement (now under Communist Party control) was underway, because they best represented the unity of the workforce (whereas the trade unions remained divided along craft lines) and were best suited to deal with many of the tasks that the working class had to face.

After the first few months of struggle the movement went into a downswing, caused by the determination of the monopolist-dominated provisional Government, backed by the AFM and the Communist Party, to prevent the struggle going too far. The Communist Party opposed all struggles as 'aiding reaction' and accepted the Government's decision to decree a derisory minimum wage of 3300 escudos (£12) a week instead of the 6000 which almost all sections of the working class were demanding (and which the CP had itself called for before the coup). The watershed was reached in June when the pos-





Postal workers launched a national strike to demand the 6000 escudo minimum wage, along with other demands. This strike involved 35,000 workers and was a model of working class democracy. The decision to strike was taken by a national meeting of workers delegates, after a series of local mass meetings, and the strike leadership was elected in a similar fashion. The strike was defeated after a vicious campaign led by the CP, who denounced the workers as 'reactionaries' and actually mobilised local mobs to attack their strike headquarters, laying the basis for the Government's threat to use the army to break the strike.

After this defeat the Government went on the offensive, enacting an anti-strike law which was much tougher than the Tories' Industrial Relations Act, for example. But even this did not prevent the workers' struggles from continuing, now centring around the fight to purge former fascists and reactionaries from positions of influence in the economy and the state. Again this was a struggle opposed by the Communist Party and the AFM. After the victory of the working class on 28 September, made possible because of the preceding and preparatory struggles, a new upsurge began which has continued until very recently.

The principal problem facing the working class became economic sabotage. Both Portuguese and foreign capitalists responded to the growing power of the working class by trying all sorts of tricks to create economic chaos. The workers responded by establishing workers' control over production: they opened up the company's books, inspected its orders its transactions, its bank balance. If they found anything out of the ordinary they reported it to the Government, and the more advanced sections took action on their own to prevent the bosses continuing their sabotage.

When factories were shut down the workers' committees stepped in and resumed production under their own control. There were few illusions that these could be turned into long-term 'workers' co-operatives' — this action was seen as an emergency measure to deal with the capitalists' wrecking, and was often tied with demands for nationalisation under workers' control.

Nor was workers control limited to capitalist industry or confined to the local level. On several occasions (the first being just after 25 April) the highly organised bank workers stepped in and enforced their own control in the banks to prevent attempts by the capitalists to suddenly pull out their funds and create a financial crisis.

At the same time they set in motion a minute investigation of their bosses' affairs through the elected

workers' committees. After the frustrated right-wing coup of 11 March the committees demanded the immediate nationalisation of the banks, and to back up their demand presented a dossier with full information on the stunts that the bankers had been up to — huge handouts to right-wing political groups, massive misappropriation of funds (one banking family, the Espirito Santos, issued themselves over £4 million in overdrafts) and all sorts of misuse of Government funds handed over to the banks to aid industry.

This determined and efficient action by the bank workers forced the Government to nationalise the banking and financial institutions. It also touched off a wave of action by other workers. A mass rally of thousands of railway workers was held to call for the nationalisation of the entire transport system and its reorganisation under a national plan. The workers in the giant CUF monopoly launched a campaign for its nationalisation, and the workers in the country's major brewery (acting on information supplied by the bank workers) occupied their plant to demand its nationalisation. All these initiatives eventually ended in victory.

But while this determined struggle and new forms of organisation created by the Portuguese working class were capable of forcing the Government into taking important actions against the interests of the capitalists, and blocking the immediate attempts of the capitalists to sabotage such measures, they have limitations. They have not been sufficient to prevent the Portuguese economy, which was in a precarious position even before 25 April, undergoing a major crisis, with production falling off and unemployment rising precipitously (to 300,000 or about 10 per cent of the workforce), and a grave balance of payments deficit developing as the world crisis and imperialist sabotage dries up foreign markets and the inflow of foreign capital.

Nor could workers control at the factory level do much to help the plight of the small traders and poor peasants caught in the vice of inflation at home, declining markets for agricultural produce abroad, and their indebtedness to the banks and local money-lenders. Today it is these problems — and the failure of any force in the country to meet them — which is laying the basis for the political mobilisation of reactionary forces, and constitutes the gravest threat to the Portuguese revolution.

The only answer to this is workers' control of the whole economy, and the implementation on this basis of socialist planning of the economy. This cannot be done simply by local factory committees, but requires a nationally co-ordinated structure of workers' power and a Government based on it.

The first step towards such a structure have been taken with the birth of 'Popular Assemblies' in a number of areas. These bodies, which group together democratically elected delegates from the factory committees, neighbourhood committees, and in some cases the local military units, represent the emergence of veritable organs of working class political authority on the local level. Beginning with a number of such bodies set up at the call of the Communist Party to play an 'advisory' role to the capitalist state, and encouraged by a decision of the Armed Forces Movement general assembly in favour of the establishment of such bodies, the Popular Assemblies still exist in only a few localities in the industrial regions of the South.

Moreover, neither the Communist Party nor most currents inside the AFM see them as having any job to do other than 'help' the machinery of the capitalist state be 'more efficient'. In order for the Popular Assemblies to lay the basis of genuine working class political power and get on with meeting the problems wracking the country, they must be extended through-



out the whole country, drawing in the vast majority of the exploited population and must be totally independent of the capitalist state.

The following is an excerpt from an interview with the vice-president of the Portuguese Textile Workers Union, Marcolino Abrantes, in which he explains the origins and development of workers' control in Portugal.

Take for example my industry, textiles. There we have firms like Courtaulds, and sectors such as man-made fibres and clothing. Foreign capital is very important here — especially in clothing — because it's a labour-intensive industry and Portuguese labour was extremely cheap. Also the Portuguese colonies supplied cheap raw materials.

Under the old regime the situation was kept stable through the various forms of repression that the working class were subjected to. After 25 April this repressive apparatus broke down and the workers began to push forward their demands. In reaction to this, as these struggles advanced very quickly due to the end of repression, the bosses resorted to economic sabotage — using every form possible. This ranged from not ordering raw materials so that factories were paralysed, through to not selling goods in stock. They told lies about the state of the market in order to reduce production, tried to declare redundancies, and pretended that they couldn't pay wages — all this sort of thing.

The process of the struggle led not only to the need for the workers to begin to control the productive process and not to be exclusively dependent on the bosses, but also to the opening of the books through occupations, etc. Apart from finding out that all these problems were actually fabricated by the bosses the workers also found out that, for example, money was being transferred abroad.

Confronted with these activities by the workers the bosses took various actions. Many decided to close down their factories, lock out their workers, and so on. The workers then responded by occupying their factories, and continuing production by themselves.

The workers soon realised that they had to set up pickets to guard the factories outside of working hours. This was shown in the case of the French-owned textile firm SOGANTAL, a typical case among many. The French bosses just left this factory when it was occupied, and returned to France. For some months the workers continued production, organising their own sales. Then one day the bosses came back with a group of thugs — some Portuguese, some foreign — and in the middle of the night tried to overpower the pickets and seize back the factory. But the pickets were able to resist and give the alarm. They were then joined not only by the other workers, but by the whole local population, who drove off the bosses' assault.

This sort of thing went on all across Portugal, because the bosses wanted to take away everything that was in store, machinery etc., with the double purpose of rescuing everything they could, and preventing the workers carrying on with their work and making the occupation successful.

Under the pressure of the working class a national minimum wage was enacted — about £50 a month. I think this was still very low, but all throughout the textile industry the bosses started to say they could



Photo: ANDREW WIARD (Report)

MARCOLINO ABRANTES

not pay it, and the rhythm of factory closures was stepped up.

This included many foreign firms. Let me give you you one very good example — a textile firm in the north of Portugal, Swedish-owned, called ALGOTE. After the workers occupied this factory the management tried to sabotage them in every way — by freezing the money in the banks, making it difficult for them to distribute what they produced. Eventually they had to stop production, but they managed to contact their fellow-workers in Sweden and there was a solidarity strike which had a big impact in the eventual success of their struggle in Portugal.

Workers control began as a move coming from the working class responding to the concrete problems they were being confronted with. Then it acquired a different character when the nationalisations began. These were brought about by the pressure put on the Government by the working class to take over sectors of the industry and economic life. Then the first problem came in terms of workers' power, and the workers began to see it in a different way. Who is going to control the nationalised industries? What is workers' control? Is it state control, exclusively through administrative means by the state? Or is it the workers who work in the nationalised industries who are going to organise that? The thing went even further and due to this developed and reached a new stage in which people are beginning to raise the question not only of workers control in relation to a certain workplace, but also who is going to control the economy as a whole?

The working class is already moving in the direction of guaranteeing that it is the workers' committees that are going to control production. There are already many instances of this. Like in the case of a very important fertiliser factory in which the workers already exercise control; and in the Lisnave shipyards where there was a mass meeting in which the workers decided that *they* should control production, and that this should be exercised through the workers' committees. There are several similar cases in the textile industry where workers are already effectively in control of production.

The example I mentioned of the fertiliser factory is very important because there are already elected committees formed in many rural villages that have decided that agrarian reform should be implemented by themselves. The workers in this fertiliser factory have decided to help this move and already supply fertilisers to the committees that are supervising the expropriation of land at a cheaper price than they charge to the landowners.



What is most vital in the process that is underway at the moment is to form and elect workers' committees, neighbourhood and village committees where they don't yet exist, and especially to create elected soldiers committees in the barracks. It is necessary to spread to all places these forms of working class organisation.

There are three main areas where these committees must act in the first place. First, to establish real links between the committees that already exist and to make sure that actions by the different committees are co-ordinated. Beginning with the co-ordination of committees at the area and sector level (i.e. in similar types of industry) this will hopefully reach the national level. Second, to make sure that, once these committees are co-ordinated, regular local mass meetings take place to make the decisions and co-ordinate action, so that the rank-and-file can control what their representatives are doing and increase the participation of the people in general in the workings of the committees.

Finally, the major task for the immediate future must be to control production as far as possible. This is already being done at factory level, as I have described but it has to be spread to other places and seen in a different way. This is why the neighbourhood committees are particularly important, for production must not only be controlled at factory level, but all the way through to the delivery of the goods. The distribution system, and the service industries, have to be organised by the people and controlled by them at the level of the community.

# The Armed Forces Movement

While General Spínola was the figure to whom the Portuguese capitalists looked to head up the new regime in their interests, the actual authors of the coup which brought down the old regime were a group of much younger and lower ranking officers, organised in the Armed Forces Movement (AFM).

The AFM was created during the colonial wars out of a group of disgruntled junior professional officers, concerned with the loss of privilege and status they were suffering as a result of the influx of conscripts into the officer corps, recruited fresh from the universities, in order to meet the needs of the wars.

But eventually they began to draw a connection between these narrow professional problems and the general political problems created by the fascist regime. In particular, their experiences in Africa convinced them that the colonial wars were not only destructive and unwinnable, but also that they could not be ended as long as the fascist regime remained intact. At the same time as they were subject to these radicalising forces, sections of them came under the influence of various democratic and left-wing political currents.

As the regime became increasingly bogged down in the wars, and more and more determined to re-

ject any form of compromise, the officers became more committed to outright political opposition. Thus the Armed Forces Movement was born with, from December 1973 onwards, a clear commitment to overthrowing the old regime by military action.

The coup of 25 April was exclusively the work of these young officers. General Spínola was informed of it in advance, but was in no way involved in its planning, nor did he identify himself with it until success was clear beyond doubt.

The officers hoped to use Spínola's prestige to ensure as rapid and bloodless a victory as possible over the old regime, while he sought to harness their base and organisation inside the army for his own plans. What Spínola and his monopolist backers wanted was a regime with a democratic facade, but a solid authoritarian core capable of 'disciplining' the workers movement and other opponents of the monopolists ambitions. They wanted an economic policy that would further strengthen the monopoly sectors in preparation for full Portuguese entry to the EEC, and a colonial policy that would end the wars in exchange for limited measures of independence that would leave the colonial territories firmly within the imperialist economic orbit.

The programme of the Armed Forces Movement — on paper — seemed to be in sharp conflict with the objectives of the monopolies, speaking of the need to defend the interests of the most impoverished sections of the population and to recognise the rights of the colonial peoples to self-determination. But fine words are the stuff of any major political upheaval. Whether they get carried out or not depends on what class forces are set in motion. The monopolists hoped to damp down the mass struggle as far as possible and bind the officers of the AFM, through General Spínola, to a thoroughly capitalist perspective, which would rapidly push the promises of the AFM programme into the background.

But the monopolists' plan was based on a bad miscalculation — not the last capitalist circles were to make. They underestimated the depth of the upheaval that the coup would set off among the masses, underestimated the determination of the colonial liberation movements to continue the struggle until final victory, underestimated the extent to which the rank-and-file of the army would be affected by the political turmoil, and, finally, underestimated the effects of all these factors on the officers who held the key levers of power.

Thus at each crucial turning point in the political situation — when the pro-monopolist politicians tried to strengthen the power of Spínola in June, when Spínola's supporters tried to stage their mass 'silent majority' march on Lisbon to boost his position on 28 September, and when his backers in the army attempted a right wing coup on 11 March — the majority of the AFM officers refused to go along with the capitalists' plans.

Of course, they did so only because of growing mass pressure. The weeks before 28 September were marked by growing activity of the most class-conscious sections of the working class in the Lisbon region against the threat of right-wing reaction. The Lisbon newspaper workers staged a one-day solidarity strike with the workers on one paper fighting to purge their reactionary editors, and thousands of steel-helmeted workers from the Lisnave shipyard marched through Lisbon demanding tough action against the reactionaries — 'Democracy for the workers — repression for the reactionaries', as they put it.

The AFM officers opposed these moves. But oppose them or not the AFM could not ignore these actions, for they displayed the fighting determination of the Lisbon proletariat to resist any strengthening of the right wing and put the entire working class on



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a state of alert.

All this laid the basis for an immense proletarian mobilisation throughout the country on 28 September to crush the reactionaries. The danger of a right wing victory, and the knowledge that big sections of the Lisbon proletariat would be going into action anyway, compelled the Communist Party and the organisations under its influence to move into action at the last minute (it had opposed all the mobilisations of the previous weeks and backed Spinoia and the Government all the way). In the face of such a reaction the AFM officers were left no room for compromise or manoeuvre: to side with Spinoia and the monopolists would mean heaving any vestige of their own programme into the dustbin and joining a bloody repression against the working class (and not a few of their own men).

Since 28 September this pattern of events has been repeated many times and in many different ways: the militancy and determination of the masses has forced the AFM and the Government under its control to go along with measures that the masses were vigorously demanding, if not actually putting into operation by themselves.

There exist two views of the character of the AFM on the British left, both of which are wrong and lead to seriously incorrect conclusions. The first is the most dangerous. It is the view held by the Communist Party, in line with the position of the Portuguese Communist Party and the world stalinist movement, that the AFM is the 'vanguard of the revolution' and that the way forward for the Portuguese masses lies through the 'alliance of the people and the AFM' and defence of the 'unity of the AFM'. Such a view bases itself on the leading role played by the AFM in the downfall of the old regime on 25 April, and its key role in the political events which followed.

As we have shown, this direction was determined by the mass struggle of the colonial liberation movements and the Portuguese masses, in many cases struggling against the officers of the AFM and their political schemes.

The other view — which some on the revolutionary left hold — is that the AFM is simply a tool of the capitalist class, based on the army, an institution of the capitalist state, and attempting to impose a 'bonapartist' military regime — i.e. one that appears to be above the class struggle, handing out some concessions to the masses, but actually working to defend the fundamental interests of capitalism. This view bases itself on the class character of the AFM — a movement based on the capitalist state machine — and on the undeniable efforts of the AFM at various stages to defuse and disorient the anti-capitalist struggle of the masses.

Both of these views, however, fail to explain the actual way in which the AFM has developed since 25 April. If it were either the 'vanguard of the revolution' or the instrument of a 'capitalist bonapartist' plan it should have had a clear-sighted view of where it was going and a relatively consistent strategy for getting there. But the AFM displays none of this.



Spinoia went one way, the masses the other

At one moment it is seeking Spinoia's support, at another it is pushing him out of office, and at another forcing him to flee the country and rounding up his supporters. On almost all the key political questions facing Portugal over the past 18 months — colonial policy, economic policy, attitude towards workers struggles — the AFM has taken different and downright contradictory attitudes at different times.

These different attitudes of the AFM have reflected sharp internal differences inside the Movement, the development of different currents inside the AFM under the impact of events, and the varying relationship of forces between these currents.

Those who think that the AFM is the 'vanguard of the revolution' must explain why it aligned itself with a reactionary spokesman of the monopolists like General Spinoia, supported a Government which reflected the views of him and his backers for so long, and broke with him so reluctantly. Those who think that the AFM is simply an instrument of capitalist bonapartism must explain why the AFM did eventually break with Spinoia, and persist in their opposition to him, when he actually represented the best opportunity to establish a bonapartist regime, and had the backing of the main capitalist groups in the country.

What then is the correct concept of the AFM? Certainly it originated as a middle class political movement among the officers of the capitalist army, with a political programme that did not go beyond the ideals of capitalist democracy. It did organise and carry out the coup that brought down the fascist regime on 25 April — but, as we have pointed out above, the coup was in no way in contradiction with the aims and aspirations of the main sections of the Portuguese capitalists. Under different circumstances such a group would have rapidly been pulled into the orbit of these decisive sections of the capitalist class and integrated into their schemes. On this basis the inevitable tendencies within the AFM (given both their class composition, and their relationship to the state machine) towards a 'bonapartist' political outlook would have gained the upper hand as they became firmly integrated into the capitalist state machine.

But the political upheaval that racked Portugal after the coup prevented such a smooth progression. The AFM could not smoothly slip into a bonapartist role based on the capitalist state because that state was in total chaos. A half century of fascism meant both that the state machine had its fingers in every pie in Portuguese society, and that it was thoroughly associated with the fascist regime and its political ideas. The collapse of that regime and the mass determination to wipe away every vestige of hated fascist rule therefore threw the state machine, and the entire society, into an immense turmoil. Most serious of all, the ultimate instruments of capitalist class domination — the repressive apparatus of armed men — were among the most affected by this process. The hated political police, the PIDE, were physically dismantled in a vast outburst of popular anger, and the new Government had no option but to dissolve the PIDE along with those political bodies most directly associated with the old regime's political leadership (the single state party and the Portuguese Legion). But they kept intact those of its repressive instruments they dared: the PSP ('Public Security Police' — the riot squad) and the GNR (Republican National Guard — a para-military police force).

However these forces were infested with reactionaries, on the one hand, and were objects of widespread popular hatred on the other. Their value as instruments of 'public order' was therefore very low. In general their use tended to cause more problems than it solved. To recite just one not untypical incident when the PSP was called to a Lisbon cafe because of





Soldiers misled by their officers on 11 March were soon put right by the popular mobilisations against the attempted coup.

an argument between the owner and a customer over the price of a cup of coffee, the matter ended with the customer being shot in the head by the police, and irate onlookers then running the police off the street and wrecking the cafe.)

The handling of all problems of an even vaguely political nature thus fell to the army. For a period of time they executed these tasks in true 'bonapartist' fashion, intervening in strikes to pressure workers to settle, evicting occupations of factories and preventing demonstrations against the colonial wars from taking place, etc. But the effect of such a situation when the masses were on the move and the whole society was in turmoil was to draw all levels of the armed forces more centrally into the arena of the class struggle and subject the ranks and junior officers to constant contact with the masses.

Thus the leaders of the AFM found themselves in a situation where the only capitalist institution left on which to base themselves was the army — and the army, far from being drawn into the orbit of the capitalists, was being riven by the pressures of the mass struggle. This prevented the AFM from becoming the instrument of any coherent 'bonapartist' strategy and led sections of the capitalists to resort to the desperate measures of 28 September and 11 March — but at the same time it doomed those actions to failure.

This in turn forced the pro-capitalist forces in the country, twice defeated, to place their hopes in the elections and seek to rebuild a viable capitalist state on the basis of the Constituent Assembly and the capitalist institutions that it was supposed to create.

The AFM, from its very beginning, was a coalition of different political elements, agreed only on the immediate task of removing the fascist regime. The only programme on which these different groups could agree was one that, whatever radical phrases it might contain, did not go beyond the bounds of capitalism. The failure of the AFM — or anyone else — to put together a viable solution to Portugal's problems on the basis of capitalism may have pushed them to the left, but it also undermined the basis for unity of the AFM.

As the leftward shift threatened more and more the survival of capitalism in Portugal those currents inside the AFM who were not prepared to break with capitalism and cast their lot with the struggles of the

working class became more and more restless. The more reactionary and foolish got involved in hopeless adventures like the 11 March coup and were rapidly driven off the political scene by the action of the masses. But the more astute last-ditch defenders of capitalism were prepared to go along with quite sweeping economic and political measures, realising both that a drastic overhaul was necessary if Portuguese capitalism was to survive and that concessions had to be made to the masses now in order to lull them and prepare the eventual reimposition of capitalist order.

Until some force should emerge outside the army on which this current could base itself politically it had to limit itself to a sort of 'guerilla warfare' factional struggle inside the AFM, creating at least the impression that the AFM was united. But as soon as such an outside force did emerge this 'unity' was exposed as the hollow sham it had always been. This was provided by the social forces set in motion by the Socialist Party's reactionary, anti-communist campaign, based on its victory in the Constituent Assembly elections, and fuelled by the chaos created by the economic sabotage of the Portuguese capitalists and imperialism. This has provided the basis for the public emergence of the so-called 'moderate faction' of the AFM, which does not totally identify itself with the Socialist Party, but shares its emphasis on a deal with imperialism (and all that would entail for strengthening capitalism in Portugal) as a means of meeting Portugal's economic crisis. It couples this with an appeal for the 'strengthening of the [capitalist] state'.

The members of this group include some important figures of the AFM — particularly Major Melo Antunes, a former Foreign Minister, and Major Vitor Alves, also a former minister and the drafter of the original AFM programme. With the virtual split of this faction the AFM is on the verge of total disintegration. Today decisions are not taken by some central 'Coordinating Committee' (as they were in the early days after 25 April) or even by Assemblies of delegates elected by AFM officers and soldiers (as they were later on), but through a hodge-podge of political manoeuvres, interspersed with all sorts of mass meetings (of whole units — officers and men — of sergeants in one service or all three combined).

This disintegration is not some dreadful catastrophe to be bemoaned with pathetic pleas for the 'unity' of the AFM, as the Community Party does. It is the inevitable result of the struggle of the Portuguese working class pushing capitalism to the very edge of the precipice. What must be stressed — against both the 'unity' cryers and the 'military bonapartist' theoreticians — is that the present situation is unique opportunity for the working class to win to its side a whole section of the armed forces, and a section that can draw behind it the vast majority of soldiers and sailors. This would make certain the victory of the working class in Portugal, even in the face of determined opposition by capitalism and imperialism.

## Reformists in crisis

When the Caetano regime collapsed the Portuguese Communist Party was the only organised force in the country with deep roots and mass influence in the workers movement. That was why the monopolists were so eager to include it in the Government (Spinoia personally supported their being invited in) — so that they could be used to tame the working class.



As events were to show the working class was in an immensely powerful position in Portugal, and had it received decisive and revolutionary leadership could have rapidly developed the struggles that succeeded the downfall of the old regime into a victorious socialist revolution.

But the political policies of the Portuguese Communist Party were firmly set in the stalinist mould of the Communist Parties around the world. It argued that the task facing the Portuguese masses was simply the construction of a 'democratic' order in place of the discredited fascist regime, that socialist revolution was not on the agenda for some time to come, and that it was therefore necessary to unite with and support those 'progressive' capitalist groups who were prepared to go along with such a 'democratic and national' revolution.

In line with stalinist 'theory' the PCP's programme identified its capitalist allies as small and middle-sized businessmen and farmers, whom they saw as in conflict with the big monopolists. But, as we have noted, the major monopolists backed the 'democracy' of 25 April. The PCP thus ended up in a government that was at the disposal of those same monopolists, serving as its watchdog and strike breaker inside the workers' movement, in order to get close to the reins of power — even if it was capitalist power.

The PCP only broke with the monopolists when it became absolutely clear that they were making an aggressive bid for power which, if successful, would almost certainly eliminate the PCP from the government and the capitalist state machine. The victory of the working class in this confrontation of 28 September put the PCP in a serious dilemma. It was followed by a new working class upsurge in which it was clear that anyone inside the workers movement who tried to halt it would be thoroughly discredited. The PCP's old strike breaking tactics would be a recipe for disaster.

At the same time the passage of the monopolists and their allies into the camp of open reaction meant that the road was left open for the PCP's programme of 'democratic and national' revolution. The PCP had no intention of breaking with the class-collaborationism which was the very heart of that programme, but it now had a choice as to how it could organise this class collaboration.

On the one hand, it could continue to base itself on the coalition Government, where it and the Socialist Party sat alongside the capitalist Popular Democratic Party. Alternatively, it could base itself on trying to build up an exclusive alliance with the Armed Forces Movement, which because of the essentially capitalist programme that kept it together, would equally serve to subordinate the working class to the capitalist state.

For the leaders of the PCP there were important advantages in channelling their class collaborationism along the road of the so-called 'People-AFM alliance' (in which they posed themselves as the representative of Portuguese working people). Maintaining the existing structure of the coalition Government would mean sharing the fruits of the capitalist state with its coalition partners and weakening the PCP's political hold. Moreover, there was a real danger of the PCP getting caught in a political vice if it tried to keep a working relationship inside the coalition Government.

On the one hand the Socialist Party and the Popular Democrats wanted to try and solve Portugal's problems by making a deal with imperialism to get economic aid, encourage foreign investment, and draw Portugal closer to the Common Market. As Socialist Party leader Mario Soares readily admitted, this would require delivering 'guarantees' to foreign capital — i.e. breaking the back of the most militant sections of the

working class and tying Portugal firmly into the imperialist system. A government committed to such a course could expect to encounter tough resistance from the most militant sections of the working class, and as the Communist Party realised, that could greatly damage its base of support.

On the other hand, the PCP was becoming increasingly aware that the legacies of a half-century of fascist rule and the continuing hold of reactionary forces — the church, local landowners and political bosses — over a large section of the country was going to weaken their showing in the forthcoming elections. A strategy based on continuing the coalition Government, the other members of which were placing all their hopes for stabilising capitalist rule on the elections and the Constituent Assembly, could lead to the PCP being squeezed out of government and replaced by a coalition of the Socialist Party with the openly capitalist parties.

The PCP hoped to avoid this double threat by basing itself on the alliance with the AFM. It would try to exploit the prestige of the AFM among the masses to boost its own support, and force on the other parties in the coalition a political course which would not be quite as pro-capitalist and pro-imperialist as the one they sought. On this basis the PCP could take a certain 'left' turn and maintain their influence in the working class. At the same time the capitalist programme of the AFM, and the presence in it of prestigious individuals cut from the cloth of the old capitalist military elite, such as President Costa Gomes, would reassure capitalism and imperialism that they were not faced with a full-blooded revolutionary threat, but simply a 'democratic and national revolution'.

In order to carry this strategy through the Communist Party had to consolidate its hold over the mass movement in order to sell itself to the AFM as the best representative of the 'people' and pressurise them into adopting its political policies. This in turn required eliminating any serious competition, particularly any that could put a different type of pressure on the AFM from within the ranks of the Government; and that meant the Socialist Party. The PCP therefore adopted a sectarian and often manipulative drive to capture key offices in the trade unions, local councils and the state machinery.

A good example of how this tactic was applied was the fight for 'trade union unity'. Here the Communist Party based themselves on the healthy class instinct of the mass of Portuguese workers for a united trade union movement that could best fight for their interests. They were opposed by the Socialists and Popular Democrats who, in the name of 'freedom', played the capitalists' game of division. But instead of fighting democratically inside the unions for unity the PCP tried to get the AFM to create a single trade union federation by law based on the existing Inter-sindical trade union federation which they controlled from before 25 April 1974.

Just how sincere was the PCP's desire for a united or fighting trade union movement can be judged not only by its strike-breaking activity of six months earlier but also by the fact that at the same time as it was fighting for 'unity' it opposed the fusion of the chemical and plastic workers' unions because the chemical workers' union was controlled by a Maoist organisation.

After the poor showing of the PCP in the elections this sectarianism towards the SP was stepped up. A party genuinely dedicated to advancing the interests of the Portuguese working class would have drawn inspiration from the fact that almost 60 per cent of the votes in the election were cast for parties of the working class and called for a government based on the working class organisations. It would have launched





How things have changed - Cunhal (left) is greeted on his return from exile by Soares (right)

a drive for a united front with the Socialist Party, not in order to allow it to carry out its pro-capitalist programme, but in order to expose to the Portuguese masses the contradiction between the programme of the Socialist Party leaders and the possibilities that united working class action opened up.

But the PCP was not this sort of party. It was simply peddling a different brand of class-collaborationism from that of the Socialist Party, and treated the SP like a travelling salesman who finds someone else flogging the same product in his territory.

Instead of proposing a united front to the Socialist Party leaders to carry the workers' struggle forward, the PCP leaders tried to use their special position as the closest allies of the main current in the AFM to squeeze the Socialist Party out of the main-stream of political life. Thus the PCP leaders adopted a thoroughly sectarian policy towards the Socialist Party and its leaders (for example, trying to exclude them from the 1 May Intersindical demonstration held after the elections), which had the effect of confusing and angering the rank-and-file of the Socialist Party, who felt that their party was as much a part of the workers' movement as the PCP. This made it easier for Soares and his gang to maintain their influence over their party members, and created all sorts of grievances which the SP leaders were able to exploit in a demagogic campaign against 'dictatorship'.

This policy has born disastrous fruit with the ability of the Socialist Party to rally big sections of the masses behind their campaign, effectively splitting the ranks of the working class and for the first time since 25 April, giving reactionary forces both a mass base and political cover. If the present threat to the Portuguese revolution is primarily the product of the treacherous pro-capitalist leadership of the Socialist Party, the class-collaborationism of the Communist Party is also to blame for helping make this treachery by the Socialist Party leaders possible.

The Portuguese Socialist Party has emerged as the highest hope for capitalism and imperialism to retain their foothold on Portuguese soil. The PSP is not a party with long standing or deep roots in the Portuguese working class. It was formed in 1972 out of a group of intellectuals who were part of the broad opposition front (along with the CP and various left Catholic groups) that took part in the phony 'elections' that the fascist regime staged. The fascists considered them sufficiently harmless to allow the present leader Mario Soares to return to the country and engage in open political activity for a time during the 'liberal' phase just after Caetano took over. Another of their

leading members, Raul Rego was able to edit the opposition newspaper *Republica* under the old regime.

After 25 April the Socialists were invited into the Government along with the Communists where they proved themselves devoted class-collaborationists. Soares became foreign minister, in which office he did all the dirty work of Portuguese imperialism, trying to stall independence for the colonies and ensure the monopolies economic interests.

Subsequently the PSP graduated to defending the interests of international imperialism. The PSP leaders were warmly received by the American Government, and among the renowned 'socialist' celebrities the PSP invited to Lisbon to boost their fortunes was — Edward Kennedy! Alongside its campaign against a united trade union federation the PSP organised seminars for trade unionists addressed by spokesmen of the cold-war, CIA-infiltrated, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. More recently the PSP has become the major advocate of defending the interests of foreign investors in Portugal and boosting the country's dependence on foreign capital, and drawing Portugal closer to the capitalist Common Market.

There can be no question about the class collaborationist nature of the PSP leadership and its thoroughly reactionary and pro-capitalist role in the current situation. But we must not lose sight of the fact that this leadership still has the confidence of a large and very important section of the Portuguese working class — which is why it is such an important ally for capitalism and able to do so much damage. One of the effects of the capitalist development of Portugal is the sharp division of the country between highly developed industrial zones and backward zones where agriculture and small scale industry prevail. The bulk of the population are thus small farmers or workers in tiny factories living in small towns and villages that are often cut off from the mainstream of national cultural and political life. This section of the population is often under the influence of the Catholic Church and other reactionary forces. This has sown the seeds of a very dangerous division in the ranks of the Portuguese masses, which the PSP leaders capitalised on, gaining big support in the elections from these more politically backward sections of the population, including many die-hard reactionaries who saw it as the 'best way to stop Communism'.

At the same time it cannot be denied that the PSP also gained numerous votes in the very centres of proletarian strength — often capitalising on the discredit that the PCP had brought on itself by unabashed support of the most reactionary measures of the Government after 25 April (such as anti-strike legislation and press censorship) which the PSP had at least voiced doubts about, and the general failure of the Communist Party to offer any sort of distinctive set of policies for the working class.

It must be said quite clearly that, with this base of support, the Socialist Party must be considered part of the workers' movement, despite its reformist leadership, and must be treated accordingly. The further progress of the revolution in Portugal can only be assured if the masses at present under the influence of the PSP leadership are drawn into the struggle and broken from that leadership. That makes the sort of sectarian approach to the Socialist Party that the PCP — and unfortunately, much of the revolutionary left — has adopted dangerously wrong.

In order to unite the Portuguese working class and win the mass of Socialist Party workers to the side of the revolution it is necessary to fight for a solid united front of all workers — Socialist, Communist and revolutionaries — to fight the reaction and strengthen the power of the working class. The membership of the PSP can be convinced of the need for such



measures. If the demands of the SP membership force the PSP leaders to go along with such proposals the development of the revolutionary struggle on the basis of this unity will rapidly push Soares and his reformist plans to the sidelines. But if — as is more likely — they oppose them, they will expose their own commitment to the defence of capitalism and impel their members to break with them once and for all.

## The way forward

Capitalism has been driven onto the defensive more thoroughly in Portugal today than in any country of the imperialist world since the days of the Spanish Civil War.

Very wide sections of capitalist industry are now in state hands: the transport system, the banks and insurance companies, most of the major sections of private industry. The importance of the banks in the set-up of Portuguese capitalism and their nationalisation has served to break up the most powerful monopoly groups which dominated the economy. Moreover the single largest monopoly — CUF — has itself been nationalised outright. Altogether more than two-thirds of the Portuguese agrarian reform will serve to break up the hoodings of the most powerful landowners in the south of the country.

At the same time the capitalist state machine is in dire straits, with its administrative machine weakened and discredited by the widespread purging of officials associated with the old regime, its 'bodies of armed men' either discredited or infected by the political upsurge of the working class, and the education system and the organs of public information (newspaper, radio and TV) falling under the sway of the workers' struggles.

This represents a very dangerous situation for capitalism. But we should not equate it with the destruction of capitalist rule, confusing the dislocation or expropriation of individual groups of capitalists with the destruction of capitalist social relations. The latter have been weakened but are still firmly implanted over wide sections of Portuguese society, where small-scale industries and farming predominate. As Lenin put it 'small scale production engenders capitalism and the bourgeoisie continuously, daily, hourly, spontaneously, and on a mass scale' (Left Wing Communism).

Moreover, the continued hold of capitalism over Portuguese society is further reinforced by its dependence on the world imperialist system. Thus far the Government has carefully avoided the nationalisation of foreign capital. Multinational capitalist firms therefore continue to occupy key positions in important sections of the economy. At the same time Portugal remains locked into the imperialist NATO alliance. The Communist Party, with its concept of the 'democratic revolution', and most currents inside the AFM who have equally not broken with capitalism, continue to go along with the myth that Portugal could begin to solve its economic problems through aid from imperialism and closer relations with the capitalist Common Market.

This has helped lay the groundwork for the international campaign by imperialism to blackmail the working class through threats to withhold aid and bar

Portugal from the EEC, and provided the Socialist Party and their reactionary allies with further fuel for their pro-imperialist campaign.

As long as Portugal does not break completely and decisively with capitalism the economy will remain in chaos, the victim of both the world capitalist crisis and deliberate sabotage, instability will reign throughout Portuguese society, with confused social groups being pulled backwards and forwards between the working class and the forces of capitalism, and the possibility of violent counter-revolution will be ever present. The unity of all the oppressed masses of the Portuguese population — the working class in the cities, barracks and farms, the poor peasantry, the small traders and craftsmen — and the crushing of the counter-revolutionary forces can only be done by weeding out the anarchy sown by the capitalist system from every corner of Portuguese society. And this in turn can only be done by one force in present-day Portugal — the working class.

The development of the mass, democratic organisations of the working class that exist in the main industrial concentrations throughout the entire country, and the drawing of all sections of the working masses into these organisations irrespective of party affiliation, would overcome the disunity that is now being spread by the agents of capital. Through the workers' commissions in the factories and the neighbourhood commissions these bodies could control economic production and distribution, regulate prices, and begin to solve the other myriad social problems facing the Portuguese masses.

Through the creation of democratic soldiers' committees and their involvement in these organisations the army could be completely broken from the capitalist state and brought under the authority of the working class, smashing the schemes of the reactionaries and 'moderates' against the onward march of the Portuguese revolution. This, combined with dissolution of the capitalist police forces and their replacement by an armed workers' militia, would allow the working class to impose and preserve their own proletarian order against the wrecking and sabotage of the reactionaries, and deal with such problems as the return of hundreds of thousands of former colonists whose outlook predisposes them towards the forces of reaction.

The coordination of Popular Assemblies at the regional, and most important of all the national level, would create the sort of set-up that could really begin to tackle the problems of the economy as a whole, replacing capitalist anarchy with socialist planning, democratically determined by the representatives of the working masses and carried into effect by its



'Democracy for the workers, repression for the reactionaries' — that was the slogan of the Lisnave shipyard workers



democratic organisations.

A workers' Government based on such a network of proletarian democracy would have the kind of unity and authority necessary to meet all the obstacles thrown in its way by imperialism and reaction. Its writ would run throughout the land. It would not have to pussyfoot around with imperialism, but could pull Portugal right out of the NATO alliance and declare its total support for the anti-imperialist forces in the former Portuguese colonies. It would be able to appeal to and inspire the sort of international working class solidarity that could tame the multi-national firms and block imperialist economic sabotage.

It would not have to go cap-in-hand to the Common Market for help, but could start to solve its economic problems through a combination of socialist economic planning at home and closer economic ties with those other countries that have pulled out of the world imperialist system — the workers' states of Eastern Europe, Russia, China and south-east Asia.

All this is not just some socialist blueprint to be dreamed about — it is the only solution to the most immediate and pressing problems facing every section of Portuguese society. What is more it is a solution that it is possible to start moving towards: the elements of it — democratic committees in many factories and working class neighbourhoods, representative Popular Assemblies in a number of the main proletarian districts, the beginnings of a democratic set-up in several key army units — already exist.

The main obstacles to the implementation of this solution are the class collaborationism of the leaderships of the main workers' organisations — the Communist Party and the Socialist Party — and the absence of any other organised force with mass influence capable of uniting the working class in the fight for these aims.

But there still exists the possibility of building such a revolutionary leadership in the heat of the class struggle. There exists a working class vanguard consisting of the most class-conscious militants in the main industrial areas and the key army units around Lisbon that numbers in the tens of thousands. (They recently mounted a demonstration of 50,000 strong to back the demand for a national Popular Assembly.) And it is in this vanguard that the organisations of the revolutionary left have an important base. While they are still fragmented into a multiplicity of groups, most of which are very confused on how to develop the struggle for the leadership of the masses and the fight for workers' power, the current crucial struggles will provide a testing-ground for different political programmes and ideas and lay the basis for the political clarification of the ideas of the revolutionary left and a realignment of the forces who look to them for leadership. Out of this a revolutionary party and revolutionary leadership can be born — which can lead the Portuguese working class to victory.

An important role in all this will be played by the militants of the Fourth International in Portugal, organised in the Internationalist Communist League. Despite their small forces the LCI has throughout its history set an example for the revolutionary left, avoiding the errors into which other groups fell on the left and right, and carving out an essentially correct path.

For example, the LCI avoided the sectarianism of many of the Maoist groups who denounced the CP as 'social fascist' and refused to take part in the mass mobilisations mounted under their auspices, preferring to organise little 'private' demonstrations on their own pure version of 'marxism-leninism'. At the same time the LCI did not follow the centrist groups like the Left Socialist Movement (MES) or the Popular Socialist Front (FSP) in giving credence to the idea

## Our Common Struggle

PORTUGUESE WORKERS NEWSLETTER 7P

Portuguese Workers Co-ordinating Committee 18 East Road, London NW3

no 8 July-Aug 77

# Republica workers fight for press freedom

THE workers press has been on the attack against government and industrialists of the Lisbon daily 'Republica' in a similar example of Portugal's class struggle. They have organised a series of strikes and demonstrations against the paper and its owners, demanding the right of the independent daily paper left in Lisbon. Even when the paper was fully aware that they were breaking the law in these respects, they continued to see the 'planning'.

The latest issue of **Our Common Struggle**, journal of the Portuguese Workers Co-ordinating Committee, has articles on **Republica**, textile workers' struggles, the political crisis in Portugal, NATO and the Azores, Spain, local workers' struggles, and news of the Portuguese Solidarity Campaign. Available from Red Books, 97 Caledonian Road, London N.1. Price 13p (including postage).

that the working class should place its confidence in the AFM and look to them to clear the way forwards, but intransigently defended the class independence of the working class and its vanguard role in the revolutionary struggle.

Similarly, the LCI shared the views of the revolutionary left that the organs of 'popular power' were the way forward for the working class struggle. But it was always aware that these had to be genuine mass organisations, and could not be created out of thin air by a small group of revolutionaries and their sympathisers as the Revolutionary Party of the Proletariat (PRP) seemed to think with their 'revolutionary councils' movement. For this reason they avoided the sectarianism of the PRP and their supporters, who counterposed the organs of working class democracy to the existing mass workers parties, instead of understanding that they had to draw in their militants and the masses they speak for. They were also able to avoid the opportunism of the PRP which allowed their proposals to be tied to the star of AFM 'left' General Carvalho, who sought to use the PRP's sectarian slogans of 'a non-party Government' to promote his own idea of military rule by the AFM unfettered by any dependence of the mass workers' parties.

Groups like the MES and the FSP also supported demands for 'popular power' but were unclear about the relationship of these bodies to the existing state machinery and in particular, the AFM-led Government. The LCI always insisted that these bodies must become the basis of a new, proletarian state power, and always connected its campaign for the creation of such bodies with the demand for a government based on these organs of popular power, in place of a class-collaborationist Government based on the capitalist state.

Today there is widespread agreement on the revolutionary left on many of these questions, and an important measure of unity around the demand for a National Popular Assembly (a proposal first put forward by the LCI during the April elections). The LCI is fighting vigorously to ensure that the adoption of this demand by the most advanced sections of the working class can serve as the first step to building the unity of the working masses under their leadership.

Recently the LCI fell into political error when it joined with 6 other organisations of the revolutionary left and the Communist Party in a 'Revolutionary United Front', the confused political



basis of which allowed the PCP to exploit it to support the bankrupt Fifth Provisional Government. This error — born out of the political inexperience of the LCI, which only came into existence just before the 25 April, and its perfectly correct desire for the unity of the workers' movement (which it has been the most consistent champion of) — was criticised by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. It serves to underline the responsibility of the Fourth International to provide the maximum political, moral and material support possible to the revolutionary forces in Portugal.

The forging of a clear understanding among the

vanguard of the working class of the measures necessary to take the struggle forward, the forging of a revolutionary leadership and the unification of all the exploited masses in the struggle to put paid to the bloody and bankrupt capitalist system, are the preconditions for the further advance of the Portuguese revolution. Drawing on the immense and rich experience of the past 18 months of struggle the revolutionary forces in Portugal can carry out these tasks. But they will need every ounce of support they can get from their comrades around the world in order to combat the capitalist vultures that are now gathering around them in the hope that the present offensive of imperialism and reaction wins the day.



## Franco's Spain Capitalism in a Blind Alley

Portugal has been an important experience for the Spanish working class, who have been injected with new enthusiasms to rid themselves of their dictatorship, now the last in Western Europe and a direct descendant of fascism. But at the same time it has served as a red-light to the capitalists, who want to avoid a similar sort of show-down in Spain.

For one section of the capitalists the lesson is that they must quickly find a way of changing the face of a fascist military dictatorship into a model 'democratic' state able to take its place alongside its capitalist competitors in the Common Market. The main stumbling block towards this 'democratic' face-lift would seem to be the old dictator himself, General Franco (now 82 and still going strong). Hardly a week goes by without some comment by the media that it is time he made an exit, presumably so that the rest of Spain can get on with 'democracy'. Even the *Financial Times* says 'Spain has two problems, the first is economic, the second is General Franco, and there is no doubt that the first is overshadowed by the second.' (June 24th 1975). However, as inextricably a part of the dictatorship as is the

Caudillo himself, the rottenness of the Spanish ruling class is so deep that his removal from the political scene will only emphasise the crisis of the dictatorship. Without him a change in class rule would only be a matter of time.

The main problem for the ruling class in Spain is how to deal with the massive upsurge of the working class in their fight with the regime for a decent standard of living and the most basic democratic rights. In dealing with this problem the capitalists are divided, with one section looking towards Portugal and saying that unless a programme of liberalisation is immediately implemented, the rulers of Spain will not be able to head off the explosion of the masses, and the other arguing that the only way to avoid another Portugal is to keep the lid of repression tightly screwed on in much the same way that it has been kept on for the last 37 years. Neither of these tactics are realistic in the present situation and do not provide a solution for the dilemma of the dictatorship. Repression is not a long-term answer, since it only forces the workers into more highly organised and more widespread activities of opposition until they become completely uncontrollable. Neither are the liberal measures which sections of the regime want to introduce, since any capitalist liberalising measures at this stage could only be too little too late, and would in



fact be the signal for the mass movement, oppressed for so long in Spain, to launch a fight for all of their rights in full.

On 8 June 1973, General Franco announced that he was delegating his powers as head of government to his 70-year old Vice President, Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco, who then became Prime Minister. This was intended to be the first stage in Franco's retirement, and Carrero Blanco was an obvious choice for successor as far as the dictator was concerned. Popular with the military, he was the only candidate with the right background and strong enough personality to provide the necessary unifying force for the different factions within the regime. Only he could step into Franco's shoes and keep the whole set-up of the dictatorship together, while being free to carry out the different twists and turns required to deal with the new political situations threatening the regime. But after his appointment in June, Carrero Blanco had less than six months to live: he was executed on 20 December, 1973, when militants of the Basque nationalist group ETA V blew him up. This immediately posed a severe problem for the ruling class, since there was no other successor who could provide a definite lead, thus adding to their anxiety about the 'post-Franco' period.

Carrero Blanco's successor as Prime Minister, Arias Navarro, a former head of police and former mayor of Madrid, represented nowhere near the same political force. He has since provided a weak government — either in terms of implementing any liberalising programmes or in terms of dealing with the masses. Franco's designated successor as head of state is Don Juan Carlos, son of the exiled Don Juan of Bourbon, who is to become king on Franco's death. But he was never intended as anything more than a puppet — the real fate of the regime will be decided by others.

Over the immediate past-period, then, the tottering regime has been literally clutching at straws. On the one hand it has given pathetic concessions such as the right to strike (with conditions), when in fact the Spanish workers have been unconditionally striking for the past 36 years. On the other hand, it has resorted to brutal repression like the recent State of Emergency imposed in the Basque country on 25 April, which polarised opinion so sharply and produced combative struggles between the state and militants not seen since the Civil War.

This apparent vacillation by the regime is produced by the faction war between the different currents of opinion inside it. The far right, such as the Falangists with members like General Carlos Iniesta, commander of the 80,000 strong Guardia Civil, not too surprisingly advocate an extreme line of more out and out repression as the only means by which Francoism can survive intact after Franco. Other currents of opinion such as Opus Dei, the powerful Catholic pressure group, want certain institutional reforms which could open a gradual and controlled process of 'Europeanisation' of the dictatorship. This would allow direct control by big capitalists of the state apparatus and the rebuilding of its social base, which has become totally depleted as section after section of the regime's traditional supporters — the Church, the army etc. — have lost faith in its abilities.

The Catholic Church, an extremely powerful influence in Spain and one of the main pillars of support throughout the regime's history, is clearly disenchanted with the regime. Many priests and even some Archbishops have given support to workers on strike and have even undergone hunger-strikes in support of political prisoners. Priests have recently been the targets of several fascist attacks by members of 'Guerillas of Christ the King', a right-wing organisation, and many others have been arrested and even tortured by the

police for their support of the mass movement. On 28 January four priests were arrested in Pamplona as a result of sermons which they had preached in support of workers on strike. One of those held was fined pts. 500,000 (about £3,800) without trial. The Bishop immediately paid the fine for him. Fines against Pamplona priests totalled £10,000 in a fortnight. Although the relationship between the Church and the State is not a harmonious one at present, the Church is by no means a revolutionary force and in any big social upheaval would only be two steps away from playing its traditional role of reaction in exactly the same way that it is doing in neighbouring Portugal.

The other main pillar of support of the regime, the army, is today an unknown ideological quantity. Basically a conscript army, it has a professional core of 100,000 officers and senior NCOs. Insulated in its barracks, it has become a closed society, highly inbred with the bulk of commissioned men the off-spring of military families (during the three years 1961-63, approximately 70 per cent of the new officer candidates were sons of Army men). Although the officer-class has shown its solid allegiance to General Franco, differences within the regime must have some reflection within the army itself, although not on the scale which created the Armed Forces Movement in Portugal.

Events would seem to bear this out. According to reports in the Financial Times, 24 June, 1975: 'A few weeks ago Madrilenos were treated to the amazing sight of senior officers snapping to salute as Right-wing demonstrators sang the Falangist battle hymn "Face to the sun", and passed out leaflets demanding the resignation of the Government because there were "traitors within its ranks"'. Earlier this year in February two army officers were arrested for participating in meetings of young officers discussing the post-Franco era, and they were also known to have had contact with centre-left political groups. Some 2,000 soldiers are said to have signed the 'justice and peace petition' calling for an amnesty for all political prisoners. The chief of the general staff, Lt. Gen. Manuel Diez Alegria, was sacked last summer for keeping in contact with a variety of political opposition figures.

On 29 July this year an army major and six captains were arrested, and later at least seven other officers were detained for political reasons. Military sources said that the arrests had brought into the open the growing clash between officers of the Civil War era and those commissioned a decade or two later. Since the Burgos trial in 1970, when six members of the Basque nationalist group, ETA V, were saved from the death penalty by international mobilisations, certain officers have become increasingly restless about their repressive functions within the State. Apart from professional frustrations, they do not like the military being used to stage court martials of civilians for political offences.

Groups of officers began to hold informal seminars and discussions about broadly economic and political matters, whilst carefully avoiding political parties. It seems that the regime is no longer wholly confident about the army's complete support, particularly in the more junior ranks, so that it cannot even tolerate simple discussion groups. It seems that no section is immune from the repressive tentacles of the dictatorship.

The evidence would seem to suggest that the army would like to play a passive role in the post-Franco era, which could be an important factor in the struggles to come.

At the same time important sections of the middle and professional classes have begun to demonstrate their impatience with the regime in its present form. On 6 February, more than 500 senior Spanish civil servants called publicly for the introduction of dem-



ocracy in a letter which they sent to the Prime Minister, Arias Navarro. They advocated the formation of free trade unions, a Government 'controlled by representatives of the Spanish people' and for 'democracy', in which they said they would willingly participate. The letter followed a strike by civil servants which paralysed the work of several Ministries.

Although 'the 500' are only a small percentage of civil servants employed in Madrid, they number among their ranks architects, economists, diplomats, finance inspectors, statisticians, engineers, senior employees of the Bank of Spain, agricultural experts, veterinary surgeons — in fact virtually the whole range of professional people employed by the State. The only exception seems to have been the State prosecutors.

Also in February, two of Madrid's principal hospitals were hit by a strike of nurses and auxiliary staff, and a more recent doctors strike lasted for several months. In Madrid, an actors strike closed theatres and the strike spread to colleagues working in television, radio and drama schools. Although the strikes were originally for higher wages, the strikers were also demanding the right for their own elected representatives to negotiate the new pay deals instead of the state sindicatos; and were also in solidarity with several journalists who had been victimised.

In at least one case during the actors strike the audience rose to its feet and applauded when it was announced that the performance was being called off because of the strike. So much for those artists in the Spanish National Dance Company who told pickets who were picketing the Coliseum in London where they were performing: 'We are artists and have nothing to do with politics'!

There are hundreds of examples which could be recounted of the many different sections of Spanish society which over the past period have been drawn into direct opposition to the regime: the one hundred school teachers in San Sebastian who in January were locked out by the authorities for going on strike, or the 26 lawyers who staged a sit-in at their professional head-quarters in support of an amnesty for political prisoners. The number of strikes in solidarity with other struggles are increasing, showing clearly the growing consciousness which Spanish working people have of their strength, and their ability to combat the dictatorship.

Against the background of economic recession, with unemployment rising, inflation running at 25-30 per cent, and no sign of the Spanish economy pulling out of decline (forecasts predict that the economy will grow only about 2.5 per cent in 1975, as compared with 5 per cent last year), the regime has reached its limits of manoeuvrability. It cannot in any way meet the challenge of the workers fighting in defence of their living standards.

Already in the first six months of this year a total of 7,795,984 man hours have been lost in strikes:

almost as much as the 8 million lost in the whole of 1971, and nearly twice as many for the same period last year. It is clear even from the figures that the working class is on the offensive. But what the figures do not tell us is that the workers' struggles are going beyond the stage of a fight solely for immediate demands. Alongside entirely justified immediate economic demands, such as equal wage increases for all, a minimum salary of 800 pesetas a day (about £30 a week) and a halt to lay offs, more far reaching demands are being raised, such as the sliding scale of wages opening of the bosses' books, and certain demands for workers control. Along with these are the demands for the release of all political prisoners; the right to strike (unconditionally); trade union freedoms; freedom of association, assembly, demonstration, and the press; dissolution of the repressive bodies of the dictatorship. These demands begin to pose the question of opposition to capitalism itself, in the context of the fight against the Francoist dictatorship.

The most impressive, and indeed most important recent struggle was the general strike in the Basque country on 11 December 1974: impressive because it involved an estimated 300,000 people; important because its central demand was for the release of political prisoners and the dissolution of the repressive corps. It drew in wide layers of the community — not even since Burgos in 1970 has a political mobilisation been backed with such solidarity. It was also one of the first major mobilisations in which the Spanish Communist Party was not a principal organiser.

Demonstrations were held during the strike in Bilbao, San Sebastian, Hernani Estella and other towns. At least one worker was shot in Hernani, near San Sebastian, in a violent clash between workers and riot police. Even in the face of severe repression the strike somehow managed to take place. Apparently the para-military Guardia Civil police force had been rounding up all known political activists more than a week prior to the strike. Many shopkeepers were threatened with heavy fines if they dared to close down during the strike — so instead of closing completely, they switched their lights off and drew their shutters half way in token solidarity with the strike.

The strike sparked off struggles in Madrid which quickly spread to include white-collar workers, and most of the major banks were hit by sporadic stoppages as the year drew to a close. In January, Spain's biggest car manufacturer, SEAT, became engaged in a long-running battle with its workers. 21,000 men who were locked out by SEAT for a week decided eventually to return to the factory because they said that it was the only place where they could meet in any number. All previous demonstrations and meetings, some as large as 4,000 had been brutally dispersed by the police with many arrests and injuries; and one worker was shot.

Further strikes took place in the northern city of



Demonstration of the Workers Commissions in Spain.



Pamplona, where the whole of the industrial belt around the city was affected for over two months by an almost continual struggle. The focal point of the general strike in Pamplona was a two-week underground sit-in by local potash miners who were eventually ejected from the mine when police actually went underground. A young militant was shot dead by the para-military Guardia Civil as he was distributing literature urging support for the Pamplona strikers.

In addition to the vicious repression from the regime itself the employers have hit hard at the workers. In 20 of the main disputes during 1974 approximately 46,000 workers were disciplined (usually by lock-outs) and 6,800 sacked. In the first three months of this year alone 1,600 men were sacked in the region of Catalonia, a heavy proportion of them coming from SEAT, while in the whole of Spain the number topped 1,000 during January and February. Whilst many of these sackings result from the economic recession which is affecting Spain quite badly, especially in the car manufacturing industries, as in the rest of Europe, they are also tied up with attempts to remove the principal working class militants. Over 80 Fasa-Renault car workers alone have lost their jobs this year for 'labour indiscipline'. In spite of these measures, the workers are able to hit back at the employers because of their conscious strength and combativity, their sense of solidarity, but principally because of their ability to organise themselves independently through such bodies as the workers' commissions.

The commissions are rank-and-file bodies which unite and organise the workers' struggles at factory, local regional, and recently even the national level. They grew up in the early 1960's out of the successful wage struggles of that period, and it was their spontaneous character which proved to be their strength. Since they were not permanent bodies, they were not illegal - any trade union except for the official sindicatos or vertical trade unions was illegal. However, as they gradually replaced the official trade unions in subsequent negotiations they became more and more permanent, and by the end of the 60's their leaders were arrested. In 1973, 10 militants, charged with nothing more than being members of the national co-ordinating body of the workers' commissions, were given long jail sentences.

Nevertheless, because of their mass character, the commissions have survived and are daily growing in their strength and co-ordination. It was the commissions and the left-wing organisations which organised the December general strike in the Basque country, and more recently the general strike of 11 June of this year. This was supported by 100,000 workers during the State of Emergency and in the face of the most vicious repressive measures ever launched by the regime.

During the Pamplona general strike a 'struggle committee' was formed including both the elected committees of several factories and the workers commissions of others, with the presence of representatives of student and neighbourhood organisations. In Barcelona a united co-ordinating body of the workers commissions is already functioning; in the Basque country this objective is on the way to realisation. In Madrid, Galicia, and Asturias significant efforts at co-ordination are under way. In Valladolid a central strike committee in the building trade was set up during the April 1975 strike, and efforts to co-ordinate with the strike of the workers at the FASA/Renault factory were sketched out. The unification of all the workers commissions of the Spanish state, going beyond the insufficient framework of the present national co-ordination, which links up the forces controlled by the Communist Party faction, is becoming increasingly possible. It is broadly felt as an urgent necessity by the workers themselves.

During the recent struggles it has become increas-

ingly evident that the workers in the Basque country (Euskadi) have emerged as the most combative section of the vanguard at present leading the struggle against the dictatorship. This leadership has grown out of the Basque people's struggle with the Spanish state for an autonomous Basque State. Since the late 19th century the Spanish Basques - concentrated in the three provinces of Vizcaya, Guipuzcoa and Alava, and to a lesser extent in Navarra - have campaigned for autonomy. The Basque people have their own language, as do the people of Catalonia and Galicia who also want autonomy.

Since the early 1960's Basque separatist feeling has manifested itself in its support for ETA, a popular movement for Basque freedom. When 6 of ETA's militants were sentenced to death in December 1970 by a Burgos Military Court this touched off the most intensive and generalised struggle throughout Spain since the Civil War. Coupled with a massive international mobilisation and outcry, General Franco had to capitulate and to commute the death sentences.

It therefore came as no surprise when, earlier this year, the dictatorship imposed a State of Emergency in the Basque country, in an attempt to smash that vanguard. Under this umbrella it launched one of the bloodiest and most outrageous offensives against the Basque people. Within a few weeks of the declaration of the State of Emergency it was estimated that the number of people detained in the city of Bilbao alone was about 2,000 to 4,000 (the majority of whom were actually released after a detention of four to eight hours). By 14 May, the number of detentions in the province of Guipuzcoa had exceeded 15,000. At one point at least 500 people were actually detained in the Bilbao bull ring because all the police stations were full. It seems ironic that this particular event (and other atrocities) were hardly mentioned by the British media, and yet a passing remark by General Carvalho of Portugal that his government might have to put reactionaries in the bull ring set the mass media screaming its head off.

The ultra right-wing para-military organisation called 'Guerillas of Christ the King' which is directly linked with the police has carried out a campaign of terror through bombing, machine-gunning and flooding people out of their homes. Several people have also been beaten up, including several lawyers and priests who have tried to help political prisoners. The police, of course, have arrested no one for these offences. According to a correspondent of the Times (21



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April, 1975) — 'Police Inspector Llorente for example, was nicknamed "Pitillo", a slang term for cigarette, because he frequently extinguished cigarettes on the chests of people under interrogation. One girl showed me her breasts, the nipples of which were partly burnt off. She said this happened during her interrogation by Llorente.' Llorente was later executed by a squad of ETA militants.

The State of Emergency in the Basque country, however, has not solved any of the problems of the dictatorship, since there is every indication that the Basque people are even more militant than they were before, and that the crimes against them will be paid for even more dearly when the dictatorship falls. One of the first things which the oppressed masses of Portugal did after the coup was to hunt down their known torturers in the streets of Lisbon.

The only political group which has the sort of influence necessary to sound the death-knell of the dictatorship is the Spanish Communist Party. However, the Communist Party is not interested in organising a workers offensive — it is too busy trying to woo maverick capitalists to join its 'Junta Democrática' (Democratic Council). Since the 1950's the Communist Party has preached a policy of 'national reconciliation' — that the different sides that took part in the Civil War should forget their differences (and the 600,000 corpses) that lie between them and get together to work for a 'democratic' Spain. Quite conveniently, in the process of arguing that everyone else should forget about the Civil War, the Communist Party is also able to 'forget' about the fact that this same policy of subordinating the working class and its allies to the political tastes of supposedly 'democratic' capitalists was the main reason for the victory of the fascists in the first place.

In their eagerness to prove to the capitalists how 'responsible' they are the Communist Party have given the 'Junta Democrática' a programme that would leave untouched a big slice of the present regime, including much of its repressive machinery, and do nothing about the material problems that are worrying the mass of the Spanish people. Despite all this 'moderation' no significant group of Spanish capitalists has shown the slightest interest in uniting with the 'Junta Democrática'. The only other participants in it so far have been small left wing groups like the Partido de Trabajo (formerly the International Communists) and the Popular Socialist Party (the smaller of the socialist parties) and a collection of individuals of varying importance. The reason for the reluctance of the Spanish capitalists to collaborate with the Spanish CP is that it does not trust it to control the revolutionary potential of the masses. Indeed, the capitalists are following with anxiety the relative decline of control by the traditional organisations, the CP and the PSOE (Socialist Party), over the working class. This further weakens the credibility of their project of re-establishing a capitalist democracy in which the reformist leaderships would be capable of channelling the struggles of the masses into paths compatible with the maintenance and consolidation of capitalist rule.

A recent example of the CP's failure was the December general strike in Euskadi. Before the strike the Communist Party issued leaflets against it on the grounds that it would be 'opportunist'. But in spite of the CP the general strike took place and involved 300,000 workers, who obviously did not agree with the CP line.

The 'Junta Democrática' is a class collaborationist pipe dream which so far has failed in the sense that it has drawn no significant section of the capitalist class towards serious action against the dictatorship. The leadership of the CP and its allies want to assure the Spanish capitalists that the regime can be changed

under conditions that would leave intact not only its economic power and private property, but even its state and its instruments of repression against the workers. This is the real content of their treacherous policy. While the effects of this policy remain weak today, this may not be the case immediately after the overthrow of the dictatorship. At that point, an alliance with the Social Democratic reformists and Stalinists could appear to significant sectors of the capitalists as a last resort in halting the revolutionary upsurge.

Revolutionary Marxists have always counterposed a consistent class strategy to the strategy of class collaboration put forward by the CP. They are fighting to develop the sort of independent working class action that can bring down the dictatorship — a revolutionary general strike. Whether the dictatorship is destroyed in such a confrontation, or is dismantled by the capitalists in an attempt to forestall such an eventuality, the perspective that will begin in Spain will be that of proletarian revolution, not that of an experiment in the peaceful transfer of power from one team of capitalist politicians to another.

In the present situation it is particularly important for the international workers' movement to understand the part that the political prisoners and the fight for their release plays in developing the fight against the dictatorship in Spain. Throughout the recent upheavals — mass occupations, strikes and mass demonstrations — the cause of the political prisoners has been taken up by the workers in struggle. This particular issue has also been taken up by ever-wider layers of Spanish society, including the 2,000 soldiers in the army who signed the petition calling for an amnesty for all political prisoners.

It is the trials of militants such as Eva Forest, Antonio Duran, Garmendia and Otaegui which now provide the focus for solidarity struggles both inside Spain itself and throughout Europe. The dictatorship itself is hoping to use the forthcoming trials to legally murder these militants and to demoralise the masses in opposition. There is, however, every possibility that the trials will produce a new 'Burgos' situation, setting off a tide of opposition that the regime will be unable to deal with. At the very least it will create a situation which will go a long way towards pushing the tottering dictatorship over the edge.

An international campaign for the defence of Spanish political prisoners is already mounting in Europe. We must build that movement in order to help the mass movement in Spain to break the repressive hold of the dictatorship and open the way forward for a Socialist Spain, a Socialist Iberia and a Socialist Europe.



Photo: ANDREW WARD (Report)



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