

**THE
REVOLUTIONARY
LEFT IN
PORTUGAL**

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"THE REVOLUTIONARY LEFT IN PORTUGAL"

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This bulletin contains interviews obtained in Portugal in July, August, and September 1975, one of the most crucial periods of the Portuguese revolution. The questions of organs of dual power, concepts of united front, attitude to left militarism, and governmental slogans, are covered, as well as the problems of the 'Republica' affair and the Constituent Assembly. On account of technical problems, this material could not be published in 1975 — but we publish it now as an educational bulletin for its value — especially when supplemented with the interviews obtained in June 1976, published in I-CL Internal Bulletin no. 6 — as background material for the critical evaluation of the Portuguese experience and the activity of revolutionaries which is essential for the regeneration of an adequate international revolutionary programme.

INTRODUCTION

Although the struggles of the Portuguese working class have been reported widely in the left press, British socialists still know very little about the politics and history of the revolutionary organisations in Portugal. The interviews we publish here go part of the way to remedying this situation.

All of the organisations standing to the left of the Portuguese communist party today were formed less than five years ago. With a scanty political tradition, several tiny revolutionary groups were thrown into a situation of tremendous social upheaval, following the coup of 25th April 1974. This fact — together with the lack of an adequate Marxist International which could give guidance — explains to a large extent the political vacillations and the lack of theoretical clarity of these young organisations.

The organisations on the Portuguese left have not of course materialised out of thin air. Many of their leaders were active in the 1960s in revolutionary groups which are now defunct. But the revolutionaries who operated in the last decade of Salazar's rule had no direct connection with the Communist Party in the days when it was revolutionary. Unlike almost every other country where a Communist movement existed, Portugal cannot show a revolutionary continuity between the early Communist Party and the Portuguese left of today. The first organisation in Portugal to call itself "Trotskyist" emerged not in the 1920s but in the 1970s.

The break in the revolutionary tradition in Portugal was mainly due to the establishment of the military dictatorship in 1926. This occurred before the dispute between the Stalin faction and the Left Opposition could have had any real impact on the PCP. From that date on, the regime made it difficult enough for official (i.e. Stalinist) Comintern literature to enter Portugal. Articles and publications produced by the Left Opposition stood almost no chance of getting through the net cast by the censors and secret police. (Even in the 1960s only a few Portuguese leftists had read one or two books by Trotsky).

There were additional reasons why the disputes in the Comintern had little impact in Portugal. Revolutionary Marxism did not become a force in Portugal until after the Russian Revolution. Before then, the two major influences on the workers' movement were the Portuguese Socialist Party and the Anarchists. The PCP, founded in 1971, had links with the First International, but with

Proudhonism rather than Marxism. After the PSP's 1909 Congress, the Party committed itself firmly to an electoralist strategy and lost most of its control over the trade unions. One year later, when the bourgeois republic came into being, a tremendous strike movement started under the leadership of the Anarchists, who were to remain the major force in the Portuguese working class until 1921. In that year a split developed within the Anarchists' ranks out of which emerged the PCP.

The process of educating the ex-Anarchist forces in the ABC of communism — difficult enough even in countries like France with a relatively developed political culture and which received considerable attention from the central bodies of the C.I. — was scarcely begun before the working class found itself held under the yoke of Salazarism.

It should also be remembered that during the first five years of the PCP's history Portugal was isolated from the rest of Europe by the buffer of Spain, then under the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. Bourgeois democracy was finished off in Portugal before it came to Spain in 1931. The subsequent triumph of Franco isolated Portugal all the more surely from Revolutionary ideas after 1939. This situation aided Salazar's attempts to focus the attention of the Portuguese masses onto the revamped Portuguese Empire and direct their energies towards the goal of creating a national economy independent of foreign capital.

Salazar's regime was extremely xenophobic. Not only did the censors deny the Portuguese people the opportunity to read socialist literature, they also prevented them from hearing speeches given by such 'subversives' as President Roosevelt. The Portuguese working class had little real knowledge of what had happened in Germany, Spain, and other arenas of international class struggle, for they lived under the rule of a government which acclaimed the triumphs of Hitler and Franco, and the only alternative source of information was the PCP.....

The Portuguese Communist Party was the opposition to Salazar from 1926 until the early '60s. Although the PSP wasn't banned until 1933, it sank without trace after that date. The Anarchists who had remained outside the PCP, or else those who were purged from the party when it was thoroughly Stalinised in 1928, were unable to survive the repression because they rejected any conception of centralised organisation. (The monopoly the PCP held on the left for three and a half decades has greatly contributed to certain of the ultra-leftist attitudes revolutionaries in Portugal display at the present moment. This over-reaction to the PCP is expressed at the one extreme by the "social-fascist" phrase-mongering of the Maoists, and at the other by the 'anti-party' stance of PRP.)

The first group to challenge the PCP from the left was the MAR (Movement for Revolutionary Action). Founded in the early '60s, MAR's membership was mostly confined to student and emigre circles and the organisation lacked ideological homogeneity. MAR's political complexion tended to vary between its three main centres of operation. The group it had in Paris was composed of radical Catholics; its Algiers group were third-worldist in orientation and had some links with Michel Pablo.

There was also a group of ex-PCP people in Portugal itself. At that time the PCP was increasingly taking a rightist course, directing its energies almost exclusively into electoral activity in alliance with bourgeois and petty bourgeois opposition groups. The MAR's response, however confused, affirmed itself 'revolutionary' and stressed the central importance of the working class. They

underlined the profound changes that had taken place in Portugal as a result of the industrial expansion at the start of the '60s, which transformed it from a predominantly agricultural country into a predominantly industrial one.

However, MAR divided almost immediately after it was founded over the question of whether or not it should join the Portuguese Liberation Front which the PCP had set up in Algiers. This issue dominated all other political discussion in the few years before MAR broke up, and hindered any possibility of developing greater theoretical clarity within the group.

MAR also found great difficulty in trying to develop a cadre within the working class. The first obstacle the MAR had to overcome was obviously the secret police, who treated with suspicion any petty-bourgeois looking character found wandering round a working class district. Young intellectuals simply didn't go to places like these unless they were 'up to no good', and so MAR militants were often picked up within minutes of setting foot in Setubal and other workers' quarters. In addition, the PCP spread slanders that MAR members were PIDE agents. This tended to cut MAR members off from the few working class contacts they had from their PCP experience. How could worker-militants be sure that there weren't at least some secret police infiltrators within MAR? "Better to doubt than to run the risk of torture in a PIDE 'interrogation' centre!" — such were the thoughts of worker militants living under the dictatorship.

Failure to make headway within the working class, combined with the effects of repression and the internal political disputes, led MAR to dissolve itself in the mid-'60s. Its members went in numerous political directions: some are now Socialist Party deputies in the Constituent Assembly, while others are in the PRP or the LCI.

Portugal's first Maoist group entered the political scene a few months after MAR. A faction had split from the PCP, after disagreeing with the pro-Soviet stand the leadership had maintained in the Moscow/Peking conflict, and had formed the FAP (Popular Action Front). FAP was more ideologically coherent than MAR and had some ex-PCP working class cadres among its number. However, it broke up in arguments as to who could best interpret the thoughts of Chairman Mao as they 'applied' to Portugal. Nevertheless, because Stalinism was traditionally strong in Portugal, it was not surprising to find that the Maoists, and in particular the MRPP, were the largest of the groups to the left of the PCP after 25th April. (MRPP's frequent habit of referring to anyone outside their organisation as "fascist" soon deprived them of the possibility of growing much more, but other Maoist groups, such as UDP, continued to gather strength).

After the Maoists, there came LUAR, whose leader, Palma Inacio, conducted a heroic struggle against the regime, involving himself in daring prison escapes and bank raids. But despite Inacio's personal prestige as an anti-fascist fighter, LUAR was, and still is to a certain degree, an organisation more concerned about guns than about politics; or rather, whose politics focus on the gun rather than on ideological struggle and/or mass working class mobilisation. Its fund-raising activities tended to attract certain criminal elements into the organisation and after a while the number of raids on banks exceeded the attacks LUAR carried out on military and police targets.

By contrast, the Revolutionary Brigades, formed after a split from the PCP in 1971, were much more determined in their armed attacks on the regime. The Brigades, who counted between 50 and 100 members before the April coup, were stimulated into action by the example of the liberation movements fighting

Portuguese colonialism in Africa. Military exploits were regarded by the Brigades as a way of showing solidarity with the PAIGC, FRELIMO, and the MPLA. There was the occasion when the Revolutionary Brigades stole maps, showing the disposition of Portuguese troops in Guine-Bissau from a heavily guarded military installation and sent them off to the guerillas.

Like LUAR, the Revolutionary Brigades held political conceptions close to Guevarism. (The ideas of the African liberation movements also had an important ideological impact on many inside the Armed Forces Movement, from Antunes through to de Carvalho). However, the Brigades, incorporated into the PRP when it was founded in 1973, have lost some of their guerillaist political outlook. The growth in the struggles of the Portuguese working class over the last period have forced the PRP to see that there is more to politics than 'armed struggle'.

Finally, a few words on Portuguese Trotskyism, which entered into Portugal via Paris after a couple of Portuguese students had been influenced by the ideas of the French section of the USFI in 1968. At the time Caetano was overthrown there were only nine Trotskyists in Portugal. Now the number is probably around six to seven hundred. Of these, four to five hundred are in the LCI, which is the 'official' sympathising section of the USFI, and the remainder are in the PRT. The PRT originally split from the rest of the Trotskyist movement in Portugal under the encouragement of the SWP, but as the interviews make clear, it has tended to shy away from the extremely rightist line which the SWP has pursued on Portugal.

In these interviews, the PRT representative gave no clear idea of the differences his organisation had with the LCI. The official journals of the USFI have also failed to explain either the background to the split or the reasons why two groups in Portugal, each claiming to be in sympathy with the USFI, remain organisationally separate.

A major difference emerged, however, on the 25th August, when the LCI decided to join the 'Popular United Front' with six other left groups (including PRP) and the PCP. This decision was a very grave error indeed. The 'Popular United Front' supported the programme of the 5th provisional government of Vasco Goncalves (including its 'austerity programme' which attacked the living standards of the working class) and the 'MFA-People Alliance'. The LCI's participation in the 'Popular United Front' — whatever reservations and comments it added to its signature on the platform — was an endorsement of class-collaboration — and that at a time of revolutionary upheaval. It casts very grave doubts — if it does not give a decisive answer in the negative — on whether the LCI possesses either sound political judgment or firm revolutionary principles. To the PRT's credit, it refused to join this ill-fated front with the PCP. (For the PRT's criticism of the LCI over the latter's participation in the FUP, together with the LCI's reply, see 'Intercontinental Press', Vol. 13, No. 35, 6-10-75).

A short comment has to be made concerning the Revolutionary Councils of Workers, Soldiers, and Sailors (CRTs) and the Popular Assemblies. At the time when most of these interviews were conducted, both bodies embraced only a small section of the working class, and it was difficult to foretell which would emerge as fully representative organs of the toiling masses in Portugal. In the following months, the Popular Assemblies emerged clearly as the embryonic Soviets of the Portuguese revolution.

The Popular Assemblies were advanced by the majority of the Armed Forces Movement in May and June of 1975, as an alternative to the Committees for the

Defence of the Revolution (CDRs) proposed by the CP and the CRTs which Saraiva de Carvalho put forward. (De Carvalho's courtship with the PRP was then at its height). The Armed Forces Movement rejected both CDRs and CRTs because it didn't want to increase the influence of either PCP or PRP.

The Armed Forces Movement issued a 'Draft Guide Document' on July 8th concerning the future government of the country, in which it called for the creation of Popular Assemblies throughout Portugal based on the already-existing workers' and neighbourhood commissions. The document expressed the desire that these Assemblies would be controlled from the top by the AFM leadership, and was vague about the time-scale for establishing the "organs of popular power". However, the working class took up the slogan of "popular power" and began creating Popular Assemblies of its own accord.

The PRP at the time was pretty vague about the Popular Assemblies and how the CRTs should relate to them. When I asked one PRP comrade what the relationship between the two ought to be, he replied, "We don't care what name the soviets call themselves, so long as they are Soviets", yet the PRP still continued to build up the CRTs and did little towards building the Popular Assemblies. The only groups which really worked to build the latter were UDP and MES.

PRP's attitude also reflected an absence of any clear idea on their part of what the CRTs were exactly. Opinions on this seemed to vary according to whom in the PRP you spoke to. Some would say that CRTs were propaganda bodies campaigning for the soviet idea, whilst others would claim that the CRTs **actually were** soviets (although, if pushed on the matter, they would hesitatingly add, "in embryo").

Of the groups interviewed or questioned below, the LCI and the PRT were chosen for the obvious reason that they, like we, consider themselves Trotskyist. The PRP was interviewed because it had an influential position in the working class, rejected Stalinism, and claimed to have some Trotskyist sympathisers within the organisation. The comrade from PRP who was interviewed remained pretty much within the confines of his Party's line, if one can really talk about the PRP having a line. However, his other ideas do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the majority of the PRP leadership. Being a raw and theoretically eclectic organisation, it is no exaggeration to say that there are almost as many different political opinions within the PRP as there are members.

There are two other groups which we regard as significant — UDP and MES — mainly from the point of view of the influence they have in the working class. They were not approached owing to lack of time.

TOM HARRISON.



Partido Revolucionario do Proletariado - Brigadas Revolucionarias (PRP-BR)

**INTERVIEW WITH A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PARTIDO
REVOLUCIONARIO DO PROLETARIADO - BRIGADAS
REVOLUCIONARIAS.**

Lisbon, 30-7-75

WF. What is the ideological orientation of the PRP-BR?

PRP. Many groups call themselves 'Marxist', 'Leninist', or 'Stalinist'. For us these theories are only applicable if they relate to a concrete situation. Our break with the PCP took place over disagreements as to what was applicable to the concrete situation we found ourselves in. It was a struggle about practice.

The PRP sees the party as having three important functions. Firstly, the party must be an institution of the working class. Secondly, it must act as the organised consciousness of the working class. Finally, it must be a suicide party.

WF. What exactly do you mean by a 'suicide' party?

PRP. Only the working class can take power. Working class power can only rest on the autonomous organisations of the working class. If a party takes power in the name of and on behalf of the class then it rules on its own behalf and not that of the class. To avoid this danger, the party must dissolve itself — commit suicide — at the moment when the class has taken power. Political organisation from then on must be on a different basis. Political parties or groups must be formed within the autonomous organisations of workers' power to debate the problems of post-revolutionary society.

WF. What role then do you see the party as playing in the situation leading up to the seizure of power?

PRP. The relationship between the party and the class is a dialectical and not a mechanical one. The party puts forward propositions to the class, and the more these propositions are taken up by the class then the more does the party assume a leading role in the class.

WF. What position does the PRP take on what we would call the Stalinist states of the USSR, Yugoslavia, China, Cuba, etc?

PRP. There is a need for a greater discussion on the question of Stalinism. Stalinism arose in the Soviet Union as a result of the economic conditions the country was faced with at the time. These conditions were

concrete and localised and created a situation whereby the autonomous organisations of the working class, the Soviets, were destroyed.

WF. OK. You say Stalinism in the USSR was the product of 'concrete and localised' conditions, but that still doesn't explain the class nature of Yugoslavia, China, etc and what you would expect the working class to fight for in these countries.

PRP. There are contradictions between Marx and Lenin, Lenin and Stalin, and Stalin and Mao Tse tung. This is what we call the 'theoretical delay'. Contradictions exist between Marx and Lenin at the level of class organisation. Mao Tse tung's "mass line" stands in contradiction to ideas put forward by Stalin. So organisations can call themselves 'Marxist, Leninist, Stalinist, Maoist' if they want to. In reality they are caught in their own contradictions. In four hours time an organisation which calls itself 'Marxist, Leninist' will come here and ask us to make an analysis of the present situation in Portugal for them since they can't do it themselves. Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Mao all developed theory, but this does not help us much when we are faced with the present situation.

WF. I can understand that definite contradictions exist between Marx and Lenin on the one hand and Mao and Stalin on the other. Marx and Lenin denied the possibility of 'socialism in one country', for example, whilst Mao and Stalin accepted what was in reality utopian nonsense. Similarly, Lenin, and Marx for that matter, always fought for the political independence of the proletariat, whilst Stalin and Mao subordinated the proletariat to the bourgeoisie. But please tell me where you think the 'contradictions' exist between Marx and Lenin.

PRP. The important contribution made by Marx was the idea of a society organised on the basis of an association of producers. The contribution made by Lenin was the idea of the party. But we have to say that it was due to this idea that state capitalism was introduced into Russia. Lenin introduced state capitalism before Stalin. The New Economic Policy marked the start of state capitalism in Russia and this was consolidated at a later date by Stalin who used violent means to achieve this end. Nevertheless, we have to recognise that Lenin made an important contribution with his conception of the party.

WF. Obviously I disagree strongly with the comrade that the Leninist concept of the party 'contradicts' the theories developed by Marx. Our organisation regards Lenin's concept as a logical and compatible development of the work of Marx, one which certainly doesn't stand in opposition to it.

PRP. You can see from this that I am not a Trotskyist.

WF. Yes, I can see that. However, I think that further discussion on these points will take a long time and perhaps they can be reserved for a later date. What I would like to move on to is how the PRP views the present situation in Portugal. First of all, what is the PRP's opinion of the Troika established by the AFM Assembly last week? What does it represent politically?

PRP. The Troika represents a compromise solution. It represents contradictions in the state apparatus. We have first of all Costa Gomes who more or less represents the Socialist Party. Then we have Vasco Goncalves who represents reformism and in particular the PCP. And

finally we have Otelo who represents the revolutionary left.

WF. You think that Saraiva de Carvalho represents the revolutionary left?

PRP. Yes, Up to now Otelo has supported the Revolutionary Councils and many revolutionary demands in general.

WF. Even so, I would like to have your estimation of him. Why does he adopt such a friendly stance in relation to the revolutionary groups? Do you think that it is because he is a genuine and sincere revolutionary, or is it because he is out for power for himself and is using the revolutionary groups to his own advantage for this purpose?

PRP. If you want an answer to that question then you'd better ask him.

WF. OK. I appreciate that he's hardly likely to answer that he's only out for his own ends. But surely the PRP must make use of him rather than allow things to be the other way round, whatever Saraiva de Carvalho's motives may be? It seems at the moment that he imagines himself to be a Castro figure and no doubt wants to follow Castro's example. But it was not the autonomous organisations of the working class which seized power in Cuba, basically it was an army composed of peasant and declassed elements. It is true that Castro was supported by the mass of workers. But it is Castro and his immediate followers who rule Cuba today and not the working class. Since, as you've said, the PRP wants to see Portugal ruled by the autonomous organisations of the working class, then surely PRP must have an estimation of the role figures like Saraiva de Carvalho will play and what attitude the PRP should take towards them?

PRP. The present contradictions in the political situation in Portugal will not be found in the Marxist classics. We have a situation where a section of the army — Copcon — is revolutionary. We must regard Otelo as being revolutionary because, so far, he has not gone back on his word. He has maintained faith with the revolutionary demands he has supported hitherto.

WF. One of the important things the PRP has been campaigning for has been the Revolutionary Councils. Our organisation thinks it very important for revolutionaries to be campaigning for these councils at the present moment. However, we do not think that in themselves the Revolutionary Councils are enough. If you look at the situation in Italy in 1920 the majority of the working class had organised themselves into workers' councils, but they were defeated nonetheless. No party existed at the time with influence enough to raise slogans related to the general administration of society which were capable of centralising the movement for factory councils. Does the PRP have slogans which relate to government? Certain groups in Portugal have in the past raised slogans such as "For an SP;CP;Intersindical government". I personally think that this particular slogan is inappropriate and dangerous at the present movement. But what does PRP advance apart from the Revolutionary Councils slogan?

PRP. In the first place the Revolutionary Councils are not advanced as a slogan but as a proposition. The proposition of Revolutionary Councils corresponds to the needs of the working class because it is what the workers themselves are demanding. This was put forward by elements in the working class and then taken up by PRP. If you want to know what programme the Revolutionary Councils movement has in relation to the

government, then you must go to the conference of the Revolutionary COUNCILS WHICH TAKES PLACE IN Lisbon this weekend.

WF. But for me that still doesn't solve the problem. Don't get me wrong. I think that Revolutionary Councils are a good idea. But even if it were possible to organise the majority of the proletariat in them, how should revolutionaries relate to the minority who remain outside? It might not be possible, for instance, to organise workers in small factories or service workers into councils. What should revolutionaries have to offer them?

PRP. We are in a revolutionary situation at the moment. A violent clash between the working class and the bourgeoisie is not only possible in the immediate future. When the clash comes the unorganised workers will have to make a choice and they will probably choose the side of the revolutionary workers. Anyway, we think it is possible to incorporate service workers, for example, into Revolutionary Councils.

WF. But that still doesn't deal with the problem of governmental slogans. Let me pose it in another way by using a hypothetical example. Suppose you have a situation where a member of the Socialist Party is also in a revolutionary council but nevertheless attends pro-Soares rallies and marches. What do you say to him?

PRP. For us this question has nothing to do with the situation at the moment. You cannot have a SP member in the Revolutionary Councils and going along to Soares rallies at the same time because these rallies are held in opposition to the Revolutionary Councils. Many SP members in fact disagree with a lot of the policies put forward by the leadership like the question of the Intersindical. The reason why the SP was able to recruit many people on the left was due to the authoritarian attitude of Stalinism.

WF. If you what you say is true that the workers in the SP are opposed to the leadership's line on the Revolutionary Councils, they are nevertheless still in the SP. How should they be won from that organisation?

PRP. As I said before, these workers are in the SP because of the behaviour of the CP. The SP has the majority of its strength in the working class mainly in the North rather than here in Lisbon. We think that the class struggle will throw up other organs of power similar to the Revolutionary Councils and these will take the workers out of the SP.

WF. Apart from winning over the sections of the working class at the moment in the Socialist Party, revolutionaries also have to attempt to reach a unity with the peasants of the North. I would like to know what demands are applicable here. For example, would a demand on the government to declare a moratorium on peasant debts apply in the present situation?

PRP. This is not a problem in the North, because the peasants are medium and small landowners. The major problems the peasants face are lack of fertiliser; the problem of securing fixed prices; and organisation of trade. It is around these three problems that revolutionary agitation can take place and peasants' committees can be organised.

WF. Finally, a very short question. What do you think of the LCI?

PRP. We don't usually criticise the LCI unless one of their representatives is present. But I can tell you of the criticisms we have of the public political positions they have taken.

The LCI has little implantation in the working class. They have also suffered from making very fragile political analyses. The LCI have been tailing the CP. They have attended many demonstrations organised by the CP, and it is a situation unique in history to see a Trotskyist organisation which follows behind the Stalinists.

WF. I can tell you of other occasions where 'Trotskyist' organisations have tailed the Stalinists, but perhaps that's because they weren't Trotskyist.

PRP. (Laughter). It should also be added that the LCI took a very sectarian attitude in relation to the Revolutionary Councils. When the CRTs were first started we invited the LCI to belong to the CRT Secretariat but they refused.

WF. You say that the LCI are 'reformist'. Can you give me an example of this?

PRP. They have been guilty of reformism because they believed that it was possible for bourgeois democracy to be stabilised in Portugal. This position shows the petty bourgeois student composition of LCI.

WF. I think that is more a mistatement of the situation than a consequence of the class composition of the organisation. The CP has more worker members than you but obviously that doesn't guarantee them a correct analysis.

PRP. Even so, the LCI is still petty bourgeois. We do not have a much fuller criticism because we do not come across them much in our activity. They represent little in the working class.



Partido Revolucionario dos Trabalhadores (PRT)

INTERVIEW WITH THE PARTIDO REVOLUCIONARIO DOS TRABALHADORES, 1st August 1975

WF. What do you think is the political significance of the Troika proposed by the AFM Assembly last weekend? Do you think that the Troika is likely to last for any amount of time?

PRT. The political meaning of the Troika is that it represents maybe the last attempt for the three tendencies in the AFM to come together on the basis of a common programme. But the Troika won't solve the problems of the working class or give impetus to the revolutionary process. The Troika is furthermore proof of the weakness of the revolutionary tendency within the AFM. The majority of the AFM follows the CP, which insists on a coalition of the three tendencies within the AFM.

The programme of the Troika can be expected to be mainly one of trying to find a possible common ground to join the three tendencies. But we can expect the result of the Troika to be the same as the fate of the last four governments.

WF. I would now like to ask what the PRT's position is regarding the Popular Assemblies which the AFM says it wants to see established throughout Portugal. The LCI seems to be concentrating its propaganda around the setting up of these assemblies, but the danger we see is that they may be used as a power base for a populist military government rather than a workers' government. What is the attitude of the PRT on this question?

PRT. We have come to a more concrete analysis regarding the AFM. We see that direct democracy is fully developed in Copcon. The Assembly of delegates of the Copcon units are elected democratically. They consist of 13 soldiers, 8 NCOs and 4 officers in each unit assembly. These structures are knowledgeable regarding the problems of the working class. They generally support popular struggles such as land occupations, the takeover of empty houses, etc. These ADUs (Unit Delegates' Assemblies) are the strongest guarantee against a right wing coup.

We have the recent case of the regiment of commandos stationed at Amadora who threw out their Commander, Neves, a well-known reactionary, together with eight right wing officers. We think that if the ADUs are connected with the workers' and neighbourhood committees in the Popular Assemblies, will be an alternative to that state apparatus.

The PRT insists on the necessity to form Popular Assemblies and extend them as soon as possible because they are potential organs of workers' power.

WF. We talk of Popular Assemblies, but of course the party with the

largest electoral support in Portugal, the SP, which has significant support in the working class, is opposed to these Assemblies. In the present situation the working class is tragically divided. Militant workers have been unable to respond adequately to the recent pro-Soares mobilisations. How does the PRT think this split in the working class can be overcome?

PRT. We think that if these organs of the military units, the ADUs, will impose Popular Assemblies all the workers will be united and their local problems solved. I work in a neighbourhood committee and the political organisations we have there are SP, CP, MES, UDP, MRPP and of course PRT. We have found a unity in action. Take squatting for example. The SP and CP leaderships do not support the occupation of empty houses. But our committee went ahead nevertheless. With this action we had the support of the military police against the opposition coming from the local organ of the state. The only way to unite the working class is to extend the popular assemblies. When doing this we also appeal for the SP and CP to present their own candidates for election in these assemblies.

WF. To a certain extent the forerunners of the assemblies were the CRTs which the PRP-BR have been very active in campaigning for. The LCI say that they refused to participate in the CRTs because they felt they might become vanguardist organisations running the danger of isolating militants from the rest of the class. Does the PRT agree with this attitude?

PRT. The first organisation to popularise the CRTs was in fact MES. The PRP-BR studied with MES the way to form CRTs. MES gave up on the CRTs because the PRP started to regard them as Soviets which could take power immediately. The PRP proposed in Lisnave, for example, the CRTs should take power within a month. The workers there thought it was a good thing and voted for it.

WF. Would you say that the main trouble with the CRTs was that they were not based on workers' struggles but, in fact, imposed from above by the PRP?

PRT. Yes, I think this is so. The CRTs are mainly the PRP. The headquarters of the CRTs is the same as that of the PRP. Certain of the Maoist groups, FEC(ML) for example, have also been supporting CRTs, but this is because they have no clear line on the Popular Assemblies.

WF. The LCI says that although it is not the CRT secretariat it does, however, participate in certain of the CRT structures.

PRT. We have a similar line to the LCI on this question. Every time there is a CRT congress they invite all the parties along. We go there to find out what is happening in the CRTs. We insist that the CRTs must be linked with the Popular Assemblies. The PRT has no official involvement in the CRTs.

WF. Although the PRP-BR places great stress on the autonomous organisation of the working class they are, however, weak when it comes to the question of slogans relating to the general administration of society. They have raised the slogan "Revolutionary Government", but so far I have been unable to get any of them to tell me exactly what this means. The LCI has been calling for a "Workers and Peasants Government", but this again seems to have no clear content. I understand that the PRT has had two government slogans in the past. One was "For a CP/SP/Intersindical Government"; the other "For a CP/SP/AFM Government".

PRT. We never called for a government of CP/SP/AFM.

WF. OK, I've been misinformed on that one. But can you tell me why you dropped the first slogan and what you advocate now in relation to the problem of government?

PRT. The slogan "For a CP/SP, Intersindical government" was raised before we made a study of the AFM. From that time on we began to feel that it was not enough to say that the AFM was bourgeois. The problem was that whenever the working class had problems they went to Copcon to find a solution, and not the SP or CP. Why was this? We began to see that the AFM was not a substitute for a bourgeois party. Essentially the AFM was a petty bourgeois movement that was not polarised politically. So it was necessary for us to have another policy.

Of course it is still necessary to argue for a united front between the workers' organisations. But we have also to see our task as one of splitting the AFM. We present to the whole of the AFM the problems of the working class. In our slogans we say to AFM's Copcon "support this".

As regards the governmental slogan of the LCI. They call for a government based on the Popular Assemblies. But these bodies aren't developed and extended yet. This doesn't mean much as a slogan at the present time. The first necessity for a revolutionary government is the democratic election of the AFM Assembly by the ADUs. Secondly, there should be the election of a Supreme Revolutionary Council by this new Assembly. We will then be in a position to extend the Popular Assemblies.

WF. The LCI say they are against democratic elections to the AFM Assembly because the army is a bourgeois army and so is bound to elect a right wing assembly.

PRT. If the AFM Assembly is elected by the ADUs then there will be no danger of reaction. The ADUs have clearly supported working class struggles till now. With the setting up of the new assemblies they would give a clear revolutionary programme.

WF. But when you say 'clear revolutionary programme', where will this programme come from?

PRT. All ADUs have discussion with the workers' and neighbourhood committees. The programme's main objective will be opposition to class conciliation; for a solution to the problems facing the working class; for the forging of unity between the workers and soldiers- and for a clear programme for socialism.

WF. The slogan "Dissolve the Constituent Assembly" has been raised recently by some of the revolutionary groups. What is the PRT's position regarding this slogan?

PRT. We think that this is a very sectarian and dangerous slogan. The AFM and all the parties said that the vote was "the weapon of the people". The two and a half million SP voters trust even nowadays in the Constituent Assembly. Till now there has been no alternative to the Constituent Assembly.

WF. You think that this slogan plays into the hands of the CP?

PRT. Yes, I think that the groups who are raising this slogan -- MES, PRP and UDP -- are guilty of precisely that.

WF. The thing I notice glancing through the newspapers here is that there is hardly anything in them dealing with the Constituent Assembly. It is almost as if the Constituent Assembly plays no part in the political life of

the country.

PRT. That is because you have only been looking at the papers produced here in Lisbon. There is more coverage of the Constituent Assembly outside of the industrial centres. The campaign of the SP and PPD is that the Constituent Assembly will solve all of the problems because it represents the peoples' vote. They say that the CP are against it because they are 'dictators'. We say that when it is possible for the UDP and CP deputies to raise the problems posed by the Popular Assemblies inside the Constituent Assembly - the result will be no response to these problems on the part of the Constituent -- then it will be correct to call for dissolution.

WF. There has been a great deal of debate on what, for want of a better phrase, I shall term the Trotskyist left over the struggle around 'Republica' and Radio Renascenca. The SWP and others say it was all a 'CP plot', an attempt by the state to gag freedom of expression, etc, and then they go on to support the SP management. We, on the other hand, recognise that it was a workers' struggle for freedom of the press and radio and support the workers in these places. What does the PRT say about these struggles?

PRT. We totally support the workers of 'Republica' and Radio Renascenca. It was not a 'CP plot'. The CP is still interested in a coalition with the SP. They are also not interested in a conflict with the Catholic Church.

WF. Another thing I would like to hear your opinion on is the question of Angola. The 'Intercontinental Press' has carried a series of articles which gloss up the FNLA, claiming, for instance, that it is a 'Stalinist slander' to say that FNLA is financed by the CIA. What attitude does the PRT take towards the liberation movements in Angola?

PRT. There has been no clear coverage of Angola in the Portuguese press. This is due to a certain extent to the fact that the CP is in favour of neutrality in relation to the MPLA/FNLA dispute. We see that the MPLA has no clear revolutionary programme but, nonetheless, our youth section, the ASJ, promoted a demonstration supporting MPLA together with MES, LUAR, FSP, MDP and the CP. But when the day came for the demonstration the CP's militants didn't turn up. We give critical support to the MPLA.

WF. I would now like to know your opinion of the LCI. The PRP-BR criticises the LCI having tailed the CP on questions such as the Intersindical. Is this true and what attitude does the PRT take towards the LCI in general?

PRT. The PRP-BR's criticism is not a politically based one because they have no clear line on the Intersindical question themselves. It is not true to say that LCI tailed the CP over the Intersindical. But we believe that there is no clear political difference between LCI and MES. For example, the PRT prepared a list of candidates and a programme for a union election recently. We talked to LCI about the possibilities for a joint slate between us, but the LCI said they already had a common slate with MES and FSP and refused to discuss our inclusion on it.

Similarly, we have also called for united action with them since we both claim allegiance to Trotskyism, but they refuse. We regard LCI as in many ways an agency of MES. We also think the LCI have no clear line on the 'AFM'.

WF. In most Trotskyist circles you are regarded as a satellite organisation of the SWP, but from what you have told me so far it is clear that you have a number of radical differences with the SWP. Could you tell me what relations PRT now has with the SWP?

PRT. We are in total disagreement with the SWP. On the question of 'Republica', their uncritical support for Soares, and many other issues, we can present nothing else but opposition. They also see the AFM as being like a bourgeois party and have a sectarian policy regarding the AFM. Some of our representatives have, however, been invited to the USA for discussions this month. The LCI says we are a creation of the PST.

WF. I haven't been following the positions of the PST lately, but surely you must have reservations regarding what happened over the Peron "pact with the parties"? The PST say they didn't sign it, but even so they weren't exactly vocal about this disclaimer until at least three months afterwards.

PRT. I'm not on the PRT Directorate so I can't tell you the PRT's position on this question. We have, however, found the PST useful when we were making an analysis of the AFM. However, we disagree with their position on 'Republica'. Our relations with them are closer than with the SWP.

WF. One final question: what is the size and influence of the PRT/ASJ?

PRT. The ASJ has about 1000 members and these are mostly in the secondary schools in Lisbon. The PRT has between 100 and 150 members, mainly in Lisbon and Oporto. Of these we have 30 to 40 worker militants. Our biggest industrial base is in the Metro.

NOTES FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH A MEMBER OF THE PARTIDO REVOLUCIONARIO DOS TRABALHADORES, 2nd September 1975.

THE PRT AND ITS YOUTH MOVEMENT THE ASJ were formed after the 25th April, some of its members coming from the Revolutionary Action Group, a clandestine organisation with some support in secondary schools. Today we are the second largest tendency in the schools, with 1,000 supporters. We have influence in several factories and workers' commissions. In Lisbon we are larger than the LCI (who are losing members) and we have some support in Oporto.

Reaction to the colonial revolution, and the needs of the bourgeoisie, led to political explosion. There was a massive working class mobilisation, which rapidly gained experience and was very militant, achieving a wide measure of workers' control. The bourgeoisie was forced to put the CP and SP in government, but the workers did not achieve a workers' government. Today, after a year and a half, the workers are becoming demoralised, and the petty bourgeoisie are losing faith in them. Socialism is being discredited, because the government is identified with it, yet is unable to achieve it, due to its essentially capitalist nature. In this situation a rightist military coup is a real possibility.

The CP attempts to be an arm of the bourgeoisie into the workers' movement. The SP is also in a class collaboration front with the,

bourgeoisie, and some sections of the AFM who prefer them to the CP, and is supported by imperialism. Both parties are reformist workers' parties. (*The PRT comrades laid great stress on the statement that the SP was a workers' party*).

The CP has formed a popular front on the basis of a pro-bourgeois policy. It gives political support to the government, to discipline in the bourgeois army, to the AFM and to Copcon. They think that they can unite 'workers power' with a bourgeois government. This manoeuvre only makes the threat of a right wing coup greater. The only way of fighting it is to create a united front, aiming to create soviet organs of power and seeking to destroy the bourgeois state. Crucial here is the destruction of discipline in the army. We appeal to the CP and SP to form a united front on this basis.

We used to call for a CP/SP government. This is clearly no longer realistic. We are instead discussing the slogan of a government based on the organs of popular power, workers' commissions, etc. At present the popular assemblies are patchy, and do not present a clear alternative to the capitalist state.

By using the centrists, the CP have played their last card, but their strategy remains the same. They have to appear as the major force in the working class movement, and to do that they must drive out the SP. Recent union elections have been won by Maoists with SP support, as workers turn against CP class collaborationism.

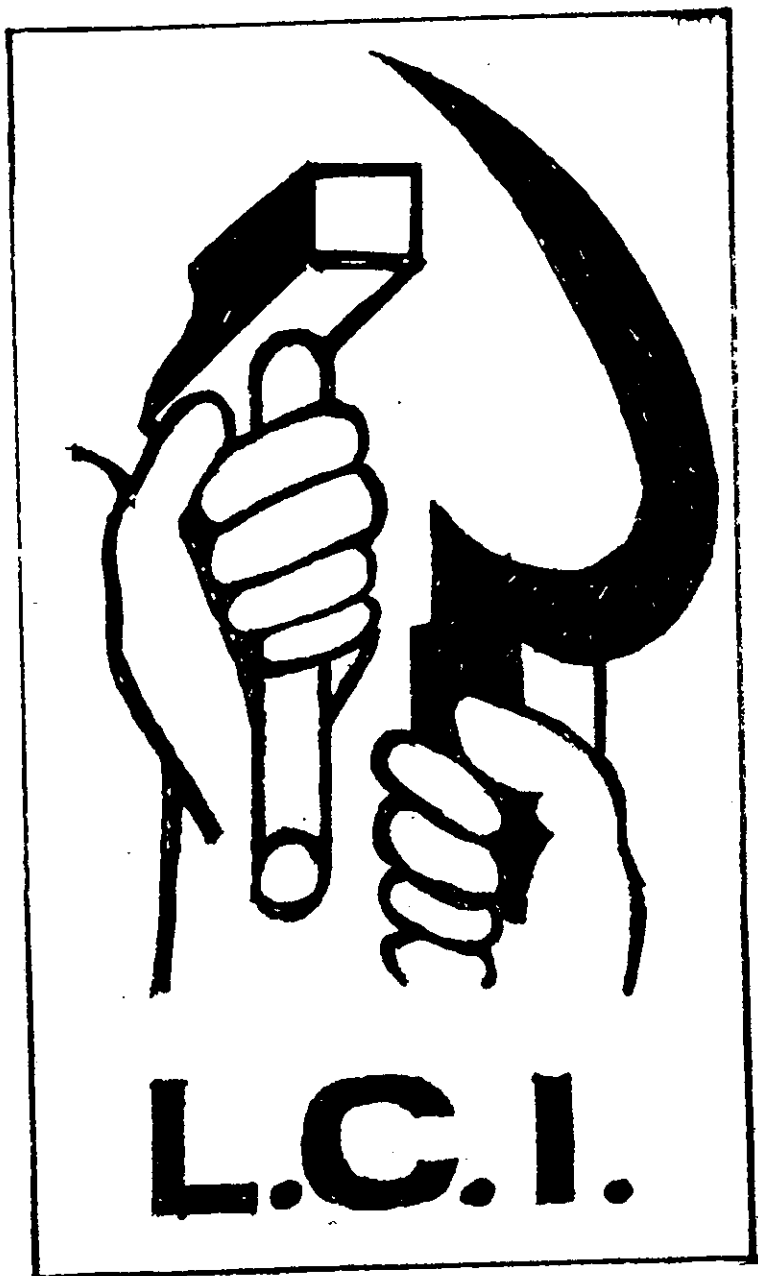
The AFM as a whole is petty bourgeois, expressing itself in different political directions, some going to the bourgeoisie, left sections open to working class pressure. It is essential to fight against discipline in the army.

We fight against the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, because there is no alternative at present. Instead we put forward a programme to the constituent assembly. We cannot demand that a bourgeois government abolishes it.

On the 'Republica' affair: since the SP is a workers' party, it should have the right to its own newspapers. Although 'Republica' was not the official paper of the SP, it was widely recognised as the SP's paper. The struggle of the 'Republica' workers was very sectarian and set an objectively dangerous precedent. Although the immediate controllers of the situation were Maoists and centrists, the CP has been able to use the affair to its own advantage. 'Republica' today is a bad paper. It has no clear ideological line. It is badly organised. Because it has no money it is, for example, unable to subscribe to the wire services and thus has no foreign news. It should be returned to the SP, but under workers' control, e.g. right of reply to articles putting a bourgeois line. This is the official position of the PRT.

The dynamic of events in the army is relatively independent of the class struggle. A certain degree of controlled democracy exists in some units, but soldiers have not achieved independent organs of their own. The Antunes group are not pro-rightist, they are merely for a different pro-bourgeois policy to that of Goncalves. However, objectively, they open the way to real rightists. The controlled democracy is mainly in the Lisbon area, where the UDP controls some units. There is some movement towards independent soldiers' organisations, e.g. committees separate from the officers. Some soldiers, and even armed cars, supported the pro-soviet power demonstration.

The situation in the North is very bad; the workers' movement reflects petty bourgeois pressure, and a fascist led petty bourgeois mass movement is just beginning. In the South, there have so far been no serious reactionary mobilisations, while zones of the Alentejo stand well to the left.



Liga Comunista Internacionalista (LCI)

MEETING OF THE LIGA COMUNISTA INTERNACIONALISTA,
9th September 1975.

Introduction

The offensive of social democracy was a cover for the whole right wing. The document of the 9 was the expression of social democracy in the army. This allowed the coordination of the right in the army for the first time since April 1974, and allowed the civilian and military spheres to be connected. The Copcon document and later the United Front allowed a similar process to take place on the left. The demonstration by 60,000 on August 20th was important. The Left front was important in giving an expression to the demand for unity against reaction.

The crisis in the United Front began on August 27th, when the demonstration was turned by the CP to support class collaboration. They used it to gain more standing in their talks with the SP and Costa Gomes. The CP was prepared to make a partial self-criticism of their role, which was not acceptable to the rest of the Front, and they were expelled. This demonstrated to many CP members that the party was attempting to cynically manoeuvre the mass movement, to aid their strategy of penetrating the bourgeois state. This has led to much dissatisfaction within the ranks of the party, and, for example, in Setubal a group of CP militants have been organising meetings with the Front outside of the official CP structure.

The split has weakened the global strength of the Left; and this has aided the victory of the right in the AFM. The Right wants more representation for themselves (the army and officers). At present the Right controls the airforce and the army outside the Lisbon military region (although the Left is fighting hard in the army in Oporto). The Left controls the Lisbon military region, and the navy.

The CP will be a prisoner in the new government of the Right, Costa Gomes and d'Azevedo want to isolate the CP from its social base, but not in immediate political terms. The SP has demanded that the PPD be included in the new government, but the CP refused, unless MES also participated. MES have, of course, refused to join a government including the PPD. The result will be another SP/CP/PPD coalition, but with the CP in a weaker position than before.

Discussion

Q. What was the programme of the United Front?

A. It was formed by the authors of the Copcon document, writing to various groups. The programme was not very clear in relation to the 5th Government. However, we are not indifferent to the circumstances in which a class collaborationist government falls; we want a revolutionary transitional government, not a right wing one. The ~~programme~~ should have

been more clear and stated that we are not giving political support to a class collaborationist government. We criticised the references to the AFM as a whole, from within the Front; they were included at the insistence of the revolutionary officers, who had illusions in the AFM. Because they were revolutionaries, we were not prepared to split on that basis.

Q. What about Mandel's criticism?

A. We respect his views, but it was vital to see who signed and what dynamic came out of the front. The LCI agrees that the programme was not completely correct, but it would be dogmatic to split over it. We must be prepared to make sacrifices of our principles if a good dynamic is forthcoming. A new manifesto is being prepared, which will exclude references to the AFM as a whole, and will deny support to the Provisional Government.

Q. Would it have been possible to ally with the CP without giving support to the 5th Government?

A. The other organisations would not go along with support for the 5th Government. We did not support Goncalves; the real significance and dynamic was not pro-Goncalves.

Q. What is the programme of the new Front?

A. There is no reference to the AFM as a whole or to the 5th Government, and no class collaboration is written in. The main objective is to develop and centralise the organs of popular power. The immediate solution to the present crisis is the formation of a government of revolutionary unity.

Q. What are your differences with the PRT?

A. We are the sympathising section of the USFI. There are many differences. The PRT fought for the Constituent Assembly, we say it is a very important centre for counter-revolution. The PC languished from the start in favour of the 'Popular Power'. The PRT now agrees. The PRT fought for a CP/SP/Intersindical government, even after the CP/SP split. We wanted to show up illusions in these bodies, they reinforced them. But the workers have lost their illusions in the anti-democratic, Stalinist Intersindical. The CP has been unable to prevent a SP/MRPP coalition taking over important unions, and removing them from the Intersindical, which has been isolated and is now much less important.

Q. What do you say to the rumour that you are to unite with the PRT within two months?

A. They are too optimistic. For example, the PRT have accused us of joining a popular front.

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Q. What is the dynamic of the SP's base in a situation where the party is fighting against the Popular Power, what has happened to the SP workers in the Workers' Commissions, and what is the state of the split between SP, CP, and leftists in the working class movement?

A. In Beja SP workers occupied SP headquarters in protest against their reactionary policies. We must be sensitive towards the SP's workers. Unfortunately the centrists, such as FSP, have a sectarian position towards the SP, which we fight to overcome within the Front. We try to use the popular power organs to win over SP workers. Also we supported the right of the SP, as a workers' party, to demonstrate, and opposed the CP's attempt to stop them.

Q. What is the extent of the worker base, and the other class forces in the SP?

A. We do not know the exact internal situation. It was started in 1975 by liberal bourgeois politicians, who attempted to win the workers after 25th April by adopting a programme to the left of the CP; but their bourgeois nature was exposed as the revolutionary process developed. The SP organises the aristocracy of labour, politically backward workers from small firms in backward areas, and some vanguard workers who do not like the CP bureaucracy. They do not follow SP orders, they work in the popular organs, and they are now leaving the party. The SP's main base is among the petty bourgeoisie.

Q. What are the chances for the Left in the AFM, with restructuring?

A. The AFM has effectively split, with the Navy, 40 army delegates, and a minority of the airforce delegates participating in the recent assembly. What is left of the AFM is grouped around the document of the Nine, who will either develop into rightists, or will be taken over by them. There is an important left soldiers' demonstration in Porto on Wednesday.

Q. I have seen the slogan of arming the workers' commissions and the Intersindical, but given the collapse of the Intersindical isn't this demanding, dangerously, "arm the CP"?

A. The reference to the Intersindical is out of date, but the demand for the arming of the workers' commissions is very important, and there have been some moves in that direction by soldiers. In any case it would still be correct to arm the Intersindical.

We do not believe, unlike some groups (e.g. the PRP-BR) in turning ourselves into a red battalion, but rather in arming the organisations of the base. Also we have military units such as the military police and the artillery regiment of Lisbon on our side. On the other hand the reactionaries have units such as the commandos and the practical school of cavalry.

Q. How much weaker are the leftists than the CP?

A. The CP is very weak, for example it had to call off a recent demonstration in Lisbon due to lack of support. The leftists' influence is much greater than their membership. It is possible that in one or two months the relation of forces will change to the point that we are stronger than the CP.

Q. Is it true that the CP has had to evacuate itself from the North, and what is your situation there?

A. It is impossible to operate openly in much of the North or Centre.

Q. Is it true that the Right is arming in the North?

A. The threat is shown by the removal of Corvacho as Commander of the Northern Military Region, after reactionary units had gone to the point of illegally putting themselves on alert to demonstrate against him. The PPD is threatening to arm 50,000 right wingers- this is largely talk, but it shows the way that things are developing.

Q. Can the organs of popular power be a real alternative government within a few months?

A. They are not an alternative at the moment, which is why we call for a "workers' government of revolutionary unity", which would develop them. A popular assembly for the whole city is being set up in Oporto, and a coordinating committee for the whole town exists in Coimbra.

Q. What is your position with relation to defending the CP in the North?

A. We defend them from attack, and would join demonstrations with them,

but we will not join a Front with them again.

Q. Is it true that the Angolan refugees are counter-revolutionary, and can they be won over?

A. Generally yes, but you cannot say they are totally counter-revolutionary. They are being used by reactionary forces. The only way to solve their problems is through economic planning. We have not yet worked out our position on the refugee problem. The MRPP is the only group to make gains among them, but on a reactionary basis.

Q. What about the split between the North and the South agriculturally, and the state of occupations in the south?

A. Latifundia in the South, minifundia in the North. Occupations have occurred in the South, but although the CP is strong in Alentejo it has done nothing to help the workers and some occupied areas have been returned. Some co-operatives are now in trouble due the failure of the CP to organise financial and technical support. Little has been done in the North. For instance, the nationalised banks are not providing cheap agricultural credit. This is why the right has been able to mobilise Northern peasants. The Copcon document proposed immediate measures. It is vital that links be established between the workers' commissions and the peasant leagues.

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