



Demonstrating for immediate end to colonial wars: 'Bring our sons home!'

ideological power of the Catholic and fascist tradition, through which women have been seen as submissive to God, man and family.

LEGAL OPPRESSION

A woman from the Womens' Liberation Movement (MLM) pointed out how the fascist conception of the family is built into Portuguese law: 'The family group, according to the law, is a fascist cell: with a boss, the man, who has the right to make all the decisions. The woman is left with the sphere of childcare; just about the right to bring them into the world and bring them up.' In law, a man has the right to repudiate his wife's employment contract. Some women never get as far as a work contract. I met one who did two mornings a week sewing for an architect's family because her husband wouldn't let her work in a factory.

A journalist, Maria Antonia Palla, tells a story which illustrates the different treatment of men and women in the law: 'A little while ago, I went to a poor area: a woman of thirty had been arrested. She had tried to poison her husband. She has two children. I talked to her neighbours and relatives. This woman was married very young, her parents made her because they thought she'd slept with her future husband. I saw her mother, who told me very calmly: "We thought it was with him, but in fact she'd slept with her husband's brother". After the wedding, the young woman moved into a tenement with the whole family: her mother, her father, her husband, his brother and wife. The husband was jealous, because he found out, obviously, that he wasn't the first. In the tenement, she couldn't stand her husband any longer. She tried to divide the flat in two, but the family wouldn't let her, and told her she ought to obey her husband in everything, including making love even if she didn't want to. So she went off into Lisbon and wandered around all day; sometimes she begged. Her husband was furious and ordered her to stay in the house to look after the kids. A house with no water and no electricity. She tried to kill him.

'The Court decided she was a little feeble mentally, but quite responsible for her actions. She got a thirteen year

sentence. The husband's doing fine. They talk about it in their street: some people say the husband was a good father, because he used to bring fruit for the kids as well as his wages. Others argue that a woman's not an animal, that she had the right to refuse to sleep with him, and anyway, her husband beat her. In Portugal, a man is untouchable. He has the right to kill his wife if he finds her "in adultery", or his daughter, if he finds her sleeping with someone. If he is sometimes brought to court it's for a minor offence, like using an unregistered weapon! Six months!'

WOMEN AT WORK – AGRICULTURE

This legal oppression, as always, is built on a system of severe exploitation of women in their working lives, in their work as rural labourers, factory workers and housewives. In the South of Portugal a few powerful landlords own large estates which are worked by landless labourers. The majority of these are women since many of the men are immigrant workers in France, Germany and Britain. Women's wages average fifty escudos a day (less than £1), and are fifty per cent lower than men's. Employment is seasonal, mainly during the harvest. The older women are taken daily in lorries from their villages to the fields, while the young girls live in primitive dormitories attached to the landowners' haciendas. All rural workers are employed on a day to day basis, with no pensions, disability or unemployment benefits, and no help with medical expenses. Earlier this year the agricultural workers' union in the Alentejo district issued an appeal for help for the women of Mertola, a small village where they were dying of hunger. Out of ten thousand unemployed in Alentejo, eight thousand are women. The women of the Alentejo have a long tradition of struggle against these conditions – strikes, arrest, imprisonment. The symbol of their fight is Catarina Enfemia, assassinated by the National Guard during a strike for an eight-hour day.

WOMEN AT WORK – INDUSTRY

Over the last ten years large numbers of women have been drawn into the industrial workforce. They have replaced the

men away fighting the colonial wars or working as immigrants abroad, and they have done so as cheap labour. In 1972 the average daily pay of women ranged from half to two-thirds of that of men. Now, they are supposed to get equal pay, but this will not be easy in a situation of the return of the colonial army, unemployment, economic instability — and male attitudes to working women. A leaflet put out by the MLM highlights these problems:

'Working women, watch out!
'equal pay for equal work . . . '

That's what the law says, but it doesn't always happen in practice. We women must demand the enforcement of this law, and fight the mentality which considers our work inferior to men's (and which unfortunately many of us share).

'Take the examples of the Via Longa Brewery and the Pao sugar factory: In the brewery, once they'd won the minimum rate (the same for men and women), the male workers felt insulted. They immediately demanded an increase to maintain their differential from the women. When it's not the bosses who are exploiting us, it's our own "comrades" who are demanding this exploitation. The same in the sugar factory, where the workers refused equal pay. The MLM calls on all women workers to fight this sexist discrimination.'

On the other hand, one of the most important demands of the strike wave after 25 April was for equal pay: something which reflected the large proportion of women workers especially in the multinational companies. The strike at Timex, a light engineering factory near Lisbon, is a case in point. There, one of the first moves was to set up a workers' strike committee, with a majority of women. The women pushed for equal pay as one of the main demands and received the backing of the men.

WOMEN AT WORK — IN THE HOME

Housing conditions in Portugal are as bad as any in Europe. Only twenty percent of dwellings have a kitchen, lavatory and bathroom. A further twenty percent are 'deficient' and sixty percent 'hopeless'. Only forty percent of houses have running water; a further twenty-seven percent have access to pumps nearby, and thirty-three percent have none at all. All over Portugal you see women carrying cans of water on their heads, up steps and hills, or doing their washing in streams. 82.7% of dwellings have no sewers and 61% have no refuse collection service. In these primitive conditions, coupled with the almost complete absence of nurseries, it is women who suffer most.

Women in the MLM are trying to reach women working in the home:

'Last year we had a meeting for "housewives". More than four hundred women from all backgrounds came. They all complained of their lack of education — some couldn't read and write (fifty-eight percent of Portuguese women are illiterate), many never got beyond primary school. It was the first time that they could talk about themselves.'

A 'housewife's group' now meets every Monday at the MLM women's centre (a house they have occupied in Lisbon). 'But often it's difficult for women to get out. They're kept in the house, their husbands stop them coming to evening meetings, in the afternoon they're busy with the kids and in the morning they have to do the housework and cook lunch.'

In the women's centre, to raise funds, they sell aprons embroidered with 'Que se Lixe a Lida da Casa' — Fuck Housework.

BIRTH — AND DEATH

The French journalist Blandine Jeanson describes the situation created by poverty and lack of maternity and medical services:

'In Villa-Franca de Xira, on the edge of the river Tagus not far from Lisbon, the fishermen often have nothing but their boat; they live in the boat. Lots of women work there as

well, going out to fish in all kinds of weather to provide for themselves and their children. One of them has already lost five children. They died of cold, damp, hunger. Their mother had neither the time nor the means to take them to the "Casa de Povo" which provides a meagre medical service. Her son of fifteen is always ill and very behind at school; she doesn't have time to take him to school. While she is fishing, they stay behind in a shack, left to themselves. Twice she has given birth in her boat.'

Portugal has the highest infant mortality rate in Europe: fifty-eight children in a thousand die at birth. Thirteen per cent of babies are born with some sort of handicap. 'There are no maternity hospitals in Portugal', said a woman from the MDM. 'The four private maternity homes in Lisbon are obviously reserved for the rich. You pay eleven thousand escudos (£220) for a confinement. My mother paid twenty escudos for my birth, in a communal ward. That's how working class women have their kids.' As many as fifty-eight per cent of births have no medical assistance at all.

NURSERY CAMPAIGNS

This appalling lack of provision carries through into pre-school services. In 1910 the Republic instituted official pre-school education, but this was removed under Salazar. In 1973 there was a total of a hundred and sixty-five nurseries in Portugal, of which only sixteen were state run. The others were private, and too expensive for working class women. The MDM is organising a nursery campaign. Working with local councils and community groups, they find empty houses, train childminders, and set up creches. 'We don't squat, we get the approval of the council', a woman from the MDM told me. 'We think you should take the legal way. Eventually we want to see a national system of creches linked to the national health service. But we can't ask too much from the government at present, because of the country's economic problems.' Other groups of women are taking direct unofficial action. A newspaper article describes how a group of 'working mothers' from a government department have occupied an old tobacco factory and intend to set up a nursery.

CONTRACEPTION AND ABORTION — A 'PRIVATE' PROBLEM?

Writing in the newspaper *Liberdade*, a woman from the MLM said: 'Countrywomen, working women, lower middle-class women — most of them have been to hospital in a critical state at least once. Most abort themselves, with a knitting needle, duck feathers, pointed sticks. A woman of forty-four told us: "I work in the fields. I've done thirty abortions all alone." A midwife said to us: "Sometimes I do as many as ten, thirteen abortions a day". She was speechless when we worked out that made an average of two hundred abortions a month. The Portuguese population doesn't know, or pretends not to know, about these things. In fact abortion is a huge problem for the less privileged women in our society. But the political parties won't approach the subject directly.'

Most men prevent their wives using contraceptives because, they say, it could make them impotent. Women have to take the pill in secret. We women must have the right to decide what we do with our own bodies.'

There are now about forty family planning clinics in Portugal, financed by the IPPF. And some of the political parties are beginning to talk of legalising abortion, but on very restricted grounds. The measure of entrenched attitudes against abortion and contraception can be seen from the very guarded attitude of the MDM, a left women's rights organisation. An MDM worker told me, 'We're not in the contraception and abortion movement. We're not against it, but we don't think it's a priority. We have to be careful — after all, Portugal will need more people to industrialise successfully. We feel contraception is a very private affair. It's up to the couple themselves to decide about it.' As long as deaths and illness from illegal abortions, with men physically preventing their wives using contraceptives, are regarded even on the left as a 'private affair', women will face enormous obstacles.

They thought they were too weak...

Laundry Take-over

At the end of a bus route, a station: Encarnacao. The double-decker (Leyland) bus stops in the middle of a working class suburb, a high-rise council estate. Council estates are a precious commodity in Lisbon – seventy thousand proletarians still live in shantytowns that reach into the city centre. Many others live in shacks. On the walls of the estate, one slogan, 'Liberty'. In one of the towers, there is a small laundry called Martirol. Twenty-five women workers work there; some of them are only thirteen or fourteen years old. 'It's because I didn't want to stay on at school that I got a job here', explains a young girl to us. She spends her whole day breathing in the steam from the machines.

In a crowded basement, crowded together are the washing machines, the dryers, the ironing machines, the tables to fold the laundry on and piles of laundry. The workers work the whole day standing up. The heat is unbearable.

A three day old poster

Victoria, who is 21, talks to us in the workshop. She is a member of the Workers' Commission which was formed last Tuesday. It has five members – three women and two men – two of the five delivery drivers. Since three days ago the poster 'MFA – People, People – MFA' is on the door of the workshop.

Since 6 February (three days ago), the small laundry is under workers' control. Victoria and others take part in the conversation to listen, discuss, comment, etc. The others continue to work. They are shouting to each other, folding laundry, carting baskets around. They do not yet know whether at the end of the month they will be able to pay themselves the national minimum wage. In any event, the feel of the place has changed since now they are their own bosses. But they are not prepared to pay themselves 75p a day as was the case for Fatima. Under the old boss, the most senior workers earned £1.50 a day. From time to time the question of a wage rise came up and, in regal style, the boss would give his workers a few more pence. There was no union. The boss had explained to them that dues were a waste of money. Which, under fascism and the corporate unions, was true.

They experienced 25 April in the streets, like all Portuguese. But liberty did not reach them in the laundry; they thought they were too weak to demand the minimum wage.

From seven o'clock to midnight

It all started two weeks ago when one of them went to the offices of the textile union, which was quite near there. She told them about the conditions of work; she had said: 'There are no fixed times of work. The boss makes us come at seven in the morning, and often we do overtime till midnight. The work must be finished. We work an average of seventy hours a week.'

The union called for the Inspector of Work Conditions – in theory it is illegal to employ people who are under sixteen. The Inspector insists that the boss pays the national minimum wage, which is what the workers are asking for. On 5 February the Inspectorate organises a meeting between the boss and the Workers' Commission delegated by the workers. The boss immediately sacks the Commission and decides, the next day, to lock-out all the workers and close the laundry. He takes with him the bills of the jobs being done and the two hundred pounds in the till.

The next day all the workers have a meeting. They have to decide whether they will pay equal wages to women and men – a very rare occurrence in Portugal. In all industrial or agricultural jobs, the men get one third more than the women. What the women say is, 'The main thing is to first pay the heads of family, men or women, and then the kids. In any event, the men because they are members of the drivers' union get higher wages. Later on, we will talk about equal wages for all. If everybody does the same work, we will all give ourselves equal wages – how much our rises are will depend on how much money there is to go round.'

The Workers' Commission

The younger women are in short skirts or trousers, the elder in black dresses – two generations, two worlds. The younger ones, half the work-force, are sleepin on the spot, under the tables. They are guarding the workshop. They are not sure what they want: to ask the government to nationalise the business or a new boss. They do not have



Canteen workers in an engineering factory.

much political experience. In any case, they know they need a new legal owner because if the old boss came back he would try to kick everyone out. His last threat had been: 'if you want the minimum wage, I will sack the adults and only keep the youngsters, whom I have to pay less'.

Why a Workers' Commission? Because all factories that go on strike have one. Some of the workers are union members, but it's not the same thing. The Commission is different, it is 'in permanent meeting'. Every problem is immediately discussed.

Occupations

Many small work places run by small, 'fascist' bosses, have gone on strike. In the great majority of cases, the government supports the workers' demand for the national minimum wage of £55 a month.* On the demo of the 7 February, the Workers' Commissions called it a 'wage of misery'.

As part of its three-year economic plan, the government will loan money to medium and small companies, which are the economic backbone of Portugal. They were 'competitive' under fascism only because of the miserable wages they paid.*

It is women – very young women – who tend to be the majority working in these places. As opposed to the proletariat of the large work places of the left bank of the Tagus, they have not the experience of fifty years of struggle against Salazar's fascism. But, this summer, they have fought spontaneous struggles full of creative militancy to take over their work places, abandoned by bosses linked to the old government. The women workers of Sogantal in Montigo went to the beaches to sell the tracksuits they had made. In many cases, all this activity is not well received by their families. But freedom can but shake the old ways of looking at things.

* Like the UK tea companies in Ceylon, and other UK firms in South Africa.

* At the end of May the national minimum wage was raised from £55 to £75 a month.

ARMED MOVEMENT



THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT AND POWER

Today, the role of the Armed Forces Movement is crucial to the revolutionary process in Portugal. By this we mean two things. First, that without the support of the MFA, that process might well come to an end: for the time being the MFA is the guarantor of the Revolution. Second, that the process itself is inside the MFA.

For us the key to understanding the MFA is to look at the relationship between the mass vanguards of the working class and the left of the MFA. As the mass vanguards organise their power, they are forcing members of the other classes in Portugal to make a choice: to side with the revolutionary process or with the international capitalist class. The result is that the middle ground – based on the alliance of classes with conflicting interests – becomes harder to hold. Over the last year, it is clear that many members of the MFA have chosen to side with the revolutionary movement.

MFA'S ORIGINS

The MFA was created by the African liberation struggles, so that the armed forces were the instrument of the liberation movements when they overthrew Caetano.

The junior officers who began the MFA in 1973 were motivated by their experience of Portuguese imperialism – that is, its effects on their own lives, on those of their people, and on those of the Africans. The original impetus for the Movement's formation was distinctly unpromising. Regular combat officers were concerned about the effects on their promotion opportunities of a new regulation giving university entrants immediate parity of rank. Although the Movement's concerns rapidly widened from this starting point to a consideration of colonial policy generally, the university conscript officers, the milicianos, were never really a close

part of the MFA. (It is only recently that the MFA expanded to include non-officers.)

More than anyone else, it was the junior officers in the field who knew how badly the war was going and how improbable a military victory was in Angola, Mozambique or Guinea-Bissau. But, in many cases, these officers had no political commitment to the war. In the first place, relations between troops and white settlers were tense, the soldiers deeply resenting the style of life of the colonials, and the latter bitter about the army's failure to protect them from 'terrorist' attack. (Settlers attacked troops, killing one, after a FRELIMO victory in early 1974.)

Moreover, as one MFA member, Matos Gomes, points out: 'There is a great similarity between the people of the North East of Portugal and Africa. We have found here a colonial situation.' (Interviewed at the end of a popular education campaign by the MFA in the North East in February 1975.) Not all the MFA officers had to wait for the education campaign to discover the condition of the people, especially in the countryside, which was the inevitable consequence in part of the enormous military drain on national resources. Many of them came from these small towns and villages and knew at first hand that Portugal had both the highest adult illiteracy rate and the highest infant mortality rate in Europe. All this helps to explain the main points of the MFA programme – immediate decolonisation and government action to improve living standards.

The Portuguese army was the second imperialist army to refuse the role allocated to it: the first was the Russian in 1917. For this to happen there were important influences other than the sheer experience of class exploitation in Africa and Portugal.

The main influences were the African liberation movements themselves and the struggles in Portugal itself. Propaganda work was taken very seriously by the liberation movements, and prisoners of war were not only well treated but intro-

duced to the achievements of the people in the liberated areas. The struggle in Portugal which probably had the most impact on the MFA was in the universities. Many *milicianos*, drafted in to help fill the severe shortage of junior officers, brought with them into the armed forces both an experience of struggle and a political consciousness. Finally, and not surprisingly in a conscript army fighting a losing battle under appalling conditions (four years service; low pay), there was a closer identification with the struggles of the working class than with the aims of the state.

25 APRIL AND AFTER

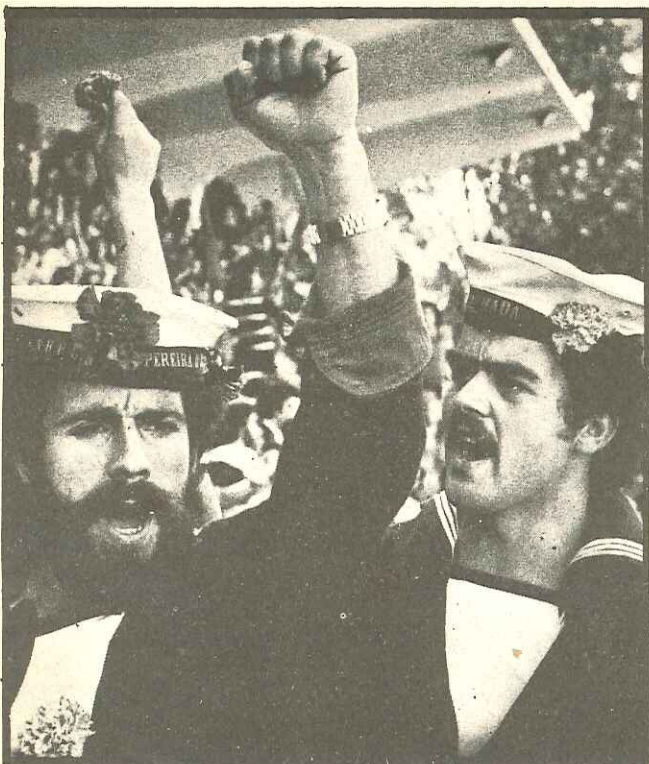
'The MFA is the fourth movement of national liberation' – Agostinho Neto, leader of the MPLA of Angola.

25 April was a combination of a military coup by Spínola and other senior generals at odds with the regime's imperialist policies, and an armed uprising by the middle ranks of the armed forces, with the MFA as an organising vanguard of two or three hundred officers. This is a combination which has shown itself to be highly unstable. The coup brought to power a coalition of forces which has gradually broken down, in the aftermath of two attempted coups.

But the majority of the MFA were undefined in their politics, even if most would have called themselves socialist. When Admiral Coutinho declares: 'The principal aspect of our socialism will be social justice, work for everyone, security in old age . . . in sort, everything that goes by the name of socialism . . . In fact, what we want is a socialism without bureaucracy!' it is obvious that he has taken a position anywhere on the spectrum between social democracy and revolutionary socialism. In fact, it is under the pressure of the working class struggle which the MFA unleashed on 25 April that what socialism means in Portugal is being defined. And whilst the MFA may defend the gains of that struggle, it is not the primary element in pursuing it.

THE MFA AND THE WORKING CLASS

It is in its relationship with the working class that the MFA's politics have been defined more clearly and the contradictions within the Movement exposed. The turning point in that relationship was undoubtedly 28 September. Spínola's involvement in the attempted coup showed that there was a



From the beginning, sailors have been the most militant section of the armed forces. 3000 came to their first congress.

limit to the support that the MFA could expect for its 'socialism' from some sections of the ruling class. Unless, of course, it was prepared to repress the strikes and occupations as relentlessly as fascism had.

On 28 September the MFA found that it had taken up a position close to the working class out of the necessity of defending the gains made since 25 April. From the moment that the workers and their political organisations begin to barricade the main roads into Lisbon, the MFA finds itself responding more and more to events, rather than shaping them themselves. The even closer co-operation between the most left wing elements in the MFA and the workers' organisation on 11 March has helped to bring about one of the most decisive developments in Portugal. The penetration of the class struggle inside the armed forces.

There is now an important movement within the armed forces for the radical transformation of military life: the abolition of privilege and distinctions between officers and men; equal rights to decision making in the MFA by all ranks; political education as part of basic training; the abolition of automatic commissions for university students, and the move towards a popular army, trained to defend the gains of the revolution. Otelo de Carvalho, in the interview we print, describes many of these developments. What underlies them is the increasing involvement of the soldiers and NCOs – the 'uniformed sons of the people' – in the politics of the armed forces, and their realisation that a battle has to be fought to ensure that the revolutionary process is not halted. More simply, the struggle for the abolition of separate messing in the air force, for example, owes a lot to the precedents set by the workers' movement in its fight against privilege.

So, when we say that the class struggle is inside the armed forces, we mean both that the social composition of the lower ranks places them alongside the workers' movement in its struggle, and also that as an institution, the armed forces and its members must themselves choose between the revolution and capitalism, and that this choice is being made through struggle.

Inside the MFA itself, the vanguard of the services, the pressure of the struggle can be felt most of all among the officers. Left wingers are having to decide where their closest loyalties lie: with the NCOs and men of their unit who want to press ahead with the formation of democratic assemblies of the whole unit, or with 'moderate' officers who aren't happy with the pace of change. What is beginning to emerge is a distinct non-party position, probably best represented by Carvalho.

THE MFA AND THE PARTIES

It is clear that had they stood, MFA candidates would have swept the board on 25 April. It is the sense that in many ways the MFA is the party of the working class, and rather more representative of the needs of the class than either the PS or the PPD, which together gained the most votes, which has helped to bring out a distinct non-party position in the MFA. This corresponds to a strong belief in some vanguard sections of the working class itself that what is paramount now is not the building of the parties but the creation of strong, independent instruments of workers' power – perhaps workers' revolutionary councils.

It has to be remembered that, apart from the PCP, none of the existing political parties counted for much in the working class during the fascist period. They arrived on the night train from Paris, usually coming complete with a programme constructed in cosy exile but having little to do with conditions in Portugal today. The PCP is still one of Europe's most stalinist communist parties. Its rigidity means that it nearly always acts as a brake on the development of working class power. The marxist-leninists, consumed by hatred of the USSR and 'social fascism', as they call the CPs, are incapable of seeing who the class enemy really is. Their policy of backing the PS against the PCP is disastrous. That leaves small revolutionary organisations like PRP and LUAR, which are growing but still don't have a mass presence in the working class.

SERVE THE PEOPLE

AGITATION AND PROPAGANDA IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

In the recent months, a large part of the MFA's work has been their 'going to the peasants'. What this 'rural agitprop' has consisted in has been groups of MFA officers and sergeants touring the countryside, explaining what happened on the 25 April, talking about the elections, asking the villagers what their needs were, providing rural villages with the services of a doctor, arranging with students to go out to teach the agricultural workers how to read, etc. This rural agitprop campaign has been a central part of the MFA's fight against internal imperialism, in their fight against malnutrition and illiteracy which are both key weapons of fascism. It has also been central in their fight against the Church who, working hand in glove with the capitalist landowners, were more than glad to keep the rural people in darkness.

(The interviews are taken from *Liberation* and *Politique-Hebdo*, two great left-wing French magazines. They are from February and April 75)

Mundao, a village near Viseu in North Portugal

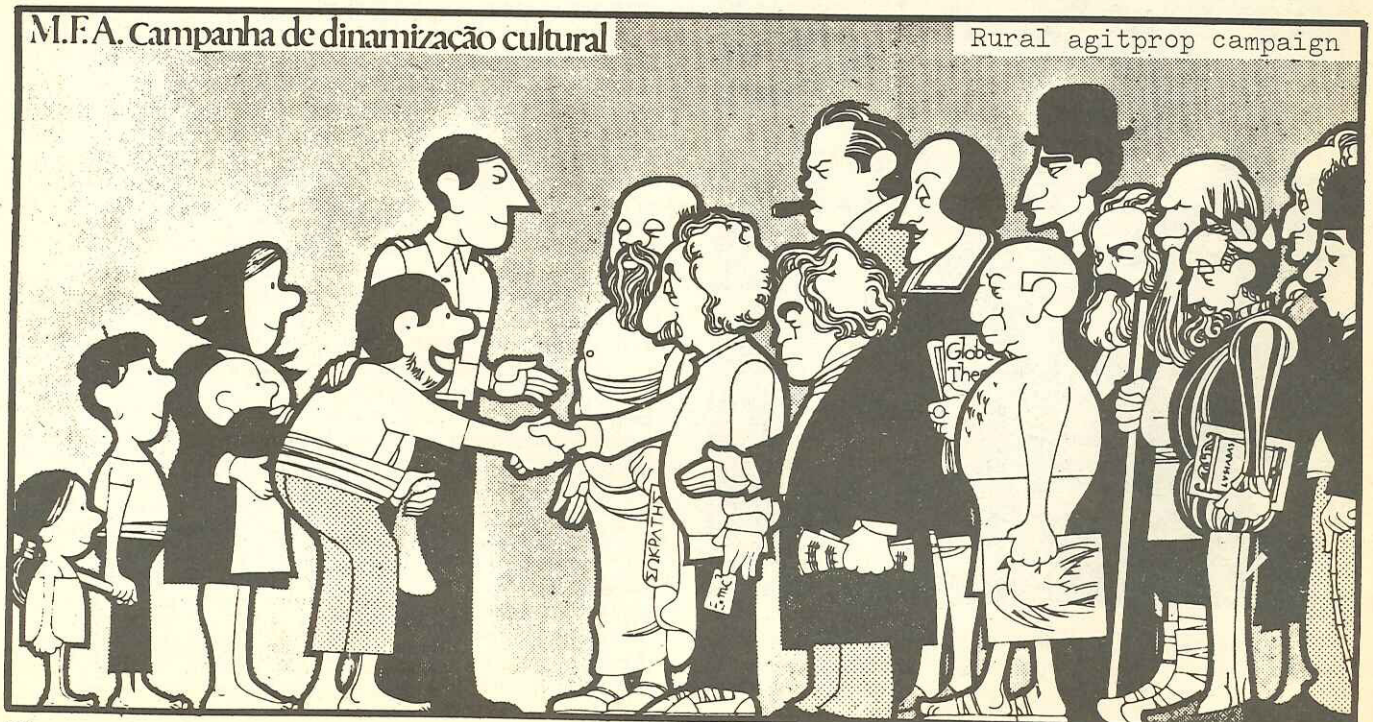
We are at an agitprop meeting of the MFA. Two hundred people – men, women and children – have come to hear 'those who have made the revolution in Lisbon'. Two non-commissioned officers of the MFA have already spoken, now it is the turn of the local captain of the GNR (the National Republican Guard). The audience is particularly interested in what the GNR captain has to say since the GNR was the organ chosen to maintain Salazar's fascist order in the countryside. He speaks: 'As you well know, we of the GNR were often used against the people. Often we were sent in to smash strikes. We had very strict orders which we had to carry out, even if we did not want to. We must no longer be afraid of one another, we must work together. Tell your children that the agents of authority are no longer there to arrest people but to help them. To live with the people is the new line of the GNR.'* There is applause all round. The turnaround of their face-to-face enemy, the GNR, matters a lot to the inhabitants of the village.

A passionate dialogue begins between the inhabitants of Mundao and the military come to 'agitprop' them. 'Mister Doctor, what will visits to a doctor cost?' The military doctor answers: 'I know that in the past a visit to the doctor's has cost you four to five pounds, a week's wages. Those times are gone. A doctor will no longer be someone privileged with a vast salary. Like everyone else, he will work eight hours a day and will not be allowed to only practice in the cities.' The MFA then go on to encourage the villagers to vote in the forthcoming elections as a sign of their support of 25 April. But they add: 'A socialist society as we want it will not be built by the Socialist Party. For forty-eight years they have terrified you with tales of communist atrocities. Today the PCP is a member of the coalition government. You have a duty to listen to what they have to say and to ask their candidates questions.' Everyone laughs as a woman says, 'Ah, well, I certainly won't vote for the Communists'.

Every day for two weeks, jeeps painted with MFA go to villages in the area. These new missions are far different from the colonial missions in Guinea, Angola and Mozambique. In fact they are inspired by the practice of FRELIMO and the PAIGC – they are part of the reconversion of the Portuguese army. An officer says: 'As we go round the country, we find poverty, isolation, loneliness, that we never imagined. These conditions alone demanded a revolution'. Now the talent of the forces will concentrate on electrification and irrigation.

In the present conditions, it is only the MFA that can counterbalance the power of the landlords and the Church, who are saying that 'the red carnation is a symbol of communism', 'they will take your land', etc. In most cases, the villagers are glad of the attention their problems are getting from the MFA because they have plenty of problems. Some of the villages have no phone or road to link them to the outside. Sometimes the MFA teams cannot find the villages! But nice speeches are not all the villagers want: they want an improvement in their everyday life. Without that all talk of 'revolution' is irrelevant. The land reform plans include the setting up of agricultural co-operatives a lot will depend on how these are carried out.

* We have not quoted this because we think the captain is sincere. What is important is that he feels obliged to say it (in front of the MFA). In the long run, what matters is how the class balance of forces has changed in the village after the MFA have gone. No doubt their visit will give the peasants courage to push for their demands.



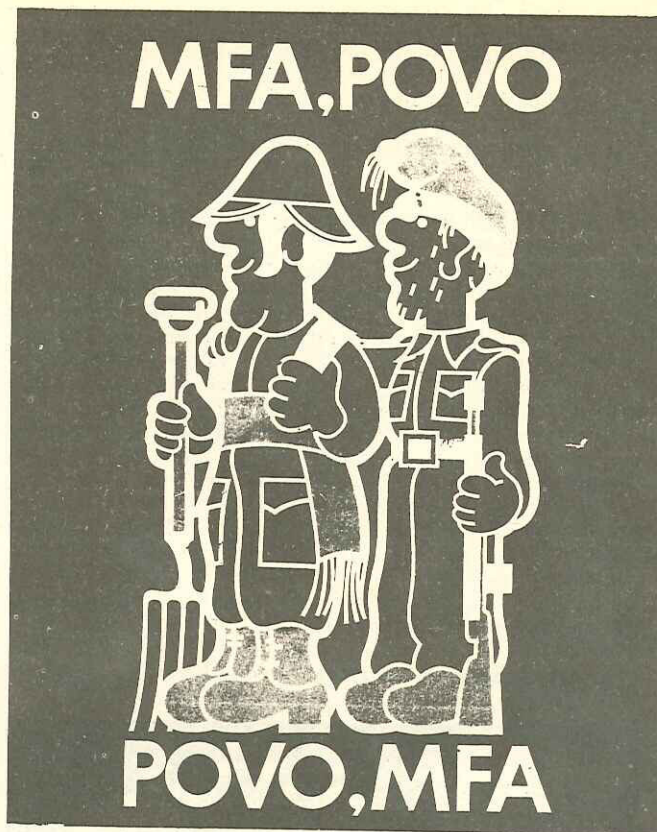
With the MFA agitprop campaign in Villa Velha

In the village of Foz almost all the four hundred inhabitants are children or old women. The few men who remain work at the olive mill where the oil is made. In this village life has remained the same for a century: there is no water, no electricity, no canals. A road is the main concern of the villagers. It would make it easier to get the baskets of olives to the mill; it would make access to the cemetery easier. The members of the agitprop campaign investigate; they take notes. They check out the different places a bridge could go. A report will go to the military construction team that builds these roads and bridges.

Water, irrigation, medicine, electricity, fill up the 'complaint notebooks' of the MFA. For these poor and illiterate peasants, democracy and freedom begin in these 'complaint notebooks'. A woman shows us a hole in the roof which is just above her bed. Fear is written on her face. It no longer seems that we are in Europe but rather in Bolivia or Peru, in the midst of underdevelopment. Everyone is well-disposed and interested in the MFA visit, but fear is still there. The army doctor tells me: 'The people here still live with fear. We are here so that they are no longer afraid.'

The regional headquarters for the rural agitprop campaign is in Villa Velha. The MFA have taken over a mansion which is now full of posters, telephones, typewriters, area plans, loudspeakers; the military is clearly in command. The few civilians there belong to the three theatre groups that the MFA has asked to play in the countryside. Film makers and painters also participate in the campaign.

The North-East is an area 'where communists are sometimes stoned to death'. It is the *Tran Os Montes*, the country of the devil and wolves. Of it a MFA major says: 'There are great similarities between the people in the North-East and the African peoples. We have discovered here a colonial situation. Landlords who dominate the economy and rule over peoples' minds. Most of the peasants do not know of the political transformations that have been going on in Lisbon. That does not mean that these people are not conscious of what they want. It is the most 'backward' people that are often the most aware of problems. Our actions have undermined the dominance of the landlords. They have also raised the consciousness of the military. **The very structure of the armed forces must go forward and cease to be a dead weight on things. It must become a structure that is of use to the exploited classes.**



MFA, People: People, MFA

If the military has a contribution to make to the process, the contribution of civilians must not be underestimated. Military men are trained to make war. When they take part in the rural agitation and propaganda, they are hit by the concrete problems that the people face: roads, health, etc. . . . Without the influence of civilians on them, the forces might have been inclined towards militarism. This we have avoided. Another officer tells me: 'In the towns, it is the revolution of the political parties. In the countryside it is the revolution of the armed forces.' This direct contact, the reciprocal learning is called 'a cultural revolution'.

POPULAR MILITIA

OTELO DE CARVALHO INTERVIEWED

The interview was published in the daily newspaper of the Italian revolutionary organisation, Lotta Continua, on 12 May 1975.

Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho is one of the original 25 April men. Then, a young major and one of the founders of the clandestine MFA (Armed Forces Movement), he commanded the operation which one year ago brought down the Caetano regime. One of Spinola's most hostile opponents, against pressure from the Junta, he set up COPCON (Continental Operational Command) in July 1974. He became second in command of this key military unit. And in that position he played a key role in the events of 28 September and 11 March. Today, as a brigadier general, he can be considered one of the left-wing members of the Supreme Revolutionary Council. The mixture of pleasantness and impulsiveness that comes over when he talks has helped to make him one of the MFA's most popular figures.

LC: To begin with, what changes have been taking place inside the armed forces in the last few months?

DC: After 25 April we wanted there and then to take the revolution into the armed forces, to make it felt at every level and in every section. Initially, and until 28 September, we tried to develop political education work in every unit, but this was blocked by the Chief of Staff, at that time General Silverio Marques. It was hard to make any progress at all. Since 28 September things have got clearer and from then onwards we've been setting up a really democratic kind of organisation within the armed forces. Various kinds of assembly have been set up.

After 11 March, further changes. Everything was getting clearer, and the process - which goes forward by stages - took on a more distinct form, so we set up a new MFA general assembly, including soldiers, sergeants and officers. So now the soldiers have full rights of representation in the most powerful MFA body, and that is very important because it allows them, at a regional level and in the different sections, to take an active part in the process of renovation.

Recently, there was a conference, the first conference for the sailors, which ended with about three thousand sailors present. They called it, and they invited to it various members of the Revolutionary Council, including Pinheiro de Azevedo, head of the Navy's high command. It was an amazing conference. It was a perfect example of how strongly based the democratic organisation is becoming. For us, democracy in the heart of the armed forces means every rank taking part in the revolution. Everyone should put forward their own ideas. The meetings and assemblies are the means through which the revolution reaches into every

corner. Nothing should be hidden, we've got to be able to discuss everything frankly. Certainly, there are difficulties.

LC: What's the relationship between the growth of democracy in the barracks and the military's links with the outside world, with the struggle that's developing in the country?

DC: That link is only beginning to become firm now. The key question is political consciousness. Certainly, it's matured extraordinarily fast this year, but you shouldn't forget that until 25 April we lived under an oppressive stopper. Soldiers couldn't talk politics, and politics was kept out of the barracks; everything was undercover. After the liberation, as I said, the advances have been enormous. They've come out of our experiences. The political parties, counting on the depoliticisation of the armed forces, thought they'd be able to stage a rapid takeover of the military. The Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) were the first to reach the barracks, followed by the socialists, then the extreme left, all trying to get their oar in. At present, the extreme left has the biggest influence, especially among the soldiers, but still the majority — more than those who support the parties — stick to the MFA's ideas. The MFA isn't a party and I think it should remain a separate political organisation, obviously leaning to the left, but above all the parties. Without its own cut and dried ideology, but able to hold sway throughout the armed forces.



LC: The latest MFA bulletin is very critical of the bourgeois democratic model, talking specifically of the necessity to build 'popular power'. How can the military support the growth of mass organisation and help proletarian control to take hold in every sector of society?

DC: What I would like to see, which is for me the main aim in the armed forces, is the transformation of the regular forces into a people's army. I think this would be possible under certain conditions.

Beginning in the late fifties, our armed forces began to undergo a process of proletarianisation. Previously, the officers came exclusively from the ruling classes, who wanted a military career for their sons. Then, partly as a result of the spread of schooling, lower class youngsters started joining the armed forces too. Because of this, the officers have been able to take part in an upheaval which could be to the benefit of the working classes. The 'coup' has had a left tinge because so far we've been able to get rid of a large number of the senior ranks compromised with the old regime. The reactionaries, the aristocrats, the ones who wouldn't accept the new democracy, have been thrown out,

so, in today's conditions, the armed forces have taken on a definite orientation to the people.

For a short time now we've been looking at the possibility of having a single entrance system. So that instead of automatic commissions for people coming out of the universities, we would like, through a general entrance, to select the men suitable for command, regardless of their class background, so as to give workers the opportunity of becoming officers and to enable the lawyers to become soldiers . . . This would be a clear step in the direction of a people's army, whilst retaining for the time being the regular structure.

LC: How free are the soldiers today to organise themselves?

DC: Discipline has to be maintained in some form, and the hierarchy has a function too, because you can't achieve anything positive without a minimum of order and method. In the barracks, at every level, there are all kinds of moves towards equality and the abolition of privileges.

Rations are already equal for everybody, and there are moves to setting up single messing facilities for soldiers and officers, but maybe the soldiers themselves prefer to keep their autonomy and to meet separately, and that isn't a bad thing.

LC: What do you think of the 'revolutionary councils', the idea of setting up common grass roots organisation bringing together workers, soldiers, and the progressive officers?

DC: I'm not in disagreement with the setting up of revolutionary councils. In fact, I'm quite favourable to them. It's an experience, like others, which shows that some sections of the people are ready for a total revolution. They get organised, put forward new ideas, go forward; this can only be very positive.

Still, I think that revolutionary councils don't correspond to the present situation. Conditions aren't yet ripe because they would have to be transformed by a powerful mass movement. From this point of view, they're not really strong enough.

As far as the soldiers and officers are concerned, I think that that kind of organisational experience could lead to a better link with the workers, and therefore to clarify their ideas and perspectives. But that still doesn't rule out the need for internal organisation. Inside the units, it's a good thing that soldiers and officers are getting organised, taking decisions, criticising and re-ordering life in the barracks.

LC: When was COPCON set up? What's its exact purpose? To what extent is it a parallel body to the high command?

DC: It's important to be clear about this. The army high command has administrative and material functions which are important at a time of general reorganisation. COPCON was set up at a time of crisis for the first provisional government, last July, when the Spínola prime minister Palma Carlos was sent packing and replaced by Vasco Gonçalves. It's concerned with operational tasks. It's the command HQ for the whole army in Portugal. Apart from this, it has at its direct disposal certain forces of intervention, such as RAL 1, as well as two parachute companies and the marine detachment which are always at our disposal. On the other hand, we don't have permanent call on naval and air units. Still, if the need arises, we can use them, as we did on 11 March, when we needed to carry out aerial reconnaissance, as well as during the elections. COPCON also has the means to take effective operational control of the whole country, centralising its actions through the various regional HQs.

LC: To a certain extent, COPCON, given the enforced lethargy the police have had to accept, also looks after public order. On what basis does it carry out this task?

DC: Sure, we've become the main guarantor of public order. Our job is to prevent violence. People need some kind



of peace, that's normal. Our only repressive actions have been against drugs, prostitution, robbery, organised crime. And then we work alongside the police. Otherwise, we always, or nearly always, try to prevent violence at meetings. As for direct action against house or land squats, we've always supported the people's just demands, and in cases where these actions might step outside the bounds of revolutionary legality, we've tried to work on the basis of convincing the law breakers politically, always avoiding the use of force against the people, something which is unacceptable for us.

LC: To what extent have the election results changed the balance of forces inside the army?

DC: I don't think they have to any large extent. The progressive forces are at present the most active and dynamic. The moderates don't really have an organised presence. Of course, there are some elements who do, but they are isolated, with the great majority supporting and taking part in the process. As long as we can keep the initiative, we can stop the conservative forces making any gains. I'm absolutely convinced that now in the armed forces, in the Revolutionary Council, and even more so in the general assembly of the MFA, if it was necessary to take decisions — really crucial ones I mean, about how we wanted to lay the line down about socialism or not — there wouldn't be much difficulty.

LC: The MFA's often criticised the parties for not playing a sufficient part in stimulating the revolutionary process. Some soldiers have seen the possibility of forming a new party, a kind of civilian MFA. What do you think about that?

DC: Today, this is probably the most serious problem. The MFA has had an amazing impact at mass level. If we'd taken part in the elections we'd have won. The truth is that the parties don't have very deep roots, and they also fight among each other to the extent of threatening the unity of the base. We have to fight the big bourgeoisie which lays down the PPD's political line, of course. The struggle between the parties is maybe a distraction, which puts us in a difficult position. But that doesn't mean we're thinking of taking on the task of mass mobilisation, even if that were possible for the MFA. The MFA needs the parties, and of course the parties need the MFA, if we're to achieve socialism.

LC: On the question of Portugal's international position — how do you think you can carry out a policy of autonomy and neutralism?

DC: It's very important for us to make rapid progress towards national independence, so that we aren't dependent on either the US, the USSR or Europe. To be free to turn to the Third World. In fact, it's from there that the forces could develop which would guarantee our independence. The socialist bloc is open to us, to be perfectly frank. But we don't want to have to depend on any super-power. Of course, we know that our country is, and will remain so for the foreseeable future, economically dependent. In terms of what we produce, we are a very backward, poor and weak country. Forced to import most of what it consumes — therefore not autonomous — and eating up its reserves at an impressive rate.

LC: On the question of workers' struggle and strikes at present, it seems to me that some recent view of the government and the MFA risk a bureaucratic opposition and a repressive response to the autonomous actions of the masses. The 'production battle' is being put forward officially and Cuba is referred to, but the situation there was quite different.

DC: Sure, the situations are different. The revolution was begun by a small group of officers, without the involvement of the parties. The direct involvement of the masses, in a process which is obviously rooted in the long years of resistance against fascism, is something that has happened since 25 April.

LC: How does that fit with staying in NATO?

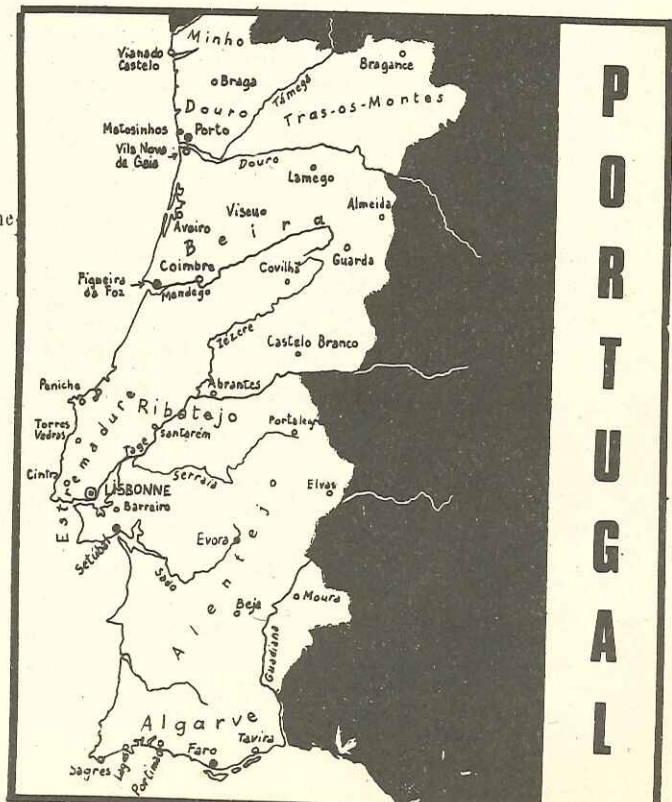
DC: Our position on NATO is, in fact, rather difficult to define.

NATO's reactions to what's going on in Portugal today hasn't been good, obviously: given that its aims are to protect the western world from the Soviet Union and communism. We've got communists in the government here which worries them a lot. They don't send us documents anymore, they're scared that the military secrets might be lost.

LC: What part can international solidarity play at the present time?

DC: **International solidarity, in Europe and throughout the world, is very important and may be able to help to guarantee our independence. Links between liberated peoples strengthen the consciousness of autonomy. If this consciousness remains strong and preventative — not coming when it's all over, as it was in Chile — it will be for us a further guarantee of victory. Our experience is having repercussions throughout Europe and the world.**

The exploited of all the countries support us and are sympathetic towards our revolution. Which is not really true of the various governments. They see us, justifiably, as a bad example. You've only got to think about what they've said about us in Spain, or of the fact that in France they've refused entry to members of the MFA, and so on. But since what we're doing has a general value, the influence of our revolution will counteract the lies. A blaze, an explosion of freedom across the continent at this time of serious worldwide capitalist crisis, wouldn't be the only result. The revolution, for the first time, would have reached the very heart of the international capitalist system.





LISNAVE WORKERS LEAFLET

In struggling to rid the Lisnave management of its fascists, the workers have become aware that they are not only fighting for the downfall of the fascist structure inside Lisnave, but also against the whole of the exploiting ruling class.

In this way the workers of Lisnave are joining with the brave fight of TAP, of *Jornal do Comercio*, of Siderurgia, of Texmalhas, backing all the struggles from North to South, and leaving the narrow walls of the factory to come onto the streets and show:

That our fight to rid ourselves of fascists is not a secondary fight, it is a principal struggle because it is part of the permanent fight against all the forms of fascism being constantly generated by monopoly capitalism.

That where there is initiative and organized struggle by the oppressed classes, the forces of reaction retreat. Where there is lack of vigilance on the part of the people, the counter-revolutionary forces advance and wipe out the freedoms already achieved.

That we support all the laws and measures of the Provisional Government which help to increase the freedom of the workers, and of the peoples exploited and oppressed by Portuguese Colonialism.

That we do not back the Government when it comes out with anti-working class laws which undermine the struggles of workers against capitalist exploitation.

That we shall actively fight the strike the 'strike law' because it is a big blow to the freedom of the workers.

That we reject the 'lock-out law' as a law against the workers and for the protection of the capitalists, granting to the bosses the freedom to starve thousands of workers.

Because we know that the 120 million escudos, are not, as claim the Melos, Champalimauds, Quinas & Company, to create 120 thousand jobs, but to create better conditions under which to exploit the workers.

That we reject all attempts, no matter from where they come, to sabotage and divide the working masses in their fight against fascism & capitalism.

That we support the Armed Forces so long as they support the struggles of the oppressed and exploited classes against the oppressing and exploiting classes.

LISNAVE WORKERS PURGE FASCISTS
DEATH TO PIDE—DEATH TO FASCISM
RIGHT TO STRIKE—YES!
LOCK OUT—NO!
SOLIDARITY WITH THE COMRADES ON STRIKE