

## **Notes on the PRP (Peter Robinson, August 1975)**

### **1. Interview end of August with a PRP organiser (Jorge?) and a Setenave worker.**

Q. What about the CRTs?

[Note the CRTs are revolutionary workers commissions which are a facet of the CRTSMs project, ostensibly a non-party network of Councils initiated by the PRP].

A. All our work in our factories, the factory commissions, tenants commissions, Setenave, the united left front, is determined by the aim of building CRTs

Q. What state is Setenave in economically?

4000 work there. Have work until 1979. Recently an order for 2 ships cancelled from Germany. Still 4 ships to make till '77.

Lots of propaganda been made about an order from Poland. A contract was for 100 boats, much too small for the shipyard, the largest one being for only 360 tons. (the ship we are working on at present is a 260,000,000 ton super tanker) . There was a rather peculiar aspect to this contract with the Polish government. Setenave was obliged to buy the materials and machinery from Poland. Setenave is a new enterprise and was not completed before 25 April.

Q. How did the militancy develop?

A. There were already some specialised workers from Lisnave who had been involved in action. It began with general actions for wages and conditions and elected a workers council. The CP tried to break the workers development because it did not fight for better wages saying that the time was not ripe. Also the CP argued that all of us must work hard so that we develop the shipyard. The PCP maintained that the workers were being used by the PRP and the UDP and those groups weren't fighting for the [interests] of the workers

Q. How many members are in the political groups?

A. PCP 150 UDP 50? PRP 15. MRPP 6. PS a small cell. MES insignificant. PRP has a growing number of sympathisers, about 40. The PCP has stayed roughly the same size.

Q. How many papers do the PRP sell?

A. About 80

Q. Tell us about the workers commission.

A. This is the second commission. 19 workers are on it. Voting is for slates and by secret ballot. Originally there were 3 slates: 1 communists and sympathisers, 2 UDP and PRP and sympathisers, and 3 the Socialist party, but the Socialist party withdrew at the last minute. Many votes were spoilt, but the UDP/PRP slate won narrowly. (Subsequently we heard that there were only 5 left on the commission - but this has to be confirmed.) The CRT (revolutionary workers commission) originally got off the ground because the workers commission recognised the importance of the political stance. Delegates to the workers commission and the unions cover the more practical, aspects.

Q. If the work is too hard for a worker, how is the problem dealt with?

A. Each section has several delegates of the syndical. Delegates of the syndical will come to the workers council with the problem. If he is really facing a physical problem the worker will go to the doctor first.

Q. Have any workers been sacked recently?

A. No. On account of the boycott there are sections in which there are too many working.

Q. What happens when there is a disagreement between the unions and the commission on an issue like wages?

A. in practice this will go to the workers commission. The commission is supreme

Q. What role does the UDP play?

A. They mainly sell books and papers. Two of their comrades have much influence.

When there is a crisis they always come to us. Once they came to ask when was the revolution.

Q. Is it workers control?

A. No.

Q. Why not?

A.. Now it is controlled by the government. Some sections may be close to workers control but in general we are not because of the divisions amongst us, the lack of coordination and the lack of politics.

Q. Does the CRT issue a paper in the factory?

A. The first council had a kind of bulletin and the administration of the bulletin. The workers council is obliged to tell the workers what is happening and this is done through comunicados and meetings in the canteen etc. When necessary we have meetings in works time. Sometimes the CP boycotts



## **2. CONCLUSIONS**

### **Influence**

This week the PRP-BR called its first rally, certainly for some time, at the sports stadium in Lisbon. It signified a more aggressive approach towards building the group. It was organised at 1 week's notice and nearly 2,000 people attended from the Lisbon region. The rally lacked the boring, professional drive which I.S. has accumulated through the years. If we in Manchester with a much larger and heavier industrial complex, organised a rally of 5,000 at short notice, the implications would be immense. Instead of having one member in factory we would have 10-20. Where we have no contacts we would have a handful of members. Seen simply, and with prospects of growth we should be talking of seizing power. At the PRP rally less than 50 had the experience of being active in the PRP eighteen months ago.

Certainly the PRP has some considerable influence. American Pressmen, in their idle speculations, toy with the idea that the PRP will be the group on the left. It is said that the Copcon document was written by the PRP. The PRP are listened to in some factories- there is the example of a workers commission from large complex asking to meet the local direction district committee. But influence is not enough. Influence comes and goes. The revolution is by no means automatic. At present the reactionary swing and the future certainly an extensive siege. Unless there is a seed in every factory and tenants commission and barracks- a seed that is growing and wont be killed when the real rot sets in- there is no chance of revolution. We are talking about the revolutionary party, of course.

### **The ROLE OF THE PARTY.**

The variety of views within the PRP is much greater than the IS. Many joined because of a healthy disdain for Stalinism. And for some 'the party' is a Stalinist conception. The most fundamental difference we have with the PRP is the role of the party. At a recent PRP press conference one of their high up members said (re the united front) "we wish to reduce the role of the parties to the role they should really have - the ideological role. This is a fundamental point. The PRP wants power to the class and the role of the PRP is ideological This is in no way the result of an anarchist influence but of history and of the Russian revolution." The primacy of politics in the party is. not at issue. What is at issue is the interrelationship of party and class - the method.

The IS does not just see itself as the ideological advisor - while we may formally separate theory and practice it is the practice which counts. It is on the battlefield that our theory is tested, re-examined and is most relevant.

Revolution depends above all, not upon the politically correct line but the ability to win. Indeed the last thing the battlefield needs is an ideological advisor from afar.

Our difference with the PRP is not fantastic, but indeed it is not so long ago that we resolved a debate on Lenin, Luxembourg, party and class and spontaneity. However, in a period of intense class war the consequences are fatal. There are two consequences which can be seen. Firstly...maneuvering.

If the party is not primarily concerned in politically building then its logical lot is to act behind the scenes. Hence we had the PRP supposedly writing much of the Copcon document and not acknowledging it. Their special relationship with Carvalho meant that they have been slow in developing a clear ideological understanding of the role of Otelo and Copcon. The second consequence is... Subordination of the party, (spontaneity??).

It may be true to say that the party's role is minimal, until the class takes a revolutionary position; at the same time one does not sit back and wait till the class moves. Indeed there is nothing self evident that instead political ferment will lead directly to the conquest of power by the class. The PRP had grown from a handful to thousands in a year. But has to grow tenfold in the next few months

And certainly the party organs, especially their paper are criminally neglected. The paper comes out irregularly, especially at critical times, average sales per member are comparable with the IS. There is a hesitancy for the party to separate itself, and therefore take credit for the role that it plays. They are in a situation where almost any communicate they wish to issue will be published in the dailies, which can lead to a dangerous state of not having your own separate organ and not testing your own impact.

### **The CRTs**

Hence have the view when it comes to the CRTS the role of the PRP has both to propose the idea, and to help the class build them. The PRP gives political support by making an analysis of the situation. It is an ideological input and of course our militants help. The CRTs are organs of the class and of course not of the party. Such an explanation disguises the fact that the CRTs were being built by the PRP and only in isolated instances by individual militants. The PRP planted the seed, but because of its position, may not nourish it. It is quite possible that the CRTs may not come of age independently, the fight for them goes hand in hand with the political fight and is not abstractly independent. In IS we often say the best way to build (e.g., the CRT) is to join the IS. That feeling is lacking.

Although it was the St Peterburg soviet who won the day for the revolution, the day was fought for by the Bolsheviks. Indeed if it were not for the Bolsheviks the soviets would not have been the revolutionary organ of the class.

So far, in the conclusion, we have talked about a difference of emphasis, of method, with the PRP. But the underplaying of the party, and the reliance upon the spontaneity of the class are both declining as positions within the PRP. Perhaps what maintains

the old positions is the lack of any clearly formulated new positions. There may be different views inside the PRP – and I suspect the theory does tally with the practice. The PRP is forced to learn on its feet and, for example, on the question of the United Front with the Party it comes out with the right answers, The line has definitely hardened on the issue of Copcon and Carvalho and also there is an ongoing debate about building the organisation, The leadership seems more than prepared to fight on these issues and I suspect the change of circumstances will alter the explanations. E.g. if one talks about building the party 10 fold in a short period, the discussion, mass party or cadre party diminishes in significance. After all, in much of 1917 the Bolshevik Party was terrible. The mistakes were numerous. Only a few saw power as being the immediate target. Yet events showed that that the Bolsheviks did manage to change sufficiently.

The difference about Party and class is our most serious; and there are some others. But the last thing that is needed is a formal polemic. In Portugal we often found the best way to make a point was to discuss the situation in Manchester, etc, and let the comrades draw their own conclusions. One thing about fighting capitalism in Britain is that we have had to be fairly methodical and routine and are usually focused on any new contact, compared to the fervour of the Portuguese situation. Consequently, for a number of reasons, the work in the factories, the organised work is very patchy. The reasons are not just related to the lack of emphasis on the party but also to the quick growth, small cadre and perhaps the military background. The assault for size by the PRP has to be coupled with a protracted period of agitational work.