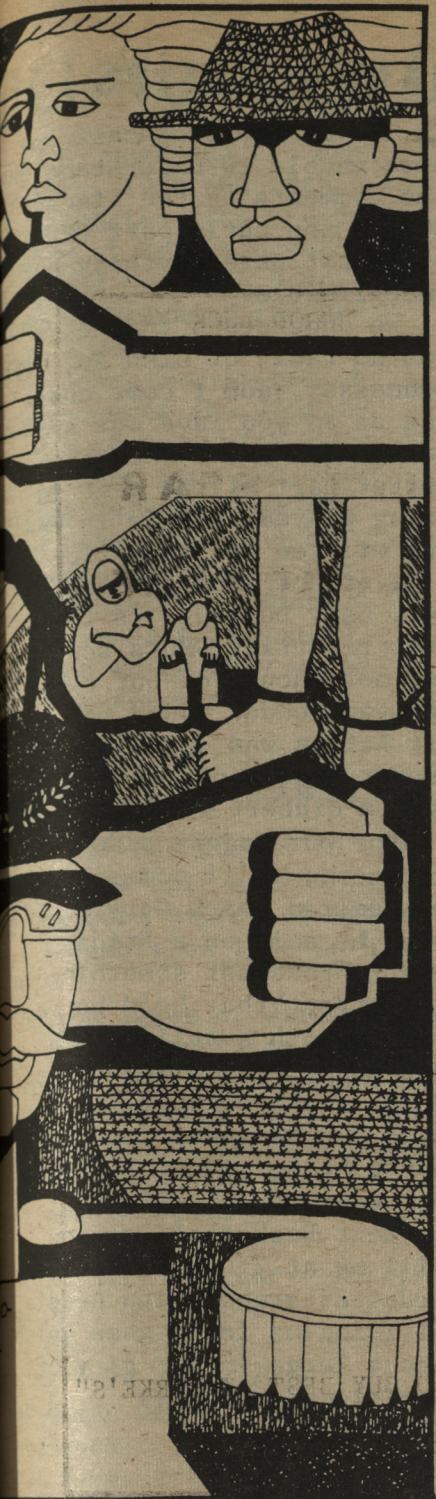


Workers' REPUBLICA Fails When Portugal Takes Swing To Right



let them inside.

The military leadership acquiesced by appointing the figurehead director so the workers could publish legally, although they had prepared to operate without him. Only three journalists and one photographer remained on the paper. The workers' commission hired about 15 new writers, mostly inexperienced.

The Socialists immediately left the government, provoking a grave split in Portugal's military leadership. Anti-communist officers soon gained control and successfully demanded the formation of a new government last September - dominated by the Socialist Party.

Owners Organize Socialist Paper

Meanwhile, Republica's owners quickly organized a new paper called "A Luta" (The Struggle), with financial help from western European social democratic parties. The parties were alarmed by events in Portugal as related by the international press and their PS informants. The director of A Luta was one Raul Rego.

Many distributing agents boycotted the workers-controlled Republica, especially outside Lisbon.

"The only way we could keep up circulation was by arranging direct distribution in factories through workers' commissions and through residents commissions," a Republica journalist said.

With many fluctuations the workers managed to maintain a circulation of about 30,000, similar to Rego's figure, she said.

And when Lisbon's state-owned newspapers were prohibited from publishing after November 25, until the government purged leftists from their staffs, Republica - privately owned - sold 90,000 copies as the only paper on the streets critical of Portugal's authorities. When the state papers returned, Republica resumed its 30,000 circulation.

The workers also inherited a debt of about \$200,000, and the Socialist-dominated government refused the workers permission to borrow money from the nationalized banks. Furthermore, their

Swedish newsprint supplier refused further credits, demanding payment of past debts. After negotiations, the company agreed to only a fragile arrangement.

After November 25 COPCON - and other regiments which had intervened on the side of workers and poor people - were dissolved.

"We know that if we tried to bring out the paper without a director they'd stop it," one Republica worker said. "Now they've got the guns."

"It's very depressing that after all this long fight we are reduced to a question of legalism," another said.

Fearing unemployment, and sensing the weakness of a badly-demoralized popular movement, a majority of Republica workers voted December 29 to ask back the old publishers, subject to guarantees against firings and infringement on the workers' editorial statute.

But Rego refuses to even meet the workers, preferring to play a waiting game with rules entirely stacked on his side.

Government Refuses To Help REPUBLICA

"The government says it will help, but they know we are losing 200,000 escudos (about \$4000) a day by not publishing. The publishers know if they wait long enough the workers will leave and look for other jobs. They can come back and start a new staff," another worker said.

The dispirited workers are split, with the older printers along with mailers and clerical staff, voting to approach the owners. The younger printers were opposed.

At last report Communications Minister Almedia Santos, himself a Socialist leader, was trying to act as a mediator. But the workers aren't optimistic.

Santos, himself, has been organizing a massive purge of anti-government journalists from state-owned newspapers, radio and television stations since November 24. On December 28 the Catholic Church was handed back control of its propaganda voice, Radio Renescensa, which had been occupied by its workers and used to promote

workers and poor people's struggles since last spring.

It is unlikely Portugal's communications czars will assist the workers of Republica much in their current position of weakness. As one Republica printer said, the events of November 25 "put us in Portugal right back where we started."



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