

## CUNHAL DECLARES COMMUNIST OFFENSIVE IN PORTUGAL

Aug. 17 (IPS)—The life or death struggle to determine who will rule in Portugal—the working class or the U.S. State Department—is now coming to a head. Portuguese Communist Party head Alvaro Cunhal, warned over 15,000 workers at a mass rally in Lisbon Aug. 14 that “the chief danger in this situation does not come from the fascists.” Instead, he stressed, “The major danger arises from the crisis of revolutionary power”—the lack of working-class control over the state, including the military.

The refusal of Portuguese fascists in alliance with the Portuguese Socialist Party to halt the fascist reign of terror, is provoking rank-and-file workers in the PSP to disobey their CIA agent leadership who are demanding that workers not form an anti-fascist united front with the Communists. Throughout the country, Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR) are spreading rapidly taking the character of Soviets—a united front alliance between workers, farmers, and the military.

The necessity of the formation of CDRs is underlined by the current equivocation of the Armed Forces Movement (MFA). The MFA is beset by “serious difficulties and internal differences,” Cunhal explained to the assembled workers in Lisbon. This has given the fascists, under CIA direction, opportunities to organize counter-revolution.

“The question posed,” Cunhal declared, “is to know whether—yes or no—the Armed Forces are up to defending democratic order. Are they—yes or no—up to assuring the exercise of liberties and rights... defending the lives, security, and property of citizens... arresting and punishing the ones responsible for crimes?” The Communist Party is now taking up that challenge, although Cunhal expressed

the PCP’s belief that the MFA will join to defend the revolution.

Within 48 hours after Cunhal’s address, the Portuguese National Radio broadcast reported that the country’s single trade union confederation, Intersindical—in which the PCP plays a leading role—called upon the government to distribute weapons to trade unionists to defend the nation from the CIA-led counter-revolution. In the south of Portugal, rural workers reiterated the Intersindical call.

Commanding over two million members, Intersindical is calling a brief but demonstrative nationwide general working class government. This Intersindical offensive occurs after CIA-deployed fascists stormed and burned trade-union offices in the northern sector of the country.

Simultaneously, the Communist Party is launching a well-defended organizing drive to re-take positions previously lost as a result of vacillation within the military. This week, PCP defense forces flanked Cunhal as he returned to a town in Alcobaca, the country’s central region. PCP organizers had been lynched in this town three weeks ago.

The Communist organizing drive into Alcobaca is a well-calculated thrust to extend its agrarian and related worker organizing into the wine-growing and orchard belt north and west of the Tagus River. It is the PCP’s agrarian organizing thrust into this region which provoked the first assaults led by landlords and Mario Soares’ PSP over a month ago. Political control of this critical region will determine the politics of military units situated there, a key “bridgehead” between conservative strongholds in the north and the critical, working-class held Lisbon region.

Cunhal’s visit to Oporto, planned for Aug. 19 signals the second PCP drive to retake lost territory. Consolidation of working-class strength in this key

northern port city, Portugal’s second largest, will enable the PCP and its allies to isolate the nests of fascist reaction centered in Viseu and especially Catholic fascist Braga, until it is convenient for them to be mopped up. Nor, by itself, can the reactionary center in Castelo Branco create a center for counter-revolution. With the PCP driving into the Leiria-Santarean belt to which Alcobaca is adjacent, and with consolidation in Oporto, the working class will have consolidated a military position unassailable from within the country.

Immediately prior to the PCP organizing mobilization in the north, CIA Socialist Party leader Mario Soares had pathetically tried to outmatch the Communists with rallies in several cities earlier this week. On Tuesday in the rural city of Evora, Soares was only able to draw 500 bodies to “counter” a PCP rally of 20,000, which included many PSP militants. Later in the week, Soares pleaded “the grip” and refused to show his face at a rally in Lisbon.

In Lisbon Thursday, Cunhal addressed the crucial significance of the international working-class mobilization which has effectively neutralized NATO’s capacity for intervention. “All night,” said Cunhal, “We have received telegrams from municipalities, cells of communist and individuals. To our French comrades, to all our comrades in the battle throughout the world, to democrats and to anti-fascists who are with the Portuguese revolution, we express here our most profound gratitude.” At the mention of the French CP, the entire audience rose to applaud the PCF for its mass mobilization, chanting “PCF—PCF—PCF!” Fed by the Communist Party offensive in Portugal and mobilized around its defense, the growing European mass strike is a warning to capitalists that any attempt at violent interference in the PCP’s stride to power will lose them Europe as well.