

LISBON (CUP) - One of the major casualties of Portugal's recent sharp turn to the right is the workers' controlled newspaper *Republica*.

The Lisbon daily stopped publishing December 23 when its military-appointed director resigned. The resignation left *Republica* in legal-limbo, because all Portuguese newspapers must have a director appointed by management.

When *Republica* workers took control in July, Portugal's military authorities agreed to appoint a figurehead director, despite the objections of the paper's Socialist Party (PS) - oriented owners. With key leftists now removed from the military leadership, the authorities refuse to appoint a new director, declaring the matter a labour-management dispute.

The owners refuse to talk to the workers.

(Portugal's political-military situation changed dramatically November 25 in what now appears a well-executed coup by right-wing and centrist military leaders. Imposing a news blackout in Lisbon region, they ended a paratroop rebellion and moved conservative troops to the capital city to disarm local regiments - who hadn't joined the rebellion - but who had been actively assisting workers and poor people's movements for many months.)

Republica gained notoriety throughout North America and western Europe last spring through an international press campaign that distorted the facts of the workers' struggle beyond belief.

Press agency reporters, accepting the interpretation of the papers' owners

without question, portrayed the workers' fight for a non-partisan daily as a Communist Party attempt to seize the paper. The 'professional' media used the *Republica* case a significant example of how "Communists" were allegedly imposing a new dictatorship on the Portuguese people.

But since July, *Republica* workers were publishing a paper frequently hostile to the Communist Party - attempting to present news and analysis "at the service of the working class and the rest of the exploited classes" - without promoting any political party, according to their editorial statutes.

By ART MOSES
For Canadian University Press

The paper emphasized news from grass roots popular organizations - workers' commission, residents' commissions, peasants' organizations, soldiers' groups. The journalism had been mediocre at times - especially in earlier issues, but was courageous and informative, describing efforts of common people to better their lives and build a new society.

Major decisions in *Republica* were made by the workers' commission, elected by the workers and subject to immediate recall. Composing room staff and typesetters - who led the struggle against the owners - established a three-member political commission with authority to approve all

significant political statements in the paper.

Newsroom staff were divided into subject areas, such with a co-ordinator elected by the workers. All the co-ordinators met each morning to plan the first and last pages, produced by a general co-ordinator.

Before the fall of fascism here in April 1974, *Republica* was the voice of restrained opposition to the regime. Soon afterwards, publisher Raul Rego began openly favoring the Socialist Party in editorials, and in the choice and placement of news stories.

Republica's printing workers didn't approve.

In October 1974 they held their first large plenary, contesting the ideological line of the paper. They demanded an independent, non-partisan paper at the service of the Portuguese revolution. The Socialists' emphasis on western European-style electoral democracy didn't impress the workers, who wanted changed economic relationships and a more deeply-rooted democracy than merely voting every four years in the new Portugal.

But with the PS gearing up for its long battle against the Communist Party and other leftist organizations, *Republica*'s publishers were in no mood for compromise.

Some fourteen journalists quit the paper last winter, protesting its partisan approach.

All these facts were ignored by the international press in its hysterical

**Whoever would
overthrow the liberty
of a nation must begin
by subduing the
freeness of the Press**

--- BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
