

campaign against *Republica's* workers. (In a well-documented academic study, a Swedish journalism student shows how the newspapers in his country systematically accepted Rego's claims and ignored the workers' side. The Swedish press was echoing the behaviour of news media in North America and the rest of northern Europe.)

Matters came to head when Rego tried to fire an administrative worker for his opposition. The printing workers petitioned against the dismissal, and on May 2 they prepared an issue of *Republica* themselves. But Rego refused to authorize it. Because the mailers and clerical staff were not yet committed to the fight, the printers couldn't put it out.

But by May 19 the mailers and clerical staff were behind the printers. They again tried to publish on their own.

Thousands of PS demonstrators surrounded *Republica's* building, throwing stones and threatening the workers. COPCON, the now-extinct military security force, had to rescue them at six a.m., and few copies were distributed.

COPCON ordered the paper closed.

The PS demanded the military guarantee Rego's continued control. The party threatened to leave the government - at that time dominated by leftist military figures and the Communist Party - if it didn't agree.

But by July 10 *Republica's* workers had formed solid links with other workers' organizations, and declared their intention to publish again. The government sided with Rego, but faced with widespread popular support for the workers, COPCON soldiers let them inside.

The military leadership acquiesced by appointing the figure head 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.

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 the rules entirely stacked on his side.

"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. Then 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 Almeida 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 Renascença, 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."