

**HERMES AUGUSTO COSTA**

**PORTUGUESE TRADE UNION PARTICIPATION IN EUROPE:  
THE CGTP AFFILIATION WITH ETUC**

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Faculty of Economics and Centre for Social Studies

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**1. Introduction**

Many of the existing studies on contemporary trade unionism have emphasised the idea of 'crisis'. This idea resides, for instance, in the absence of an articulation of interests about the working class, in the lack of solidarity among trade union members in the face of the emergence of contemporary individualism, in the weakening of trade union action (struggle), or in a low social representativeness which frequently takes the form of a decrease in trade union membership rates.<sup>1</sup>

This unfavourable scenario occurs within a context of intensification of transnational interactions which are, among other designations, known as globalisation or transnationalisation. Although not a new phenomenon<sup>2</sup>, globalisation has reached an almost uncontrollable dimension, weakening the role of trade unions and questioning the States' capacity to regulate the activities occurring within their own frontiers.

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\* This text is a slightly revised version of the article 'A globalização do sindicalismo como desafio: a adesão da CGTP à CES' (Trade union globalisation as a challenge: the CGTP affiliation with ETUC), published in the *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, 51, June 1998, pp. 69-107. It consists in a summary of an M.A. dissertation in Sociology entitled *Os Desafios da Globalização ao Sindicalismo: Contributos para uma Perspectiva Portuguesa* (The Challenges of Globalisation for Trade Unionism: A Contribution towards a Portuguese Perspective) (1997). The thesis was publicly discussed in the Faculty of Economics, University of Coimbra within the Programme 'As Sociedades Nacionais Perante os processos de Globalização' (National Societies Facing the Processes of Globalisation), co-ordinated by Professor Boaventura de Sousa Santos.

The research for this paper has been developed within the framework of the research project on 'O Movimento Sindical Português Perante os Desafios da Globalização' (The Portuguese Trade Union Movement Facing the Challenges of Globalisation) – Ref. PRAXIS PCSH/P/SOC/118/96 –, financed by JNICT and recently concluded at the Centro de Estudos Sociais.

<sup>1</sup> As far as the Portuguese case is concerned, recent studies show that there has been a clear decrease in unionisation, in the line of a parallel world-wide tendency. According to ILO (BIT, 1997: 252) unionisation in Portugal fell to 25.6% in 1995, that is, to almost half of the 51.4% registered ten years before (the most important decrease in the countries of the European Union). Other data reveal that 'from the period 1979-84 up to 1991-95, the trade union movement had an yearly average loss of about 44 thousand unionised workers, the most relevant drop having occurred in the second half of the eighties: about 320 thousand in 1985-90 against 200 thousand in 1991-95' (Cerdeira, 1997: 48); see also Visser (1991), Stoleroff and Naumann (1993), Waddington, Hoffmann and Lind (1997), amongst others.

<sup>2</sup> On this, see the discussion promoted by Hirst and Thompson (1996: 6), Hoffmann and Hoffmann (1997: 7-13) or Hyman (1999: 90-92) on globalisation as a myth *versus* globalisation as a reality.

The weight of globalisation has therefore functioned as a stimulus for trade unions to reactively try and find the 'functional equivalent' of that process in the domain of labour; so much more so because, unlike the aspiration of the 19th century workers movement, 'it was the capitalists from all over the world who did unite, not the workers' (Santos, 1995: 138). Even considering the fact that the appropriation of a transnational scale of trade union activity did not constitute a totally new challenge – for one cannot forget the role played by Workers Internationals since 1864 (the year when the International Workers' Association was created) – it is a fact that, as a consequence of the 'Cold War', the State became an active and dynamic subject, with a strong capacity for intervention in society. The key note was therefore that the logic of the relations between States began determining the logic of trade unions. The gradual exhaustion of that model since the seventies progressively generated the conditions for a trade union globalisation to be opposed to that globalisation which was led by financial markets and multinational companies. And as though the full presence of economic globalisation were not enough, trade union globalisation collides with a number of obstacles which are difficult to overcome, namely: a) national trade union roots – as a consequence of that there are differences between countries both as to their capacity to mobilise workers and as to the decisive weight of ideological factors in trade union organization (Jensen, Madsen and Due, 1995: 9; Visser, 1995: 44-45; Gobin, 1998: 199-200); b) a lack of theorisation on the theme, which reflects the absence of many concrete movements towards that same globalisation (Turner, 1998: 210)<sup>3</sup>; c) the inclusion of the countries' logic of competition in the acting strategies of trade unions, which may generate forced forms of trade union globalisation (Costa, 1997: 235-236; 251; Costa, 1998a: 32). That is, if, on the one hand, the constitution of trade union strategies of unity is stimulated, on the other hand, the emergence of obstacles which generate conflicts within the international labour movement is promoted (Ruzza, 1996: 125).

In performing a social-historical analysis of a transnational trade union affiliation process and specifically addressing the case of the *Confederação Geral dos*

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<sup>3</sup> As is shown by Jensen, Madsen and Due (1995), one of the ways of theorising the globalisation of trade unionism is to make simulations for a transnational regulation scale, on the basis of the trade unions' capacity for organization in terms of social conciliation and collective bargaining at national level. Some possible forms of stimulating that theorisation include, for instance, the discussion of the influence that collective agreements at European level may have on national trade union organizations or the critical

Trabalhadores Portugueses (CGTP - the General Confederation of Portuguese Workers) affiliation with European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), this article can be regarded as an element in the construction of a transnational labour counter-power. This process also creates new opportunities for trade union intervention, although specific practices and rhythms of a national acting pattern should not be abandoned.

Thus, the article starts by looking at both the national and the transnational affirmation of Portuguese trade unionism. It then introduces the main actors involved in the process of CGTP affiliation with ETUC and describes the subsequent tensions thereby generated at the level of organization. I then proceed to a review of the 'causalities' of trade union affiliation (based on the applications for membership and the replies of the organizations involved) and finally produce a provisional balance of the transformations occurring in the period after the affiliation of CGTP with ETUC.

## **2. A late affirmation trade unionism?**

Differently from what happened in other more developed European countries, the timing of Portuguese trade unionism affirmation, both nationally and transnationally, was a belated one. In comparison with those countries, the stages of development of the Portuguese trade union movement are characterised by 'delays and vicissitudes which are connected with the specificity of national history' (Pinto, 1989: 1; 1990; 1991; Baglioni, 1990; Noronha *et al.*, 1993). It is certain that after the proclamation of the freedom of labour as a consequence of the establishment of liberalism in 1834, as soon as 1839, Portugal saw the emergence of its first mutual societies, such as the Sociedade dos Artistas de Lisboa (The Lisbon Artists Society) and the Sociedade dos Tipógrafos (The Printers Society) (Barreto, 1981; 1982). However, trade unions as such – known in Portuguese as 'class associations' - appear between 1880 and 1890. Specially in Lisbon and Oporto there emerge the municipal cobblestone layers associations, the tobacco workers, the graphical arts, the metal workers associations, etc. However, it was only with the 1911 Republican Constitution that a period of development of labour legislation began, although its concrete results could only be seen in the last years of the Republic, through Law 10 415, which came into force on 27 December 1924. It granted trade unions the possibility of associating into

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analysis of the initiatives taken by influential European Union transnational actors such as the European

unions and federations endowed with juridical powers to sign agreements and collective labour contracts.

Any possible image of vitality or precocity that might be associated with the Portuguese trade union movement (Sagnes, 1994: 52) should therefore be relativised especially if we consider the conditions imposed by Salazarism (a dictatorship) on the Portuguese labour movement during an important part of the 20th century. With its defensive (Costa, 1979) and isolationist attitude, the Salazar's regime tried to keep the whole Portuguese society protected from 'external influences' as well as from the modernising impulses which crossed the whole of democratic Europe after the Second World War.

The period of legislative development in the domain of labour made possible by the First Republic was therefore discontinued. It was only after the 'Estatuto do Trabalho Nacional' (the Statute of National Labour) of September 23, 1933 that important Laws were passed, such as Law 23 050, which determined that commerce and industry workers should organize into 'national trade unions'. These were, however, the consequence of a number of serious legal restrictions which took the form of compulsory membership, forced payments of fees or the forbidding of strikes, amongst other things.

For about forty years, the contents of Law 23 050 were kept unchanged, in spite of the fact that, in 1969, under Marcelo Caetano's more open regime, Law 49 058 (July 14) aimed at granting 'a degree of freedom in trade union elections as well as allowing an ampler organization at both the personal and the territorial levels, with the possibility of creating trade unions by areas along with a degree of "verticalisation"' (Almeida, 1996: 32). That 'opening', however, gave way to a new period of repression, with the re-establishment of government control over the unions, starting with the repression of both trade union leadership and demonstrations (Lucena and Gaspar, 1991; Barreto, 1990).

But during the *Estado Novo*, besides internal repression, trade unions were also confronted with the prohibition of international affiliation, for, although it was theoretically possible for trade unions to participate in international meetings, in practice it depended on the government to authorise them. Not even the 25th April 1974

(when democracy was (re)established) were those obstacles immediately removed, for Article 7 of trade union legislation (Law 215-B/75, April 30) forbade, as corporative legislation also did, the affiliation of trade union organizations to international organizations. It was only with Law 773/76 (October 27) that the prohibition was cancelled, with the Portuguese Constitution later allowing an ‘opening to globalisation’, in terms of n° 5 of Article 55, according to which ‘trade union associations have the right to establish relations with or become affiliated to international organizations’.

On the other hand, however, if we consider Regini’s periodization (1992: 2-8) to characterise the development of the labour movement in the most developed European countries – which includes the workers collective mobilisation stage from the end of the sixties to the beginning of the seventies; the social conciliation stage, during the seventies; and the flexibilisation of wage relations and the segmentation of the labour markets, a phase which starts in the early eighties and goes on till the present – it would be legitimate to say that it is not well adjusted to the Portuguese trade union movement for the latter did not follow the same evolution when compared to those countries (Lima, 1991; Santos, 1995: 132-133; Costa, 1997: 148-149). When, during the sixties, those countries had their trade union mobilisation, Portugal was suffering the oppression of Salazar’s regime. When those countries had their macro level social conciliation during the seventies, Portugal was having its 25th April with the institutionalisation of social dialogue consequently developing in the eighties, even if a first step in that direction had been taken in 1978, when the União Geral de Trabalhadores (UGT – the Workers General Union) was created under strong State intervention (Lima, 1991; Santos, 1993; Costa, 1994). Lastly, if macro-conciliation still has a somewhat significant weight in Portugal, in the most developed European countries, the relationships and negotiations between capital and labour have now for fifteen years being given a strong incentive at the micro level of the company (Marques and Ferreira, 1991; Regini, 1995). This lack of national symmetry of Portuguese trade unionism in comparison with that of the most developed European countries consequently led to a later progress towards transnationalisation.

### 3. On the interest of the present research

The main objective of my research was to study the behaviour of the national trade union actors resulting from the appropriation of a transnational scale of trade union organization. With that objective in mind, I held the following hypotheses: a) the apology of trade union globalisation or transnationalisation (even if limited to the European context) confirms the existence of a defensive trade union position which may be taken as a response to the fact that economy became too globalised in terms of the political structure it was based on. The transnationalisation of companies thus constitutes the basic reason for the parallel efforts from the trade union point of view; b) the Portuguese trade union movement inscribes itself in that comprehensive logic of trade union transnationalisation (despite the aforementioned delays). However, the fact that the challenge was almost simultaneous with the emergence of national trade union organizations themselves has generated factors of a more open nature which propitiated new opportunities for the consolidation of the institutions and restrictive factors of vulnerability or institutional destruction. Given these ambiguities, through an analysis of a transnational trade union affiliation process, this paper asks whether action at this level allows to compensate for the limitations of the national trade union regulation pattern.

This interest in CGTP's affiliation with ETUC is justified not only by the fact that CGTP had never been a member of any international trade union organization – even if it had developed very close links with the communist-oriented World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) –, but also because the ETUC is an organization which is ideologically opposed to CGTP. Yet another reason was the fact that it would be extremely interesting to understand why CGTP first submitted an application for membership as far back as 1979, a time when there was actually no mention of a collapse of the Eastern European countries' model of trade unionism, which CGTP supported. For those reasons, studying a process like this meant analysing it not only in terms of the post-affiliation period, but certainly also in terms of the preceding conditions which determined the affiliation *de jure* (January 1995).

The transnational trade union challenge which constitutes the object of this study is simultaneously 'new', because of its recent materialisation, and 'old', because it had been a long-desired aspiration. The period (of about fifteen years) between the



applications for membership and their actual approval clearly evinces the obstacles which entangled the process. In order to analyse those hindrances, as well as the motives for the affiliation and the transformations felt after the process was completed, I have interviewed some UGT and CGTP present and former leaders, as well as founding members, present and former technicians and also some ETUC members and researchers on 'trade unionism'.

Considering the fact that many of the contacts made during the process of affiliation took the form of 'foreign affairs' and diplomacy actions, the question of documentation was a matter of lesser concern<sup>4</sup>. In the face of that 'sociology of absences', the solution was to resort to (un)available documents (unpublished or of restricted publication) belonging to the CGTP/ETUC 'trade union correspondence', which mainly include the application documents (only two formal ones) and the ETUC respective replies. In the light of the interviews made, the documents made available by the organizations, press analysis and a large number of informal contacts (the latter having proved a very useful channel, for it granted me access to some unpublished papers), I thus managed to collect the information needed to characterise the insertion of CGTP in a type of trade unionism of pluralistic tendencies as was the ETUC's, as well as assess the social and temporal transformations associated with trade union transnationalisation.

#### **4. Actors and tensions in trade union globalisation**

On the first of January 1995, CGTP became a member of a transnational trade union organization, the ETUC, for the first time in its history. Seen as the product of a reassessment of the relationship between trade union actors, the event constituted an opportunity to promote institutional experiments which could reveal new European forms of cooperation. The transnational labour recomposition thereby projected did not however erase the traditional CGTP 'alliances' on both the European and the general international stages. Let us then proceed to a short introductory description of the 'inclinations' of both organizations, CGTP and the ETUC. After that, I shall mention another national trade union actor, UGT, whose role in this process of affiliation is closely connected with the tensions generated in the context of organizational scale.

#### 4.1. A brief introduction of the actors: CGTP and the ETUC

CGTP is an organization of the utmost relevance in Portuguese society, having been not only the major heir to the corporative trade union structure, but also remaining for almost a whole decade the sole national trade union confederation.

The roots and principles of CGTP are based upon ‘the glorious organization and struggle traditions of the working classes’ and the organization sees itself as ‘a trade union class organization, unitary, democratic and of the masses’. The ‘class nature’ of CGTP – linked to the recognition of the ‘determining role of class struggle in the historical evolution of mankind’ – is after all the key concept which generates a set of principles – unity, democracy, independence, solidarity and mass trade unionism – all of them ‘inseparable and interdependent, which direct and characterise the organization’s options, both in terms of the definition of their claims and programmatic objectives and in terms of the definition of its forms of action and struggle, as well as also in its structure and organization’ (CGTP, 1996a: 4-6).

Some of the CGTP present and former leaders do not wish to hide the long history of close articulation between the confederation and the Partido Comunista Português (PCP, the Portuguese Communist Party) which determined CGTP’s trade union policies, programmes and plans of action. Reminding the words of José Pedro Castanheira, one might say that it constitutes a type of *political trade unionism*, because ‘for CGTP, the space and the means of trade union and political action are the same. Trade union action should always have political consequences. And it is equally important for political action to also have consequences at the trade union level’ (Castanheira, 1985: 812).

One might also simultaneously talk about a *disputing* type of *trade unionism* against the so-called bourgeois power, as is proven by the confederation’s vehement dispute against government and employers’ actions, since ‘each falling government is interpreted as a defeat of the bourgeoisie and, to that same extent, as a victory won by the organized working classes’ (Castanheira, 1985: 812). Even if its discourse is now less inflamed than it was in the past, CGTP likes to emphasise that ‘the growing accumulation of and centralisation of capital with the consequent market control, on the

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with a CGTP leader (International Relations Department, January 1996) and with a Deputy

one hand, and the unstoppable growth in unemployment and lack of social protection which lead to social exclusion on the other, are the most visible and revealing signs of the negative consequences of neo-liberal policies' (CGTP; 1996b: 9)<sup>5</sup> Thus a disputing concept of trade unionism is enhanced in detriment of a participatory attitude (Rosa, 1998)<sup>6</sup>.

CGTP's faithfulness to the class principles and interests defended at the national level has determined its international contacts. That is, the organization's alignment with WFTU reproduces the political plan and positioning defended at home, the same being true of the relationship between UGT (created in 1978) and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).

CGTP's international relations were therefore almost exclusively limited to WFTU, a fact which could be witnessed in the early eighties when *Solidarnosc* was created in Poland. As it had refused to condemn the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, CGTP did not condemn the illegalisation of 'Solidarity' by the socialist regime, nor did it condemn the repression of its leaders and activists, justifying Jaruzelski's coup in terms of it being included in a set of actions which aimed at consolidating socialism (Castanheira, 1985: 815). As a consequence of that, CGTP was closer to the WFTU and simultaneously more distant from other European trade union tendencies which promptly condemned those events. In that context, the refusal of the CGTP's request to join the ETUC in January 1979 acquired a deeper meaning, and all the more so because, as Gobin points out (1992: 41), one of the specific resolutions of the ETUC Fourth Statutory Congress (which took place in Haye, April 19 to 23, 1982) took the form of an accusation (and indignation) against the military coup of 13 December in Poland which led to the abolishment of democratic and trade union rights and the imprisonment of a large number of *Solidarnosc* trade unionists. The only curiosity behind that proximity between CGTP and WFTU resided in the fact that there was no formal affiliation, 'for

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General Secretary of the ETUC (February 1998).

<sup>5</sup> On this, and especially on the accusations made by CGTP against neo-liberal globalisation, see CGTP (1998: 5-6).

<sup>6</sup> No one can deny that CGTP has given an invaluable major contribution to many bargaining processes. Even if they became members of the then Permanent Council for Social Conciliation as late as 1987 (that is, three years after it was created) the outcome of many social conciliation agreements was certainly due to their decisive contribution. Nevertheless, the fact that the disputing tendency within the confederation has been consistently stronger than the tendency for participation 'till the final agreement' confirms the existence of a *disputing trade unionism*.

reasons of prudence and balance within the federation and because it would be a sort of announced death of unity'<sup>7</sup>.

In the meantime, certain sectors whereupon CGTP had found support would end up by determining the rhythm of new policies related to transnational issues. Cerdeira and Rosa (1992: 86) point out the fact that, in 1987, the majority forces within the *Federação dos Metalúrgicos* (the Metal Workers Federation) and the *União dos Sindicatos de Lisboa* (the Union of Lisbon Trade Unions) were opposed to CGTP accepting the entrance of Portugal in the EEC, for it would mean national disturbances and the reinforcement of capitalist domination. Ten years later, the matter had not been altogether forgotten, given the CGTP's critical approach of it. As is patent in the Eighth Congress 'Programme for Action', 'Portuguese membership of the EEC was negatively marked by the negotiations of the Accession Treaty (...). Being a less developed and a more dependent country than the other EEC member States, Portugal should have negotiated the Accession Treaty in such a way as to guarantee the time needed for agriculture, fishing, industry and services to adapt, modernise and restructure themselves so as to be able to face stronger competition both from the EEC countries and from third countries with privileged relations to the EEC' (CGTP, 1996b: 102). To emphasise that notion, it is also stated that 'not everything "that comes from Europe" is either modern or inevitable. The dominant EU guidelines are subordinated to the interests of monopoly groups interested in ensuring an ample basis in the process of capitalist accumulation' (CGTP, 1996b: 103).<sup>8</sup>

Recently completing 25 years of life, the ETUC was founded, like CGTP, in the early seventies, although its origins date back to the early 50s, as a result of a set of initiatives led by the ICFTU, an organization of socialist and social-democratic tendencies which included the vast majority of trade unions organizations in the Western world<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Kalidás Barreto (former CGTP leader), interviewed by *Expresso* on August 17 1996.

<sup>8</sup> See also CGTP (1999: 2).

<sup>9</sup> For a more detailed social-historical analysis of the ETUC set up process, which, since 1952, involved the creation of several organizations and the merging of trade union organizations, see Barnouin (1986), Debunne (1987), Portelli (1990), Blaise (1992), Groux, Mouriaux and Pernot (1993), Sagnes (1994), Dürmeier and Grundheber-Pilgram (1996), Oesterheld and Olle (1998), among others.

From the standpoint of its leaders, the specific character of the ETUC consists in being a unitary, pluralist organization which represents national confederations of different trade union tendencies. Recent data show that there has been an increase in the number of its members: '65 National Trade Union Confederations from 28 countries and 14 European Industry Federations with a total of 59 million members' (ETUC, 1999: 2).

Among the objectives set by the ETUC there can be counted the defence of a strong trade unionism with an innovative and agglutinative capacity, structured at European level both in the professional and in the inter-professional planes. A new balance between economic efficiency and social justice will only be feasible if trade unionism is capable of integrating those features. For the ETUC, the scenario of economic efficiency and social justice entails the conclusion of the Domestic Market and progresses towards the Economic and Monetary Union. Europe will only be able to find its path towards development and prosperity in a scenario where the construction of Europe can be developed, that is, a scenario where full employment, the multiplication of job opportunities, environmental issues and social cohesion are considered priority issues (CES, 1995a: 5). But the ETUC 'remains convinced that European integration cannot be confined to the single market and the single currency. The process must be completed by a real Social Union – of which developed industrial relations form an essential part – and evolve towards a Political Union based on democratic institutions and the full recognition of civil and social rights' (CES, 1999: 3-4).

During the last four years, employment and solidarity were de main priorities of ETUC for Europe. The motto of the Eighth ETUC Congress (9-12 May 1995) 'Placing employment and solidarity in the heart of Europe' – was accompanied by a project for a statement of principles submitted to the Congress by the ETUC Steering Committee. The chapters of that project – *Employment: The Greatest Challenge; A Sustainable and Durable Development; Promoting the European Social Model; Dinamising the Labour Market; Negotiating the Reorganization of Working Time; Social Europe, an Aspect of European Integration; Consolidating European Trade Union Power* – which shall not be dealt with in detail here, give us a panorama of the ETUC's objectives.

From what has been stated, we may detect some differences between CGTP and the ETUC's respective views on trade unionism. However, from the point of view of CGTP, being an affiliate to the ETUC meant that new paths could be opened up for a 'real intervention of the Portuguese trade union movement in the context of Community and European institutions in general. [Moreover,] Portuguese workers see their capacity for intervention strengthened in different spaces, namely in the organization of workers in multinational companies. The ways and possibilities of inter-sectoral and interregional co-operation have become wider...' (Lança, 1994: 4). In its latest Congress, CGTP further defended an international activity based upon dialogue as well as on bilateral and multilateral co-operation which could protect the Portuguese trade union movement from the negative impacts of transnational companies (CGTP, 1996b: 117).

As far as the ETUC leaders are concerned, even considering the fact that it constitutes a direct inheritor from ICFTU, many of their public interventions have been noted for their open and pluralistic discourse. That is the context within which the affiliation, *de facto* and *de jure*, of CGTP can be understood, and probably that type of discourse also justifies the opening of the ETUC to the trade union organizations of Western European countries, themselves equally important references of an European labour counter-power which can be able to oppose the strength of transnational companies.

#### **4.2. Tensions at the level of organization**

CGTP's membership of the ETUC was caused by both transnational and national dynamics: the former include the fact that CGTP's affiliation with ETUC meant that the Portuguese organization became a member of the European one and not the opposite; the national dynamics reside in the fact that only when a national trade union actor like UGT did declare itself in favour of the affiliation, not using the 'right to veto' it had due to its quality as an ETUC member, could CGTP's membership be finally approved.

The analysis of the 'UGT factor' leads us into that rather complex issue concerning the 'right to veto'. It is a complex issue because, in fact, the ETUC Statutes do not include that specific procedure, although, in 1979, the ETUC Executive

Committee had manifested the view that it would be important for affiliated organizations to be heard whenever new applications for affiliation from the same country were submitted. That 'right' has always been a practice or even an informal resource used by the organizations affiliated to the ETUC to de-authorize certain applicants, although it was mainly incorporated by either the DGB or TUC (Groux, Mouriaux and Pernot, 1993: 35), two trade union confederations of great influence within the ETUC. However, other national trade union confederations have used that 'law out of books' – France was an example of that opposition, with CFDT and the FO resisting the CGT (whose affiliation with ETUC took place in March 1999)<sup>10</sup> – and this is not even an exclusive practice of the confederate threshold.<sup>11</sup>

By making it difficult for CGTP to join the ETUC for years, UGT was reproducing in the ETUC European arena – which the latter had joined in 1983, after having become affiliated to the ICFTU in 1979 – the very imprint of their internal confrontations at national level, a fact which resulted in not very favourable critical judgements on the part of CGTP. Because it was an immediate product of both the ICFTU and the ETUC (both of which were organizations which did not mirror CGTP in ideological terms) the UGT easily maximised the emerging opportunities it saw, or was given, soon after it was founded. In truth, 'UGT was, in itself, a project breaking out of the eggshell, shall we say, just like the image of the little chicken being born, and, therefore, like a little chicken being born ... fragile. Therefore, UGT itself needed international support to grow up and consolidate itself. Besides all that, UGT, which had always been linked to the International Socialist trade union World (...), also needed to fight CGTP at home ...'<sup>12</sup> Besides that, it should also be noted that 'the field was ready for us, with ample support from the Germans, all the Northerners, the Spanish, the French, the Italians'<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Interviews with a member of the CGTP Executive Committee (October 1996) and with a leader of the Federação de Sindicatos do Mar (Federation of Sea Trade Unions), CGTP (August 1996).

<sup>11</sup> The veto became a habit for the ICFTU federal organizations as was the case of the International Federation of Commercial, Clerical, Professional and Technical Employees (FIET), where it was a 'respected practice, a school' (interview with a member of the National Secretariat of UGT and of the Board of the Sindicato dos Bancários do Sul e Ilhas (the Bankers of the South and Islands Trade Union) (June 1996), or of the International Transport Federation (ITF) which 'seeks the counsel of all its affiliates whenever there is a new national applicant' (interview with a leader of the Federação de Sindicatos do Mar/CGTP, August 1996).

<sup>12</sup> A member of the General Secretariat of UGT and of the Board of the Sindicato dos Bancários do Sul e Ilhas, interview (June 1996).

<sup>13</sup> A member of the Secretariat for International Relations of UGT, interview (October 1996).

Even now, some UGT leaders still maintain that the veto UGT resorted to was nothing but a legitimate practice and one simultaneously legitimated by the ETUC<sup>14</sup>, especially because the Portuguese organization was interested not only in ensuring political and financial support from abroad (Eisfeld, 1983) but it was also interested in projecting a trademark image of itself conveying the notion that the Portuguese democratic trade union movement was solely and exclusively represented by UGT.

In one of the publications issued by the important ETUC information body – the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) – a ‘pro-UGT’ attitude can be observed, a fact which may be explained by the circumstance that the publication in question was drawn by its representatives. The following could be read concerning the comment on the relationship between the two Portuguese confederations: ‘there is no institutional relationship between UGT and CGTP, since the latter insists in calling itself the only confederation. Often did UGT make proposals for conversations with CGTP-IN in order that they might lead, at least at certain levels, to a unity of action’ (ISE, 1988). Notwithstanding the fact that it aims at producing a global image of the Portuguese trade union panorama, the ETUI brochure was after all manifestly selective. That seems to be apparent also when it declares that ‘the administrative bodies of CGTP-IN are mostly made up of PCP militants [and] there are also CGTP leaders who are members of the PCP administrative bodies’ (ISE, 1988: 54) or when it is stated that ‘the labour radicalism which characterised CGTP-IN after the 25th April 1974’ took the form of a brutal decrease in the wage range and it seriously limited the expression of minority groups (ISE, 1988: 58).

In order to illustrate the reference to the actions of ‘victimisation’ or ‘ghettoisation’ CGTP complained of being a victim of, we shall now consider a concrete situation which occurred in the graphical sector and involved a sectoral organization of CGTP. Although CGTP’s full membership of the ETUC was granted only in December 1994, the *Federação Portuguesa dos Sindicatos das Indústrias de Celulose, Papel, Gráfica e Imprensa* (Portuguese Federation of the Cellulose, Paper, Printing and Press Industries Trade Unions) – better known as *Federação dos Gráficos* (Graphical Workers’ Federation) – has been affiliated to the European federation of that sector

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<sup>14</sup> Interviews with a member of the Secretariat for International Relations of UGT and with a member of the National Secretariat of UGT and of the Board of the SETACCOP/UGT (October and September 1996, respectively).



since 1991, the latter federation – the European Graphical Federation (EGF) – being a sectoral organization of the ETUC and also a continental organization of the International Graphical Federation (IGF– affiliated to ICFTU). What did happen was that in May and June of that same year, the International Secretary of UGT has supposedly sent some letters bearing the UGT stamp to both IGF and to other ETUC affiliates. According to the following description made by a leader of the CGTP Federação dos Gráficos, those letters were sent after a visit to Portugal made by the President and the General Secretary of IGF.

The contents of those documents read as follows<sup>15</sup>:

‘The first is a translation of a letter addressed to the General Secretary of the International Graphical Federation by Mr. Henrique Coelho, the International Secretary of UGT. Well, we do have a copy of the translation of that letter, a reliable one. This letter, with the UGT stamp, is dated June 4, 91 and addressed, almost from a personal point of view, to the General Secretary, Roberto Tomlins: «Dear Bob: Following our talk in Lisbon on March 25, I would like to inform you that our position concerning the possibility of the CGTP– Inter-Sindical Graphical Workers joining the International Graphical Federation has not been altered. We consider that the necessary conditions have not yet been reached for that Federation to become a member of the International Graphical Federation; unfortunately, our colleagues in the Graphical Federation of CGTP- Inter-Sindical have shown us once again and during the collective bargaining negotiations they had during the month of May that they remain a non-democratic organization, and also how they still are under the control of the Portuguese Communist Party. I am sure that our colleagues in the SINDGRAF will give you more details on this. For your information also, and in order that it be possible to give an adequate vision to the members of the Executive Committee of the International Graphical Federation, I hereby enclose a copy of the letter we sent the organizations affiliated to the European Trade Union Confederation in the end of May. Looking forward to receiving your quick reply and always available to provide any extra piece of information, with our brotherly regards, Henrique Coelho».

This letter has the date of June, the General Secretary and the President of this organization had meetings with us in Portugal in May and with the UGT themselves, and we were formally accepted as members of the International Graphical Federation in July of that same year, in spite of all the barriers, plots, and petty complaints.

Then there is a letter, also signed by Mr Henrique Coelho, the International Secretary of UGT, addressed to all organizations affiliated to the European Trade Union Confederation and to the ICFTU on 27 May 1991; this is the translation: «Dear brothers, you’ll find enclosed the translation of a newspaper cut from ‘O Jornal’, May 17, 1991 issue, on the affinities between CGTP Inter-Sindical and the

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<sup>15</sup> I was repeatedly told that those were internal documents of the IGF (and of the EGF), and therefore could not be photocopied. The reason for the fact that they did not include either the stamp with UGT’s symbol or the signature of their International Secretary was, according to what I was told, that they were just transcriptions of the original documents (originally written in French). However, to prove that they really were reliable, I was given permission to quote the letters in question, being allowed to see them and to listen to a reading of them, which I could also record.

Portuguese Communist Party. We consider it unnecessary to make any additional comments besides what you can read in the document. Fraternal greetings. Henrique Coelho». This letter is accompanied by a photocopy of an article published in the newspaper 'O Jornal', May 17, 1991, with the title «Disagreements: PCP mistrusts the Inter's Administrative Board» where there is a photograph of Carvalho da Silva with somebody at the PCP headquarters...<sup>16</sup>

It should however be noted that the fact that UGT had for long years supposedly tried to hinder CGTP's affiliation with ETUC does not mean that CGTP had not tried to do it too, for between the set up of UGT, in October 1978, and its affiliation with ETUC, in February 1983, there was a period of not much more than four years during which something could have been done, especially at an individual level:

'The meeting where the affiliation of UGT was decided was postponed, about at least three times, three times with no majority to justify it. I had some privileged relationships with the Belgian trade union movement, where I worked for ten years with the FGTB, an ICFTU affiliate and a founding member of the ETUC. I therefore had some influence on the trade union movement, I knew all those people. (...) In that situation, then, I had acquaintances and connections in the European trade union movement, and some doors were open to me...'<sup>17</sup>

Independently of certain individual cases of protagonism, the idea remains that the inevitability of the presence of UGT in the ETUC had been decided from the start, in 1979, the moment of its affiliation with ICFTU. As a corollary of that, UGT activated some foci of 'national resistance' (which were reinforced by its affiliation with ETUC in 1983), even if some of its present leaders show some caution when commenting on the strong statements contained in the letters quoted above – although they do not deny them. The possible obstacles to the affiliation of CGTP with ETUC set by UGT as a member of the ETUC over a period of years indicate how the integration of national trade union confederations into transnational instances evinces contradictory rhythms of institutionalisation, since that type of integration can subvert the hegemonic combinations of transnational architecture.

## **5. The CGTP affiliation with ETUC: a look at its causes**

As I see it, CGTP's adhesion to a transnational trade union 'project' is based upon factors which were external to it, although for years CGTP rested upon discourses

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<sup>16</sup> A leader of the CGTP Federação dos Gráficos (Graphical Federation), interview (August 1996).

<sup>17</sup> Former head of the international department of CGTP, interview (July 1996).

of trade union affiliation which were meant to enhance national trade union performances.

### 5.1. The first application for membership

The first CGTP application for affiliation with ETUC was formally submitted on January 15, 1979, through a letter addressed to the then General Secretary of the ETUC, Mathias Hinterscheid, by the National Secretariat of CGTP. The arguments used to justify the application functioned, as Max Weber would put it, as ‘adequate causes’ for obtaining the result desired – CGTP’s *de jure* affiliation – and were presented in the following terms:

‘CGTP-IN was founded in 1970 and is a unitary, democratic, class organization of masses developing its action with complete independence regarding Employers, the State, Religious Beliefs and other political associations or groups of a non trade union nature.

The whole of CGTP’s internal life is directed by democratic principles and by the right to freely express and discuss all the different points of view of Portuguese workers.

The vast majority of unionised Portuguese workers are members of CGTP-IN: men and women of the most diverse political tendencies and opinions as well as the most diverse philosophical and religious beliefs.

As you know, CGTP is not affiliated to any of the three world Trade Union Federations, ICFTU, WCL and WFTU, a fact which has not prevented CGTP from trying to maintain the best relations of friendship and co-operation with them, based on the Program for Action approved in the ‘Congresso de Todos os Sindicatos’ (All Trade Unions Congress) (...).

This being all, please, dear comrade, be the recipient of our fraternal trade union greetings.

On behalf of the National Secretariat of CGTP-IN: Álvaro Rana, Armando Teixeira da Silva, Joaquim Calhau, José E. Cartaxo, José Luís Judas, L. Kalidás Barreto, Manuel Carvalho da Silva, Manuel Lopes, Maria do Carmo’<sup>18</sup>

After this first formal application, through its November 29 and 30, 1979 Executive Committee, ETUC would call CGTP’s attention to the fact that membership applications should be analysed according to objectively verified criteria and, on the other, according to political assessment criteria. It would be fundamental for affiliated organizations to possess the maximum amount of information on the nature, the type of activities and the behaviour or political aims of those applying for membership. In those terms, the list of ‘affiliation criteria’ adopted by the ETUC Executive Committee in order to accept affiliation includes: ‘fundamental criteria’ – a) to have a democratic

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<sup>18</sup> Letter concerning the first CGTP application for affiliation with ETUC, January 15, 1979.

statute; b) autonomy regarding governments and parties; c) a commitment to the principles of free, democratic and independent trade unionism as defended by ETUC –; ‘organizational criteria’ – to be a representative organization in the country of origin; to represent workers of different categories and sectors of activity –; ‘geographical criteria’ – a possible previous affiliation with an Western European intergovernmental organization – or, ‘general criteria’ – respect for the ETUC’s statutes, objectives and political practice; availability to co-operate at European level; respect for the opinion of the affiliated confederations regarding their own country’s applicants<sup>19</sup>.

It certainly was not by chance that the context in which CGTP formally submitted their application for affiliation almost coincided with the moment when UGT was constituted, October 27 and 28, 1978. The decision was taken during the Trade Union Plenary Meeting of December 16, 1978, about six weeks after UGT was founded. The first application should therefore not be considered independently of the growing affirmation of UGT, evident since February 1976 with the ‘Carta Aberta’ movement. UGT was after all ‘a stimulus for CGTP to fight at international level<sup>20</sup>, and that application for membership was a defensive practice on the part of CGTP in order to protect their external image, not allowing it to be unduly undervalued.

After some time, and despite the fact that some of the internal motives invoked by CGTP actually met the affiliation criteria set by the ETUC (the question of representativeness, for example), the latter would end up by refusing CGTP’s application in 1982, ‘considering your fundamental conceptions of society, the role of trade unions in this society and your political practice, the Executive Committee believes that you do not meet the necessary criteria. Therefore, the Committee considers that your affiliation would damage ETUC’s internal cohesion rather than reinforce its political impact’<sup>21</sup>.

Independently from the “adequate causes” which formed the basis of the first application for affiliation and emphasised the logic of internal organization of CGTP, the motives for accession to the largest European trade union forum were strongly

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<sup>19</sup> Annex including the ‘affiliation criteria’ set by the ETUC (December 7, 1979) to the letter addressed to CGTP by Mathias Hinterscheid (General Secretary of the ETUC), December 14, 1979.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with a former head of the CGTP international department, (July 1996).

<sup>21</sup> Letter by Mathias Hinterscheid to CGTP, February 5, 1982. An extra factor which displeased the ETUC was an ‘anti-Europeanist’ stand on the part of CGTP (interview with a Deputy General Secretary of the ETUC, February 1998).

influenced by external factors, especially after the second half of the eighties. In fact, 'the positions of CGTP had their origin in international rather than national factors. The national factors really amounted to competition with UGT and concern about UGT'<sup>22</sup> From among the centripetal stimuli, besides the accession of Portugal to the EEC, there may be especially mentioned the fall of the 'Eastern block' (both events happening during the 1980s), the 'opening' of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (which had an important role in the constitution of UGT) and the weakening of UGT's systematic opposition (these two factors becoming more significant only during the nineties and, especially the second one, being more closely associated with the period closer to affiliation).

The accession of Portugal to the EEC and the end of the 'Eastern Block' actually ended up by being associated, as the following passages illustrate:

'There were facts that happened in the world and that have in some way influenced all this. On the one hand, the fall of the "Soviet Block", which had some weight in the international relations of CGTP, namely through the WFTU, to which CGTP was closely connected and strongly influenced by (...) When the soviet Block fell, Portugal also joined Europe, the EEC. The Eastern Block falls in 1989 and we join the EEC in 1986 and all that facilitated the tendencies that supported CGTP's insertion in ETUC, making our reasons victorious'<sup>23</sup>.

As for the gradual closeness between the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and CGTP, the weight of centripetal factors also seems to be evident:

'In fact, I should really tell you that I did not have this job that I have here in the international department and I had "semiclandestine" contacts already, the word is a strong one, but that's how it is, with the Foundation's representatives (...). I had regular contacts with them to help the Foundation analyse some of the questions that had to do with us, because we were reliable sources for the knowledge of Portuguese reality (...). And I am telling you about contacts I had which were not of my own responsibility, they were of their responsibility, of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. Whenever they wanted to know about something with rigour, it was us they would contact'<sup>24</sup>.

Finally, and as far as the end of the opposition from UGT is concerned, we also have a factor which is external to CGTP, even if it is internal to the Portuguese trade union movement (Costa, 1999: 213-229). According to an interview with an important

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<sup>22</sup> Founding member of CGTP (socialist tendency), interview (July 1996).

<sup>23</sup> Founding member of CGTP (socialist tendency), interview (July 1996).

<sup>24</sup> CGTP 'International Relations' officer, interview (March 1996). It seems undoubtedly true that 'in the past that would be unthinkable, because the word among the communist trend of CGTP was that they were the real enemies, for, in truth, it was with the money of Friedrich Ebert Foundation that we got UGT' (CGTP founding member, socialist tendency, interview, July 1996).

member of the National Secretariat of UGT, 'it was possible for CGTP to join the ETUC only because it had UGT's support'<sup>25</sup>. The same leader goes on stating that 'CGTP itself was forced to recognise UGT as an organization because UGT consolidated hardly, with difficulty, but it managed to consolidate as a trade union project, a trade union organization'. From these statements it can be concluded that it was in exchange for a certain 'recognition of the other' imposed on CGTP from the outside that the conditions were gradually created for its international recognition.

## **5.2. The second application for affiliation and the ETUC assent**

CGTP submitted a second application for affiliation with ETUC towards the end of 1992. In this application they reminded the Confederation that CGTP had for some years then been co-operating bilaterally with many of the organizations affiliated to the ETUC<sup>26</sup> and also that reciprocal contacts with the administrative bodies of that organization had been increasing. That situation had created a better mutual knowledge and built up stronger mutual trust, which were becoming apparent via the participation of CGTP in some ETUC initiatives with observer status. The text reads:

'This application for affiliation represents for us the acceptance of the ETUC internal rules and regulations as included in its Statutes, as well as our agreement with the programmatic objectives approved in the 7th Congress held in May 1991 in Luxembourg.

As we formally submit our application for affiliation, CGTP considers it important to evoke the following facts:

1 - CGTP-IN is the most representative trade union organization in Portugal. The number of affiliated workers, including the different professions, is 853,000.

2 - The emergence of CGTP in 1970, during the fascist dictatorship, materialises the unitary commitment of trade unionists from the most diverse political, social, and religious backgrounds and corresponds to the rebirth of the Portuguese trade union movement, with origins dating back to mid-19th century but violently persecuted during the dictatorship period.

The undeniably relevant role it played in the fight against dictatorship and later in the building up and consolidation of the Portuguese democratic regime established

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<sup>25</sup> The UGT blockade was in itself a stimulus for CGTP to display a more combative image and try to be more convincing in projecting it abroad. Therefore, with the end of the UGT veto, CGTP was able to find irreversible conditions for affiliation. As a Deputy General Secretary of the ETUC emphasised, 'the authorisation from UGT was a determining element in the process' (interview, February 1998).

<sup>26</sup> I must highlight the fact that, through the already mentioned Federação Portuguesa dos Sindicatos das Indústrias de Celulose, Papel, Gráfica e Imprensa (Federação dos Gráficos/Graphical Workers' Federation), CGTP did really affiliate to a sectoral organization of ETUC, the EGF, in 1991. This example, which was used to justify the opposition of UGT, can be regarded as an 'anticipatory experiment' in the federal context of what was later to become a reality in confederal terms; on this, see more developments in Costa (1997: 195-197).

on the 25th April is present in its statutes through the consecration of ample democratic and unitary internal regulations (...).

3- On the national level, CGTP develops an intense and unpaired activity in defence of the workers' interests and humanitarian rights: mobilising and organizing the workers trade union struggle; participating in State institutions of different social and economic natures, namely the Economic and Social Council; intervening near the national governing bodies: The President of the Republic, Parliament, Government and Courts of Law; establishing dialogue with all the political forces and parties as well as other civil society organizations in the economic, social and cultural areas.

4 - On the plane of community institutions it participates in the Economic and Social Committee as well as in different paritary and tripartite committees.

5 - CGTP is not, nor ever has been affiliated to any world trade union organization.

Despite that fact, directing itself by the universal values of Peace, Democracy, Human Rights and International Law, it establishes an intense activity of friendship and co-operation with trade union and humanitarian organizations from all continents and of different political, philosophical and religious backgrounds.

We thank you for your attention and hereby send our Trade Union Greetings<sup>27</sup>.

If we compare this with the first application, we conclude that this time there was more discursive attention put into the selection and the structuring of the arguments forwarded, with no major changes in terms of content. That is, the argumentative priority of CGTP is still very much focused on 'national issues'. Those issues – representativeness, for instance, the historical fight against fascism or the defence of the workers' interests and humanitarian values – were selected because CGTP still considered them to be especially favourable namely when compared to UGT. However, they are far from erasing the true basic reasons mentioned before, such as the accession of Portugal to EEC or the fall of the 'Eastern Block'. It should however be noted that here CGTP invokes its participation in some community institutions.

ETUC's acceptance of CGTP's affiliation would follow from this application, which was submitted in November 1992. Even so, during the process, CGTP was confronted with a fact which disturbed its organizational logic: José Luís Judas (the Portuguese figure who was more committed to the affiliation process) withdrew from its ranks during the 7th CGTP Congress, in March 1993. However, the Congress would issue a resolution which may have favourably influenced its intentions and claims for transnational trade union conviviality: participation, alongside with UGT, in a joint

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<sup>27</sup> Letter to Emilio Gabaglio by Manuel Carvalho da Silva, on behalf of the Executive Committee of the National Council, November 28, 1992.

demonstration for employment and 'Social Europe' promoted by the ETUC on April 2, 1993. This shows that CGTP was probably not interested in endangering a 'collective consciousness' which had been growing stronger since the mid-eighties. But, simultaneously, Judas's withdrawal as a 'non-moment' in the affiliation process was mainly used by the UGT trade unionists, who saw that action as maybe their last change to refresh the blockade that had been favourable to them for years. That is how it can be understood that Torres Couto (the General Secretary of UGT at the time) took the opportunity of that internal conflict of CGTP to align with José Luís Judas and criticize the profound feeling of distrust on the part of the CGTP 'radicals'.

Even if some credit can be given to that last 'breath' on the part of UGT to delay the pretensions of CGTP, it was probably only a passing moment, for the path toward affiliation was then acquiring almost final contours. The German DGB itself supposedly manifested a degree of impatience vis-à-vis the slow dragging of the whole process. The fact was that 'after some time it was the others who kept asking UGT, saying: "well, after all, why are they not in? We're prepared to let them in, why are you checking them?". That is, after a time, UGT could not stop the affiliation'<sup>28</sup>. That being a fact, UGT came to recognise publicly that it would assent to the affiliation of CGTP with ETUC. A short press release bearing the title 'UGT supports CGTP-IN affiliation with ETUC' read: 'by invitation of the General Secretary of UGT, José Manuel Torres Couto, a work lunch was held in Brussels, on October 28 with the presence of the General Secretary of The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), Emílio Gabaglio, and the Co-ordinating Secretary of CGTP-IN, Manuel Carvalho da Silva. The aim of that meeting was the preparation of CGTP-IN's affiliation with ETUC, by proposal of UGT.' (UGT, 1994). Albeit brief, these statements show how UGT did not lose the opportunity to reclaim its protagonism in the process. However, having spent years fighting to avoid sharing that protagonism, one might believe that it was only 'officially that UGT sponsored CGTP's membership'<sup>29</sup>.

Besides the ending of UGT's opposition, I think it would be defensible to say that the ETUC accepted CGTP's affiliation based on the "recommendations" of other institutions such as the European Commission. As a matter of fact, in the context of the

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<sup>28</sup> A member of the National Secretariat of UGT and of the Board of the Sindicato dos Bancários do Sul e Ilhas, interview (June 1996).

<sup>29</sup> Former UGT technician and advisor, interview (August 1996).



implementation of the Maastricht Protocol in terms of social policy (especially concerning Articles 3 and 4 of the Protocol), in mid-1993, the European Commission was confronted with a number of matters concerning the representativeness of European employers' and trade union organizations. Those matters had to do with the Commission's mandate to promote consultations with the 'social partners' at Community level so as to allow the possibility (mentioned in Article 4 of the Protocol) that the dialogue between 'social partners' at Community level can lead to agreements and contractual relationships. Therefore, the representativeness of the associations of interests, both the employers' and the trade unions', had to be analysed. As far as the trade union context was concerned, the Commission's study concluded that, in terms of the ETUC, 'the trade union federations with a global character are by far the most representative in all member states, with only some reservations concerning France and Portugal, countries where two very representative trade union confederations (UGT and CGTP respectively) are applying for affiliation with ETUC, although with no success up to the present. In sum, the ETUC is definitely the most representative trade union confederation of a general character at European level' (Comissão Europeia, 1993: 18). The fact that France and Portugal were the only two countries where there were reservations as to the question of representativeness allows me to say that the decision to accept CGTP into the ETUC, which happened after the Commission's study, may well not have been a mere coincidence<sup>30</sup>.

On the other hand, the fall of the 'Eastern Block' constituted yet a third factor which contributed to the ETUC's final decision. As I have already mentioned, that factor was also an external reason on the basis of which CGTP legitimated their positions towards the end of the eighties. It was a 'globalising factor' which not only was not indifferent to national trade union actors but which also determined ETUC's assessment action. That is the context in which, even after the CGTP affiliation, the admission of other Eastern European trade union federations can be understood. Even if the debates around the issue of the EEC enlargement could be considered as constituting important concerns for the ETUC as far back as the seventies, with the

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<sup>30</sup> The idea was implied in some interviews, namely with a former UGT technician and advisor (August 1996), with a technician of the CGTP Department of International Relations (January 1996); on this argument, according to which such institutions as the European Commission did play an important role in the reinforcement of transnational trade union collaboration which was eventually favourable to the ETUC, see Jensen, Madsen and Due (1995), Martin (1996: 8), Silva (1998b: 1) and Turner (1998: 211).

WFTU crisis and the falling apart of the Eastern countries, the issues concerning the ETUC's organizational register as well as its territorial activity are back in the spotlight (Groux, Moutiaux and Pernot, 1993: 58). As Goetschy maintains (1996: 253), one of the factors that moulded the rise of European trade unionism at ETUC level in the last twenty years was one related with the internal composition of its members. Although the ETUC has always defined itself as a very open and comprehensive organization (of the 'catch-all' type), capable of recruiting members from the most diversified geographical and ideological quarters, never before has it been faced with the need of managing such a diversity of interests at internal level, a challenge which will produce the supplementary difficulty of implementing a common trade union policy (Martin and Ross, 1998: 259).

Lastly, the admission of CGTP into the ETUC has to do with the direct involvement of certain individual protagonists in the process; an example is Emílio Gabaglio, whose election as General Secretary of the Confederation undeniably constituted an important fact. As Carvalho da Silva said in his statement before the ETUC Executive Committee on December 15, 1994, 'it is fair to emphasise the determining role of the General Secretary of the ETUC, comrade Emílio Gabaglio, who, since he was elected, took the matter into his hands, thereby also contributing to improve the relationship between all the components of our trade union movement'. He was a man who 'belonged to the left of Christian democracy, with a past of trade unionism and a personal history of permanent intervention, possessing a view of trade unionism as a counter-power'<sup>31</sup>.

## **6. A practice of change without a change of practice?**

The interest of CGTP for new European forms of co-operation as a result of their affiliation with ETUC leads to the question of whether or not that transnational form of participation is reproducing national trade union practices.

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<sup>31</sup> CGTP leader (International Relations Department), interview (January 1996). This idea was reinforced, among others, in the interviews I made with a former head of the CGTP International Department (July 1996), with a member of the CGTP Executive Committee (October 1996) and with an Deputy General Secretary of the ETUC (February 1998); on the fact that the role of the ETUC lobby sometimes undermined the national co-ordination of trade union strategies, see Groux, Mouriaux and Pernot (1993: 61) and Goetschy (1996: 258).

CGTP has only recently become an ETUC affiliate, and that means that any test performed upon the new trade union *praxis* associated with that forum must be done with the utmost care. However, the 8th ETUC Congress, which took place in Brussels, May 9 to 12, 1995, provided the first possible conclusions. From among the documents discussed by the Congress, two of them were especially relevant: 'Placing Employment and Solidarity in the Heart of Europe' (the central document) and 'For a Strong, Democratic, Open and Solidary European Union'; they reflected the position of the ETUC on the European Union as a political project and confirmed certain criticisms and discontents as to the present and future state of the European process.

That 'political resolution' regretted the fact that European integration had become fragile to the eyes of both workers and citizens, and it made an appeal for the reinforcement of its concerns regarding employment, social rights, the equality of opportunities and the environment. In the domain of the 'deepening of the Union', the ETUC stated that, besides the need to avoid an excessive and unjustified centralisation of decisions, it would be important to create adequate instruments for facing economic, political and social problems which reclaim supranational responsibility, be it the Union's or shared with the States. 'This commitment implies an European integration in accordance with this balanced federal logic, only ready to ensure the maximum exploration of accession potential and the respect for plural Europe in all its dimensions' (CES, 1995b: 3). Regarding the same aspects, it was stated that 'the common aims of the European Union can be attained if (...) periods of transition and therefore different rhythms are accepted' (CES, 1995b: 4) and also that the vote by qualified majority should be considered the general rule regarding social and environmental matters.

That 'political document' was the basis for a clear 'dissenting vote' on the part of CGTP during the Congress. On May 12, 1995, Florival Lança justified CGTP's position in the following terms:

"Dear Friends and Comrades:

CGTP-IN favours a strong, democratic, open and solidary European Union.

We would vote for a resolution setting these objectives clearly and ready to take all their consequences.

However, the text under proposal includes views that we cannot agree with, namely the acceptance of both a federalistic logic and the condition of an Europe at different speeds.

As the document itself recognises, the European integration appears to have become fragile to the eyes of its workers and citizens.

In our opinion, that fragility is precisely due to the predominant power of the federalistic logic defenders in the past, where they tried to impose solutions which failed to consider the different realities, cultures, values and sensitivities which exist in the various European countries.

Europe at different speeds is a notion that denies the whole meaning of building the Community, namely in the eyes of the workers from the least developed countries of the European Union (...).

We unfortunately conclude that the document submitted does not entirely address or answer these questions and that is the reason why we cannot give our assent to it'.

In a short comment of that political resolution on the European Union, CGTP highlighted precisely the main 'hot issues' that had influenced their decision, confirming the contents of the above quotation: the federal logic of European integration; Europe at different speeds; and the unanimity transformed into a majority for all decisions. For CGTP, 'if the results of the votes indicated the defeat of Europe at different speeds<sup>32</sup>, in spite of not reaching the two thirds, and the defeat of the majority issue by 2/3, the truth is that all the federalistic logic, with the present EMU nominal convergence criteria, is maintained, in a document which is made obsolete and unrealistic by Jacques Delors's speech in the Congress. Thence our vote decision against the consensus of the delegation' (CGTP, 1995b: 5).

Although it was very clearly defined, CGTP's decision to 'vote against' did not reflect the degree of internal 'comradeship' that had been planned. What happened was that, upon the voting of the 'political document', 'three elements in the delegation failed to hold up to the commitment, and they did not declare their vote intentions' (CGTP, 1995b: 6). CGTP was not exactly happy about it, especially given the way it contributed to the re-emerging of a not very comfortable discussion which may be systematised through a recurring dualism in sociological analysis, i.e. the 'agency'—'structure' dualism. The dilemma that this dualism points to is that of knowing which element is the most important in this relational tension: the constraint which is socially imposed by the 'structure', or the individual creativity appertaining to 'agency'. Perhaps the historical influence of PCP over CGTP may have, in most situations, tipped the scales for 'structure'. And even if at present some of those who have always

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<sup>32</sup> In fact, an amendment proposal which was submitted to the Congress with the aim of altering the expression 'and therefore different speeds' (which ended the sentence of the last paragraph of chapter 2, 'item 4') was accepted, and it therefore was not included in the 'final resolution' of the Congress.

favoured the 'logic of structure' recognise that there is in CGTP a prevailing incompatibility with forms of conviviality closer to social democracy which are perfectly opposed to their ideology, it is also true that this is and has always been a complex issue in internal terms. When somebody comes out publicly saying that 'I have this mania of thinking with my own mind [and that] our strength should not be muscular but rather arise out of trade union intelligence'<sup>33</sup> he is probably making a stand which, albeit deserving of respect, falls out of the typical patterns of 'structure'. In the case of the unfavourable vote of CGTP concerning the document 'For a Strong, Open, Democratic and Solidary European Union', what happened was an internal deviation action in the form of a 'breach of cohesion within the delegation (...). Of the eight members, five voted against the document, and three did not vote at all, neither for nor against it. Besides the trade union implications both at internal and external levels, the situation demands a deep discussion in the light of the principles, the aims and the statutes of CGTP-IN' (CGTP-IN, 1995b: 13).

Even if it had wanted to, CGTP was unable to protect its image externally in this matter of the 'vote against'. Similarly, the weight of 'structure', although it had not been publicly disseminated, ended up by becoming apparent, because 'everybody learnt that the five elements who had "voted against" were all members of the Communist Party. The three who did not vote either for or against were not communist militants: two of them were socialists and one (a woman) was a Catholic. Therefore, in terms of the international impact, it also reflects a bit of CGTP's reality, that's the truth...'<sup>34</sup>. On the other hand, it is certainly no less true that, as it was expressed, the 'five to three' vote can also be used as an argument to contradict the voices which rose against the absence of pluralism within CGTP. Simultaneously, the fact that the CGTP delegation to the Congress was not exclusively composed of communists can be seen as a flurry of fresh air entering CGTP's organizational logic. However, since the assessment of the participation of the delegation in the Congress emphasised the idea of a 'breach of cohesion', maybe one should rather speak in terms of an 'invigilated plurality'.

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<sup>33</sup> Ulisses Garrido, *Expresso*, June 15, 1996 issue.

<sup>34</sup> A leader of the Federação dos Sindicatos do Mar (CGTP), interview (August 1996).

Besides this attitude on the part of CGTP which really does not confirm the existence of a change of practice, it would be worth to consider the way the most important document in the Congress was judged: 'Placing Employment and Solidarity in the heart of Europe'. This document won the agreement of CGTP in several of its items, but not in all of them. In this manifest for employment, it was an innovative fact for CGTP to have contributed to put into question a practice which was alien to the ETUC Congresses: the practice of abstention. The prevailing tradition in those Congresses was that the vote of documents under discussion could only take the form of a 'yes' or a 'no', the 'rule [being] the tentative achievement of consensus over all matters' (Portelli, 1990: 150). That situation allowed the transnational imposition of a certain 'normative' consensus which had not much in its favour, according to CGTP. For some of its leaders, 'it is understood that there is a practice of excess of unanimity or of excess of support which is not justifiable'<sup>35</sup>, but which ETUC ended up by structurally incorporating. Because it is not included in the ETUC Statutes, the 'discipline' towards a favourable vote pattern suggested by the Confederation could be seen as yet another 'unwritten law' somewhat similar to the 'right to veto' discussed above.

That 'central document' in the Congress included a set of items that CGTP considered difficult and dangerous and therefore justified the abstention: the reorganization of working times; admission of the principle of part time employment; the reduction of indirect labour costs and the issue of social welfare financing; job share with wage reduction; European collective agreements of a binding character.

For the CGTP (1995b: 5), although some of those issues had failed to pass in Congress, the delegation decided that they should abstain from voting, and went so far as preparing a vote statement subscribed by all the members of the CGTP delegation. The statement explained that CGTP's abstention concerning the 'central document' was due to the fact that they were 'in disagreement with some of its conceptions regarding the reorganization of the working time, part-time employment and indirect labour costs, [since] in Portugal those are issues involving important confrontations both with the employers and with the government, all the more so because we still have low-quality employment, wages below one third of the Community average, low levels

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<sup>35</sup> A member of the CGTP Executive Committee, interview (October 1996).

of social welfare and a working week of 44 hours by law'. Nevertheless, CGTP would also recognise that, in terms of the balance of its participation in the Congress, and 'given their agreement regarding other issues and especially because it was a "Platform for Action"', they really should not vote against (CGTP, 1995b: 12).

From among the issues which CGTP opposed and which were described above, the problem of flexibility was one which perfectly mirrored the Confederation's straightforward approach. It certainly is not an easy matter because what happens in many situations is that distinct scenarios are treated as if they corresponded to the same reality, which means that it necessarily involves multiple connotations. Maybe to protect the theme of flexibility from less favourable interpretations, in 'item 33' of the 'central document', the ETUC proposed a 'positive flexibility'. For the ETUC, 'what is central to this concept is the notion that not only the entrepreneurs need flexible labour, but workers also need flexible entrepreneurs, that is, entrepreneurs who are willing to, and capable of adapting to the workers' needs, for they increasingly need to articulate their professional activities with their family responsibilities, or even other private commitments' (CES, 1995a:18).

But CGTP did not entirely agree with ETUC's position regarding the introduction of the concept of 'positive flexibility'. However, facing the possibility of considering ETUC's positions legitimate in the sense that they seemed to point towards a recognition of the existence of diverging interests which should therefore be articulated, a CGTP leader described 'positive action' in an interview in the following terms: 'it is that which arises from the voluntary acceptance on the part of the worker although we do not accept the problem of flexibility as a principle (...). All flexibility, be it functional or regarding the working time, if it is compulsory and universal, we must refuse it'.

UGT's position on the matter, on the contrary, was convergent with the ETUC. 'For UGT there are no taboos, no matters which cannot be discussed. But there are clear-cut choices, albeit difficult: we prefer solidarity before individualism, participation and negotiation before unilateralism, positive flexibility and strategical adaptability to negative and short-term flexibility, real convergence to nominal

convergence, European integration, based upon double subsidiariness to isolationist nationalism'<sup>36</sup>.

The different positions of UGT and CGTP concerning the problematics of flexibility reproduced their internal *décalages* at ETUC level, a fact which would be repeated, for instance, when Law 21/96 of July 23 (which established the reduction of normal work periods of over forty hours a week) was interpreted and implemented<sup>37</sup>.

Anyway, the participation of CGTP in the 8th ETUC Congress constituted a manifestation of coherence regarding a set of principles defended at national level, *ipso facto* making any change in practice only very tenuously possible. By that I mean that if, on the one hand, with the controversy concerning the existence of the figure of 'abstention' at ETUC level, CGTP did in fact stimulate a practice of change, on the other hand, the motives invoked to resort to it do not really evince an attitude of change of practice on the part of this trade union organization.

The argument invoked by CGTP, that they had not had enough 'training for the race' was perfectly legitimate, because 'of the five meetings of the Committee for the Preparation of the Congress we only participated in the last two, one of them specifically called to discuss the political document "For a Strong, Open, Democratic and Solidary Europe" (...) and the second on the trade union document (...). [similarly] we participated only in the last of the four Executive Committee meetings which was exclusively dedicated to the discussion of the financial report and the changes in the Statutes (...)' (CGTP, 1995b: 1). Nevertheless, opposed to the natural inexperience of a newcomer, the notion that it had been a planned attitude or even a 'strategy' was certainly implied: 'we just could not leave any opening through which it might be inferred that there was any weakness in the position of CGTP'<sup>38</sup>. Even before the ETUC Congress, CGTP was demanding a dynamic attitude for the trade union movement, although it would not necessarily have to be an assenting attitude (CGTP, 1955a: 2). That behaviour seems to have been a kind of pre-announcement of a future practice pattern. With it, CGTP aimed at anticipating that which, in its view, would be the occurrence of an 'unanticipated consequence' of a negative type for itself. Foreseeing a 'negative unexpectedness', which Merton (1970) termed *latent*

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<sup>36</sup> Barbosa de Oliveira, *O Bancário*, May 30, 1995 issue.

<sup>37</sup> On this issue, see also UGT (1995: 34; 1996: 42), Proença (1998: 35-37) and Silva (1998a: 26).

<sup>38</sup> CGTP "International Relations" officer, interview (March 1996).



*disfunction*, certainly made sense to CGTP – a specific type of unexpected consequences of an action which disturb or become dysfunctional to the whole system or structure wherein they occur. In the case, the system would be the entire European trade union movement meeting in the ETUC Congress. However, the conception of the system adopted by CGTP proved to be, *a priori*, more subsidiary to their logic of internal operation than to the *modus operandi* of the ETUC structure. So that, while ‘warning’ that they might ‘vote against’, CGTP left the ‘unexpected’ no room for manoeuvre, thus creating the conditions for avoiding in advance that which would, in terms of their structure, be considered a disfunctionality: ‘to vote for’. In those terms, what was functional for ETUC came to be dysfunctional for CGTP and vice-versa.

## 7. Conclusion

Conceived as a counter-hegemonic form of globalisation, ‘trade union globalisation’ occupies the centre of trade union concerns both in Portugal and abroad, in spite of the fact that, in the Portuguese case, the consolidation of national trade union practices occurred in a context of strong globalisation. Focusing upon a late affirmation trade union movement, the dynamics of globalisation simultaneously encourage factors of openness or institutional integration and of closure or institutional destruction, differently valued by the Portuguese trade union confederations.

The CGTP affiliation with ETUC was a process which revealed that, in specific situations, taking advantage of external opportunities (resulting from a transnational trade union affiliation) gave place to the reproduction of internal ‘marginalities’. The *de jure* affiliation with ETUC was a summons for CGTP to extend their trade union intervention spaces as well as to engage in new forms of co-operation. Even so, for over a decade, UGT was able to hinder CGTP’s affiliation, strongly activating a tension between national and transnational regulation scales.

And for over a decade did CGTP also make their applications for affiliation with ETUC dependent upon an ‘adequate causality’ based on internal ‘rules of experience’. The 1979 application for affiliation constituted, according to the words of the most important CGTP leaders, the ‘ground for a hiatus’ that was tactically presented to satisfy the minority tendencies within CGTP and also as a tentative anticipatory move regarding UGT, which had appeared less than two months before.

The 1992 application was, by its turn, the result of a different political context, its content still somewhat limited to an enhancement of the national performances of CGTP. It nonetheless appears to be more mature and committed, which certainly is the consequence of a number of factors generated from the outside of CGTP: the accession of Portugal to the EEC and the fall of the 'Eastern Block', in the second half of the eighties; the opening of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the gradual easing up of the UGT blockade, in the nineties.

From the ETUC's point of view, the authorisation of UGT was a fundamental element in the whole process, for when one analyses the ETUC criteria for the acceptance of new applicants one sees that they have remained essentially unaltered for the last two decades. However, the urgent need 'to consolidate the European trade union power' defended by the ETUC during its 8th Congress was also a decisive factor for the acceptance of CGTP, since that consolidation can only be attained if the representative capacity of the ETUC is reinforced.

The *ex post facto* period of the CGTP affiliation with ETUC is perhaps too recent to allow final conclusions to be drawn regarding the true meaning of that affiliation. Therefore, as various CGTP leaders like to repeat, 'history has yet to be made'. Nonetheless, the first consequences of the participation of CGTP in the ETUC have revealed a defensive posture – based on abstention (actually confirmed in the 9th ETUC Congress, Helsinki, June 29-July 2, 1999) and the 'vote against' – which seems to reproduce a national trade union practice and, therefore, an unstable relationship to 'trade union globalisation'. After the affiliation, it would be legitimate to expect that some signs of a closer relationship with UGT might serve to compensate for their absence at national level. But UGT did also confirm their 'affirmative' stance within the ETUC, reproducing their own national 'model' of actuation and the opposition to CGTP which exists at that level. That being a fact, Portuguese trade unionism can only very timidly and very sporadically find an opportunity for overcoming the national dissensions in the transnational regulation space.

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