

Portuguese Trade Unions and European Integration Lessons from a Dual Vision

Les syndicats portugais et l'intégration européenne : leçons d'une vision

*As centrais sindicais portuguesas e a integração europeia : lições de uma visão
dualista*

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PORTUGUESE TRADE UNIONS AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

*Lessons from a Dual Vision**

Following the same course adopted towards the national issues, the positioning of the two main Portuguese trade union confederations (CGTP and UGT) vis-à-vis European integration also seems to lead to the adoption of distinct positions between them. Taking the “European challenge” as a backdrop, this paper attempts to systematize some of the most recent positions of the CGTP and UGT concerning European integration, taking into consideration not only the contributions to a Europeanization of union structures, but also the institutional evolution of the European Union.

*Les syndicats portugais et l'intégration européenne :
leçons d'une vision dualiste*

En concordance avec ce qui s'est passé sur les questions de nature nationale, le positionnement des principales centrales syndicales portugaises (CGTP et UGT) envers l'intégration européenne semble être une manière supplémentaire d'assumer les différences de position entre les deux. Avec le « défi européen » en toile de fond, cette étude cherche à systématiser quelques-unes des positions les plus récentes de la CGTP et de l'UGT relativement à l'intégration européenne, compte tenu non seulement des contributions respectives à l'europanisation des structures syndicales, mais aussi de l'évolution institutionnelle de l'Union européenne elle-même.

*As centrais sindicais portuguesas e a integração europeia :
lições de uma visão dualista*

Na linha do que vem sucedendo face a questões de âmbito nacional, o posicionamento das principais centrais sindicais portuguesas (CGTP e UGT) perante a integração europeia parece constituir igualmente pretexto para a assunção de posições distintas entre ambas. Tendo como pano de fundo o « desafio europeu »,

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este texto procura sistematizar algumas das posições mais recentes da CGTP e da UGT a respeito da integração europeia, tendo em conta não só os contributos para uma europeização das estruturas sindicais, como um olhar sobre a evolução institucional da União Europeia.

The present characteristics of Portuguese trade unionism are the result of the last 30 years of democracy. Indeed, it was in the political context of transition from dictatorship (which undermined the country during decades in several areas) to democracy that the trade unions recovered their lost liberty. It was in the context of the 1970s that the two main national trade union confederations were born and progressively grew stronger, the CGTP and the UGT. With them also emerged the main political-ideological cleavages that still characterize today, in general terms, the Portuguese trade union movement. On the one hand, the CGTP (created in 1970), closer to a communist oriented political project. On the other hand, the UGT (created in 1978), more closely identified with a socialist and social-democratic political project. If the first embraced from early on a trade unionism of *confrontation*, the latter supported a trade unionism of *negotiation*.

From the 1980s on, the European integration project would “interfere” in the Portuguese trade union agendas. On January 1st 1986, the accession of Portugal to the then EEC was an event of undeniable political, economic and symbolic significance for the country. Even if the trade union organisations had engaged in a clearly secondary position within the negotiation of the accession process, the fact is that it couldn’t have gone unnoticed. However, European integration would represent another pretext for the assumption of distinct positions by the CGTP and the UGT, in this way confirming a scenario of *dual trade unionism* regarding European integration. Thus, the CGTP adopted an anti-European position and assumed a weaker predisposition to integrate into the European and international trade union structures. On the contrary, the UGT adopted a pro-European position and assumed a stronger predisposition to integrate into those structures.

Abbreviations

- CGTP, *Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses* (General Confederation of Portuguese Workers)
- EEC, European Economic Community
- EIFs, European Industry Federations
- EMU, Economic and Monetary Union
- ETUC, European Trade Union Confederation
- ETUI, European Trade Union Institute
- EU, European Union
- EWCs, European Works Councils
- ICFTU, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
- TNCs, Transnational Corporations
- UGT, *União Geral de Trabalhadores* (General Workers’ Union)
- WFTU, World Federation of Trade Unions

Based on the “European challenge”, this paper aims to systematise some of the more recent positions of the CGTP and the UGT regarding the European Union (EU). I will start by referring to the positions of the UGT on European integration. However, I will spend more time with CGTP attitudes towards EU. As well as being the largest Portuguese trade union organisation, the CGTP is also the one that has placed the most reservations upon the process of European construction, the one that has warned the most of the “dangers” associated to the institutional evolution of the EU and the one that has revealed the most difficulties concerning integration within the European trade union structures. In the case of the CGTP, two vectors of analysis will be taken into account: on the one hand, its contributions towards the Europeanization of trade union structures. In this respect, I will account for the complex process of organic insertion of the CGTP into the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), as well as the positioning of the Portuguese trade union organisation in the framework of ETUC’s instances (above all at congresses, where the CGTP has participated as a fully-fledged member since 1995); on the other hand, a second vector of analysis takes hold with the conjoint vision of CGTP in what refers to the institutional evolution of EU.

The UGT Attitudes towards European Integration

Created in October 1978, the UGT appeared in reaction to the monopoly enjoyed by the CGTP in the Portuguese trade union universe. Composed essentially of office, bank and service workers unions, UGT was aided by the Socialist Party (PS) and the Social Democratic Party (PSD), as well as by other political and financial supports brought from abroad, notably social democrat trade union confederations – “UGT has always had close links with the union movements of central Europe and Scandinavia” (Barreto and Naumann 1998: 410) –, the German SPD or the Ebert and Nauman Foundations (Eisfeld 1983). At the same time that it came to compete politically and ideologically with the CGTP, the UGT – the product of a “coalition of mainly service sector and white-collar unions” (Stoleroff 2000: 460) – paved the way for a lasting logic of competitiveness in the core of the Portuguese trade union movement.

As I have analysed elsewhere (Costa 1997: 50), the constitution of the UGT signified the birth of a trade unionism at the national level which, almost simultaneously, was caught up in a process of internationalization and Europeanization of its structures. That is, the definition of formal organic connections with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), which it joined as early as 1979, and with the ETUC, which it joined in 1983, allowed a set of external pooling effects flowing to the UGT without the trade union confederation accomplishing a true consolidation of its internal organisational models. Thus, “our identity of political-union viewpoints, like those of the ICFTU, is total and unreserved”, and in relation to the ETUC “we see ourselves entirely in their principles, statutes and political-union practice” and “we have an identity of viewpoints with the ETUC regarding trade union action” (UGT 2000: 119-120). Especially in the case of the ETUC, the UGT congratulates itself for always having actively participated in its governing bodies and initiatives. As for the rest, this strategic and structural participation in ETUC’s framework is a key vector of UGT’s international relations.

This international opening which was born with the UGT (reinforced by its immediate integration into the goals and structures of the ETUC) instigated from early on a favourable positioning vis-à-vis the challenges emanated from the EEC. It is not by chance that UGT is proud of being the first social partner to support Portugal's application to the EEC "when such was not in fashion" (UGT 2000: 119). Along with the process of European integration there was, from early on, the expectation of a set of "advances" of various orders for the country, notably in relation to the process of development and gradual approximation to the average social and economic conditions of the EU resulting from a set of technical and financial supports from the Community Support Frameworks. Furthermore, as an *external* process, European integration created conditions towards the reinforcement of the *internal* democratic process, still poorly consolidated: "the adhesion to the European Union allowed the deepening of the democratic process in Portugal and a full participation in the European construction, reinforcing economic and social welfare and the projection of Portugal in the World" (Proença 2004: 2).

In opposition to this *a priori* optimistic vision for the country deriving from the European "appeals", stood the *a posteriori* less optimistic challenges for the trade unions. In this regard, according to Alan Stoleroff (2000: 454), European integration has largely created unfavourable conditions for union development detrimental to the capital and the state. By exposing the relatively under-developed Portuguese economy to new forms of competition, European integration led capital and the Portuguese state to seek major transformations in the existing industrial relations pattern much to the detriment of union stability. In any case, serious complaints from UGT in what regards to the stability been put in doubt with the European integration aren't known. What happened was this: before the perspective of European integration, it seemed clear that the path to be followed by the trade unions would inevitably be longer than the path to be followed by the governments and employers, all the more so in that the very constitution of the ETUC only took place in 1973, that is, more than 15 years after the signing of the Treaty of Rome. The fact that trade unions confirmed themselves as "second order" actors in the negotiation and construction of the regional integration process is probably the most complete proof of their "delay". Nevertheless, it is also here that resides precisely the pretext for reclaiming higher levels of social protection (notably with regard to health and social security) and better mechanisms of dialogue and collective bargaining between employees and employers, after all basic characteristics of Social Europe. In spite of social cohesion being more difficult to measure than economic cohesion (UGT 2000: 10), the articulation between each other, in order to harmonize the average levels of economic and social development in the member-States and in order to improve quality and welfare for the population is, after all, one of the goals of European construction. For the UGT, in countries like Portugal that must be a reason for constant claims by the trade unions, so that the persisting differences between Portugal and the EU (in terms of unemployment, wage levels, qualification of the labour force, poverty and exclusion, etc.) can diminish.

The impacts of Portugal's integration into the EU are considered by UGT as globally positive: the adhesion of Portugal to the EEC, on January 1st 1986,

revealed itself as a decisive factor for the economic and social development of the country. Despite the different economic cycles, to which corresponded different speeds in the convergence process of the Portuguese economy to the Community economy, "the balance of Portuguese growth is positive" (UGT 2000: 9). For this reason, there is no doubt that "Portugal today is better off because it is more developed, and European integration was fundamental to attain this desideratum. In the European construction the advances were significant and Portugal, through its legitimate representatives, ratified the Single European Act, the Maastricht Treaty, the Amsterdam Treaty and the Nice Treaty" (UGT 2003: 1). UGT's leader (Proença 2004: 1) reinforces this position precisely, pointing out that integration into the EU and the successive advances always functioned as moments of national mobilization that led to convergence with the European average and the sustained improvement of working and living conditions. Productivity rose emphatically, giving Portugal better results than the EU, right after Ireland. Wages and incomes increased. Unemployment decreased. This favourable situation suffered, though, a certain reversal in the last two years, in which unemployment increased more than in any other EU country, real salaries decreased, and the country came into disagreement vis-à-vis the EU. For the UGT leader, only in 2005/2006 is it foreseeable that such a situation can be overcome, despite the fact that Portugal continues to receive a large part of Community funds.

The structural evaluation of European integration is considered by the UGT as globally very positive. For the UGT, the necessity now arises of promoting new advances in the European construction, notably in the context of the present revision process of the Treaties, dictated by the European Convention since the Laeken Summit, in December 2001. With the analysis of the European Constitution project, which the UGT considers not to be a first European Treaty, but rather a revision and systematization of the existing Treaties, some animosity in institutional terms came about due to the understanding that the French-German axis was being benefited to the detriment of small countries like Portugal.

For the UGT, this situation is due both to an insufficient discussion of the options underlying the revision of the voting methods in the European Council, and to poorly defined options in terms of future shocks with National Constitutions, notably regarding article 10 which allows Governments to cast doubt over National Constitutions, forcing its revision, when the competence for such revision is the National Parliaments' duty. Thus, one can point out as the main concerns expressed by the UGT: a) to the detriment of unanimity, the enlargement of the voting by majority in social, fiscal or environmental issues; b) the privileging of decision-making capacity in a Europe of 25, instead of decision-blocking mechanisms that lead to paralysis or to lack of definition; c) progress with reinforced cooperations, following decisions made during the Portuguese Presidency of the EU, but without the creation of a Directory of big countries (in areas such as Defence or Foreign Affairs) that withdraws participation space to the smaller countries (UGT 2003: 8; Proença 2004: 2).

In spite of these institutional remarks made by the UGT, this organization considers that the Treaties' revision project contains very important advances concerning European citizenship and the deepening of a social dimension of EU, advances which, according to the UGT, are also the result of ETUC's decisive contribution:

“UGT considers that, in a clear and unmistakable way, the Constitutional Treaty project is an advancement concerning social issues. First because in Article 7, it recognizes the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which therefore constitutes part II of the Constitution with all its rights, liberties and principles. The latter implies that values such as social justice and solidarity, referred to explicitly in the Charter, are fully received. There is also an advancement in the full recognition of social rights, when issues as relevant as ‘the social market economy’, ‘the coordination of economic policies’ and the necessity of promotion of social goals such as ‘justice, social protection and solidarity amongst generations’ are integrated in the Constitutional Treaty. Without a doubt, the main demands of the European trade union movement consubstantiated in ETUC were [well] received. Thus our support to the Treaty project as far as the social area is concerned” (UGT 2003: 4-5).

In short, beyond the support for the integration (with judicial value) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights into the Treaty, the fixing of goals such as full employment, establishment of a legal basis for general interest services, the European Union’s mandate in terms of economic, social and employment coordination, and the recognition of social partners and the role of social dialogue are some of the points that summarise the satisfaction of the UGT with the draft Treaty.

As a conclusion, one would say that “the UGT supports and will always support the construction of the currently denominated European Union. In this area as well as in others the UGT was never neutral or grey [. . .], we are a European and a pro-European Union” (UGT 2003: 1; 7). Nonetheless, in spite of this, [UGT] considers that there has never been a true national debate in Portugal concerning European matters, a reason why a referendum that could enable a reinforcement of the European project should be stimulated in order to debate in detail the social interest issues that appear in the Constitution’s project (UGT 2003: 7; Proença 2004: 2). For the UGT, the path to follow in the future goes through the creation of an

“authentic Constitution. It is important to continue to deepen European construction, based on values of peace, liberty, democracy, fundamental rights, solidarity, social justice and equality, full employment and high quality employment, social and territorial cohesion, welfare and solidarity, sustainable development and a high level of environmental protection and based on the European social model principles, public services of general interest and a social market economy” (Proença 2004: 3).

CGTP Attitudes towards European Integration

The CGTP is an organization of the utmost relevance in Portuguese society, having played a major role in combating Salazar’s regime. The roots and principles of the CGTP are based upon ‘the glorious organization and traditions of struggle of the working classes’ and the organization sees itself as “a trade union class organization, unitary, democratic and of the masses” (Silva 2004: 1). The “class nature” of the CGTP – linked to the recognition of the “decisive 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, directing and characterising 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 in its structure and organization” (CGTP 2004d: 7).

CGTP’s loyalty to class principles and interests at the national level has determined its international contacts. That is, the historical organization’s alignment with the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) reproduces the political plan and positioning defended at home, the same being true of the relationship between the UGT and the ICFTU. CGTP’s international relations were therefore almost exclusively limited to the WFTU, a fact which could be witnessed in the early 1980s when *Solidarnosc* was created in Poland. As it had refused to condemn the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the 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 this, the CGTP was closer to the WFTU and simultaneously more distant from other European trade union tendencies which promptly condemned those events. In this context, the refusal of the CGTP’s application to join the ETUC in January 1979 acquired a deeper meaning, 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 The Hague, 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 the proximity between the CGTP and the WFTU resided in the fact that there was no formal affiliation, “for reasons of prudence and balance within the federation and because it would be a sort of announced death of unity”¹.

The Slow and Complex Integration into European Trade Union Structures

There are not many doubts that Portugal’s destiny lies in Europe. At least, that seems to be evident in the words of some of the CGTP trade unionists I interviewed:

“We, the Portuguese, have an important relationship, which is also an affective relationship, with Europe. There are crossings and exchanges of sensitivities, perceptions and dynamics that are easier to accomplish with the organisations of Southern Europe, in particular Spanish, than with others”²;

“Within our priorities there are, in the first place, those which occur in the European context”³;

“We have a priority which is the European Union, the European Union trade unions”⁴.

However, this “natural” discursive integration into Europe did not represent, to the CGTP, an integration of the same kind into the main European trade union

¹ K. Barreto (former CGTP leader), interviewed by *Expresso* (newspaper) on August 17, 1996.

² CGTP General Secretary (interview, March 31, 2000, Lisbon).

³ CGTP International Secretary (interview, March 2, 2000, Lisbon).

⁴ CGTP Trade Union Training Secretary (interview, April 6, 2001, Lisbon).

structure, the ETUC. That is, in terms of organic relationships, CGTP's positioning exemplified very well how difficult it is to articulate "trade unionism in Europe" with "European trade unionism"⁵. For that reason, the success story of UGT's affiliation to the ETUC was for a long time the failure story of the CGTP's affiliation to the ETUC. Elsewhere I have carried out a very detailed analysis of CGTP affiliation to the ETUC (Costa 1997: 143-248; 1999: 153-280). In this paper I mainly focus upon: the key obstacles to CGTP's affiliation to the ETUC; the factors that were important in CGTP's acceptance in ETUC; and the positions assumed by CGTP at the ETUC Congresses.

Obstacles to CGTP's Affiliation to the ETUC

I identify three obstacles that, for about 15 years, prevented CGTP's affiliation to the ETUC: i) the UGT's veto; ii) the ETUC's resistance; and iii) the lack of a truly consolidated interest on the part of the communist majority of the CGTP.

• *The UGT's veto.* For more than ten years, the UGT used the "right to veto" to sustain the CGTP's admission to the ETUC. The "right to veto" is a complex issue because, in fact, the ETUC Statutes do not include this 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 German DGB or by the British TUC (Groux, Mouriaux & Pernot 1993: 35), two trade union confederations of great influence within the ETUC. However, other national trade union confederations have used the "law out of books" – France was an example of this opposition, with the CFDT and the FO resisting the CGT (whose affiliation to the ETUC took place in March 1999)⁶ – and this is not even an exclusive practice of the confederate threshold⁷.

⁵ Given the historical, political, cultural, ideological, etc., differences between trade union projects across Europe, I admit that it is convenient to distinguish between "trade unionism in Europe" and "European trade unionism" (Schutte 2000: 13). The first of the expressions remits to "the set of histories and realities of dozens of trade union organisations", born two centuries ago and which grew and transformed themselves with the political and economical development of capitalism in the various European countries. European trade unionism would be basically the reflection of a more recent history (of the last three decades) protagonised mainly by the ETUC, by the European Industry Federations (EIFs) and by the European Works Councils (EWCs).

⁶ 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).

⁷ 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, 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 Transports Federation 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).

By making it difficult for the CGTP to join the ETUC for years, the UGT was reproducing in the ETUC arena – which it had joined in 1983, after having become affiliated to the ICFTU in 1979 – the very imprint of their internal confrontations at the national level, a fact which resulted in not very favourable critical judgements on the part of the CGTP. Because it was an immediate product of both the ICFTU and the ETUC (both of which were organizations which did not mirror the CGTP in ideological terms), the UGT easily maximised the emerging opportunities it saw, or was given, soon after it was founded. In truth, “the 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, the UGT itself needed international support to grow and consolidate. Besides this, the UGT, which had always been linked to the International Socialist trade union World [. . .], also needed to fight the CGTP at home [. . .]”⁸. In addition, it should be noted that “the field was ready for us, with ample support from the Germans, all the Northern countries, the Spanish, the French, and the Italians”⁹.

• *The ETUC’s resistance.* At the beginning of the 1980s, the ETUC refused the first formal CGTP application for affiliation to the ETUC, because it did not respect the list of “affiliation criteria”: “fundamental criteria” – a) to have a democratic statute; b) autonomy regarding governments and parties; c) a commitment to the principles of free, democratic and independent trade unionism as defended by the 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 to a Western European intergovernmental organization –; or “general criteria” – respect for the ETUC’s statutes, objectives and political practice; availability to co-operate at the European level; respect for the opinion of the affiliated confederations regarding their own country’s applicants¹⁰. As a consequence,

“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”¹¹.

Furthermore, according to a Deputy General Secretary of ETUC that I interviewed in Brussels, CGTP’s anti-Europeanist attitude was incompatible with the European integration project defended by the ETUC: “the main reason for refusing the CGTP was its attitude concerning Europe [. . .]. The trade unions that are against the European Union can hardly join the ETUC [. . .]. One cannot

⁸ A member of the General Secretariat of UGT and of the Board of the *Sindicato dos Bancários do Sul e Ilhas* (interview, June 1996).

⁹ A member of the Secretariat for International Relations of UGT (interview, October 1996).

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ Letter by Mathias Hinterscheid to CGTP, February 5, 1982.

accept a trade union that is against the European Community, one cannot admit a trade union that is against ETUC's foundations"¹².

There even seemed to be a direct correspondence between UGT's veto and ETUC's resistance. In one of the publications issued by the important ETUC information body – the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) – a “pro-UGT” attitude could be observed, a fact which may be explained by the circumstance that the publication in question was drawn up 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 the UGT and the CGTP, since the latter insists on calling itself the only confederation. Often the UGT made proposals for conversations with the 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 to produce a global image of the Portuguese trade union panorama, the ETUI brochure was after all manifestly selective. This seems also to be apparent when it declares that “the administrative bodies of the CGTP-IN are mostly made up of PCP [Portuguese Communist Party] 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 the CGTP-IN after the 25th of April 1974” took the form of a sudden decrease in the wage range and it seriously limited the expression of minority groups (ISE 1988: 58).

• *The lack of interest of the CGTP.* In a book about the communist-oriented trade unions and the ETUC, Juan Moreno argues that all the affiliation processes (of the Spanish CCOO, of the Portuguese CGTP and of the French CGT), despite their specificities, “met with a high degree of consensus” (Moreno 2001: 21). In the case of the CGTP the author considers that “there was an almost general consensus on the need to affiliate to the ETUC. This view was shared by the members of the FUT as well as by the “left-wing” socialists and most of the communists. Only some of the latter expressed strong reservations, describing the ETUC as an organisation that had no “class principles” (Moreno 2001: 221). In my opinion, Moreno's argument is questionable, since if a strong consensus prevailed, such a consensus was brought from the outside rather than from the inside. It is evident that there had always been a minimal internal consensus for an affiliation to exist, since otherwise, there wouldn't even have been affiliation requests. However, CGTP's affiliation to the ETUC, being strongly conditioned by the availability of the central communist line, did not anchor itself in a strong consensus, since the dominant political line in the CGTP was always the strongest opposition.

¹² Deputy General Secretary of the ETUC (interview, February 2, 1998, Brussels).

The external factors that favoured CGTP's integration into the ETUC

When, on December 1994, the ETUC's Executive Committee approved the CGTP's affiliation, the latter saw its past impediments ended. What were, then, the factors that determined CGTP's affiliation to the ETUC? If we look at the motives invoked by the CGTP to join the ETUC, which consist of two formal applications for membership (the first in 1979, the second in 1992), we can verify that they were mainly focused on "issues": representativeness, the historical fight against fascism or the defence of the workers' interests and humanitarian values. However, the real motives for integration into the ETUC were strongly influenced by external factors, given that there was not a strong interest among the communist elements of the CGTP (as suggested above) and given that "the positions of the CGTP had their origin in international rather than national factors"¹³. Those external factors were the accession of Portugal to the EEC and the fall of the "Eastern Bloc" in the second half of the eighties; the opening of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the gradual easing up of the UGT blockade, and the influence of the CCOO affiliation process in the 1990s (these three factors being more closely associated with the period closer to the affiliation).

The political and economic importance of Portugal's accession to the EEC could not be ignored by the CGTP. Indeed, in the mid 1980s, the CGTP seemed to fear (although without publicly affirming this) that if it missed the "European Train" it might remain on the sidelines of the new forms of social dialogue that were likely to stimulate the unity of action of workers and trade unions at the European level. On the other hand, the centrality of the EEC's influences on economic, financial and political national life – notably through access to structural funds – could not leave anyone indifferent. If not *with* Europe, the CGTP had to be at least *in* Europe, since it was there that resided the answer both to the weakening or even absence of social dialogue, and to the draw back of the decisional mechanisms in the economic, political and financial areas, which, on the trade unionism level, the CGTP was not always capable of capitalizing on as it aspired. Maybe it was precisely because of this that, at the ETUC's Executive Committee of December 15th and 16th 1994 (which approved CGTP's affiliation to the ETUC), the CGTP leader, Carvalho da Silva, reminded that "Portugal's entrance into the European Economic Community re-launched the debates on CGTP-IN's affiliation".

The accession of Portugal to the EEC and the end of the "Eastern Bloc" (a second external factor) ended up by being associated, as the following passages illustrate:

"There were events that happened in the world and that have in some way influenced all this. On the one hand, the fall of the "Soviet Bloc", which had some weight in the international relations of CGTP, notably through the WFTU, to which CGTP was closely connected and by which it was strongly influenced [...] When the soviet Bloc fell, Portugal also joined Europe, the EEC. The Eastern Bloc falls in 1989 and

¹³ Founding member of CGTP (socialist tendency) (interview, July 1996).

we join the EEC in 1986 and all this facilitated the tendencies that supported CGTP's insertion into the ETUC, making our reasons victorious"¹⁴.

Thirdly, with regard to the gradual closeness between the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the 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 already had "semiclandestine" contacts, 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 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"¹⁵.

Fourthly, and as far as the end of the opposition from the UGT is concerned, we also have a factor which is external to the CGTP, even though it is internal to the Portuguese trade union movement. According to an interview with an important member of the National Secretariat of the UGT, "it was possible for the CGTP to join the ETUC only because it had UGT's support"¹⁶. The same leader goes on to state that "the CGTP itself was forced to recognise the UGT as an organization because although UGT consolidated with difficulty, 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 the CGTP from the outside that the conditions were gradually created for its international recognition.

Finally, the "CCOO's admission into the ETUC in December 1990 speeded up that of the CGTP, and this in turn helped to ensure the success of the French CGT's application" (Moreno 2001: 22). In my opinion, this last external factor is directly connected with the fall of the "Eastern Bloc" (the second external factor mentioned above).

From the ETUC point of view, the main reasons for accepting the CGTP were the end of the opposition from the UGT; the fall of the "Eastern Bloc"; the "recommendations" of the European Commission; and the direct involvement of certain ETUC individuals.

The ETUC was informed by the UGT trade unionists that the UGT was no longer against CGTP affiliation. The UGT came to recognise publicly that it would assent to the affiliation of the CGTP to the ETUC. A short press release bearing the title "UGT supports CGTP-IN affiliation with ETUC" read:

¹⁴ Founding member of CGTP (socialist tendency) (interview, July 1996).

¹⁵ CGTP "International Relations" officer (interview, March 1996). It is undoubtedly true that "in the past that would be unthinkable, because the word among the communist elements 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).

¹⁶ The UGT blockade was in itself a stimulus for CGTP to display a more combative image and try to be more convincing in projecting itself 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 decisive element in the process" (interview, February 1998, Brussels).

“By invitation of the General Secretary of UGT, José Manuel Torres Couto, a work lunch was held in Brussels, on October 28 in the presence of the General Secretary of The ETUC, Emilio 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).

The fall of the “Eastern Bloc” was another factor which contributed to the ETUC’s final decision. As I have already mentioned, that factor was also an external reason that would favour CGTP integration into the ETUC. This was a “globalising factor” which was important both to the national trade union actors and to the ETUC. The fall of the “Eastern Bloc” created the conditions under which, even after the CGTP affiliation, the admission of other Eastern European trade union federations could be accomplished. Even if the debates surrounding the issue of the EEC enlargement could be considered as constituting important concerns for the ETUC as far back as the 1970s, with the WFTU crisis and the falling apart of the Eastern countries, the issues concerning the ETUC’s organizational register as well as its territorial activity were back in the spotlight (Groux, Mouriaux & Pernot 1993: 58). As a matter of fact, “the ETUC’s geographical coverage was extended following the wave of reform in Central and Eastern Europe, and the first unions from Central and Eastern Europe were affiliated to the ETUC in 1995” (Hoffmann 2000: 632).

As well as the end of UGT’s opposition and the fall of the “Eastern Bloc”, 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. In fact, in the context of the 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 unions organizations. Those matters concerned the Commission’s mandate to promote consultations with the “social partners” at the Community level so as to allow the possibility (mentioned in Article 4 of the Protocol) for the dialogue between “social partners” at the Community level to lead to agreements and contractual relationships. Therefore, the representativeness of both employer and trade unions organizations 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 (CGT and CGTP respectively) are applying for affiliation with ETUC, although with no success up to the present. In short, the ETUC is definitely the most representative trade union confederation of a general character at the 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 the CGTP into the ETUC, which happened after the Commission’s study, may well have been more than a mere coincidence¹⁷.

¹⁷ This argument was implied in some interviews, notably with a former UGT technician and

Lastly, the admission of the CGTP into the ETUC came about with the direct involvement of certain individual protagonists in the process. An example is Emilio Gabaglio, whose election as General Secretary of the ETUC 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 emphasize the decisive 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 improving 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”¹⁸.

The positions assumed by the CGTP at the ETUC Congresses

In December 1994, when it was admitted to the ETUC, the CGTP considered 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).

However, the post-integration period within the ETUC confirmed the incompatibilities between the CGTP and the ETUC. The public positions assumed at the ETUC congresses are an example of this. At the 8th ETUC Congress (1995), a “political document” (entitled “For a Strong, Democratic, Open and Solidary European Union”) was the basis for a clear “dissenting vote” on the part of the CGTP. On May 12, 1995, the international relations secretary 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 a Europe at different speeds.

advisor (August 1996), and 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 & Due (1995), Martin (1996: 8) and Turner (1998: 211), among others.

¹⁸ CGTP leader (International Relations Department) (interview, January 1996). This idea was reinforced, among others, in the interviews I had 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 & Pernot (1993: 61) and Goetschy (1996: 258).

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

In our opinion, that fragility is precisely due to the predominant power of defenders of the federalistic logic 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, particularly 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 on this political resolution on the European Union, the CGTP highlighted precisely the main "key issues" that had influenced their decision, confirming the contents of the above quotation: the federal logic of European integration; a multi-speed Europe; and unanimity transformed into a majority for all decisions. For the CGTP, "if the results of the votes indicated the defeat of a multi-speed Europe¹⁹, in spite of not reaching two thirds, and the defeat of the majority issue by 2/3, the truth is that all the federalistic logic, with the present EMU (Economic and Monetary Union) nominal convergence criteria, is maintained" (CGTP 1995: 5). In addition, the CGTP considered that some items of the ETUC's central document ("Placing Employment and Solidarity at the Heart of Europe") were dangerous and therefore justified an abstention. The introduction of the concept of "positive flexibility" was an example. For the ETUC, "what is central to this concept is the notion that not only do the entrepreneurs need flexible labour, but also workers need flexible entrepreneurs, that is, entrepreneurs who are willing and able to adapt to the workers' needs, for they increasingly need to articulate their professional activities with their family responsibilities, or even other private commitments" (CES 1995: 18). On the contrary, according to the CGTP "all flexibility, be it functional or regarding working time, if it is compulsory and universal, we must refuse it"²⁰.

At the 9th ETUC Congress (1999), although forsaking the "vote against" position of the previous congress, the CGTP maintained an abstentionist and critical stance towards the political documents of ETUC:

"Since the first approach to the ETUC's congress documents we verify that the CGTP-IN did not identify itself with the essential aspects of the political perspective of those documents" (CGTP 1999a: 1).

"It is important to criticize with vigour and clarity the neoliberal model that has dominated the construction of the EU, which, in our view, the congress documents do not do sufficiently. And that is a prejudice to workers, because the proposals for action

¹⁹ In fact, a draft amendment 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.

²⁰ CGTP International Relations Secretary (interview, March 1996).

in social areas (essentially in the congress documents) will not be effective in the framework of economic policies misadjusted from the realities of the workers and the peoples [. . .]. The ideological cleavage concerning the central political problem that the deepening of the integration has dragged into every phase of the European construction process and that has divided the “unionists” from the “federalists” leads us to think that in the name of unity and respect of the plurality of ETUC as a whole, this problem [. . .] should not be submitted in the congress documents. CGTP-IN disagrees from the federalist vision, even if ‘balanced’, that crosses the whole document on trade union policy, without, with that disagreement, us feeling less European, or less engaged and liable in the construction of a Europe of peace, progress and social justice, as well as in an ETUC more and more representative and acting [. . .]. It is in the face of this analysis that in this congress we will adopt a position of abstention concerning political resolution, voting for the remaining documents” (CGTP 1999b: 1-3).

Finally, at the 10th ETUC congress (2003), the CGTP began by pointing out as positive the fact that, thanks to its pressure, it had ensured that concepts like “balanced federalism”, “European Constitution”, “transnational collective bargaining”, and “European trade union” were not included in the final documents of the Congress (CGTP 2003c: 2). The references to balanced federalism had already been subject to strong criticism on the part of the CGTP in its participation in previous ETUC Congresses, since federalism, be it a balanced version or otherwise, is refused by the CGTP on principle. Second, the reason why the CGTP rejected the European Constitution was in order to safeguard national sovereignty, this being an ever-present matter (as I will emphasize in the following section) in the transnational discourses of the CGTP. Third, European collective bargaining is not acceptable as a strategy that takes away manoeuvre/autonomy space to the multiple forms of national sectoral bargaining. Finally, and following on from the previous position, the idea of a European trade union can never overlap the idea of a national trade union.

In some areas, however, CGTP proposals turned out to be incompatible with those of the ETUC, and were not accepted by the latter. In the document *Making Europe work for the people* (in a section entitled “A Constitutional Treaty for an Enlarged Europe”), the CGTP proposed that the ETUC put to its members that until the European elections of June 2004, they would support the political parties and candidates that defended a Social Europe (CGTP 2003a: 1). However, this reference to the political parties – which in programmatic terms is always analysed with great caution by the CGTP – was not included in the final documents of ETUC, even though, according to the Portuguese trade union confederation, this absence could imply “doctrinaire unresponsibilisation and could pave the way to populism, demagoguery, lies and misleading publicity in political terms”²¹. In the document *Programme for Action* (in the “Globalisation” section of the Report “Our vision of Europe”), the CGTP asserted that the struggle against the neoliberal conceptions of globalisation should be made in the name of a “solidary globalisation” (CGTP 2003b: 1), but the final version of the document only contemplated the defence of a globalisation regulated by democratic institutions. In the same

²¹ CGTP International Secretary (interview, September 24, 2003, Lisbon).

Report (but this time in the section “Strategies and coordination of collective bargaining in an expanding Europe” from the Report “Expansion and reinforcement of the European industrial relations”), the CGTP proposed that in the negotiation between social partners the workers’ interests should be properly represented, which implied “developing positive strategies that adapt the working conditions to the changes in place” (CGTP 2003b: 3), while in the final version of that ETUC document, the necessity to “develop positive strategies in matters of flexibility” (ETUC 2003b: 14) ended up being presented.

This last aspect, concerning the continuity of the positive flexibility (which after all was part of the two main documents of the 10th ETUC Congress), heightened the tension between the political positioning of the CGTP and the ETUC. In fact, in the proposed alterations advanced by the CGTP the idea was to exclude the expression “flexibility” from the strategies destined to reinforce European industrial relations (consistent with what it defends nationally and with what it also defended in other ETUC congresses in which it participated). But there were other points that prevailed in ETUC’s final documents and that the CGTP contested and considered polemical: on the one hand, in the *Programme for Action* (concerning the discussion on “the globalisation of social justice”), one could read that the ETUC defended an intensification of the interactions between the workers’ organisations and the employers’ organisations in the framework of the World Economic Forum (ETUC 2003b: 18); on the other hand, in the document *Making Europe Work for the People* (and concerning the discussion of “commercial negotiations”), the ETUC claimed that it did not oppose commercial liberalisation, hence the *core labour standards* were respected (ETUC 2003a: 35).

It would not be an exaggeration to say that ideological factors still interfere in CGTP’s organic relationship with the ETUC today, often leading the CGTP to continue to assume a defensive attitude towards the ETUC. After all, “when the subject is elaborating a manifestation in favour of the Charter of Fundamental Social Rights it is easier to draw up an agreement. When the subject is the political position of the ETUC, then the CGTP has more difficulties”²². For example, faced with the necessity to invoke the protection of the European social model, the CGTP considers that the ETUC does not always criticize neoliberalism clearly enough (CGTP 2003e: 49; 2004b: 94). In fact, the divergence between the CGTP and the ETUC (and, consequently, between the CGTP and the UGT) concerning the way to face economic liberalisation seems evident. Thus, in the same way that the UGT wishes for a “society with markets and not a market society” (UGT, 2000: 7), “the ETUC strategy has been not to oppose trade liberalisation, but rather to make progress on ensuring respect for core labour standards” (ETUC 2003a: 35), as mentioned above. The CGTP international relations secretary informed me precisely of that divergence concerning the way to face the market’s role:

“There is here a deep divergence between what the CGTP defends concerning this matter and . . . I won’t say the ETUC because it is abusive to say the ETUC, but what the majority of ETUC’s organisations defends [. . .] the problem is this isn’t just commerce [. . .] it isn’t merely a problem of technicians that discuss the trade

²² UGT International Secretary (interview, October 23, 2001, Lisbon).

mechanisms, let's say, of commodities, when the debate moves on from mere commercial relations to other issues such as investments, for example. Thus, most of ETUC's organisations have a view that it is possible to humanize this system, giving it a more humane face, that this can continue to function in the best of worlds as long as there is respect and rules, right? And we have a different view. [. . .] We privilege the Social Forum to the detriment of the Economic Forum [. . .]²³.

Even though the CGTP recognizes, day by day, that it is necessary to negotiate with capital, the above quotation suggests that the "class struggle" still occupies a central position in the confederation, which is why not just the "market society" but also the "society with market" are not well received, even because capitalism hardly lets itself to be humanized.

In any case, in spite of this and of other divergences that I have referred to above, the years of familiarity within the ETUC and its institutions has "softened" CGTP's position concerning the ETUC. After all, it is admissible, on the one hand, that particularly with regard to European institutions, the ETUC "has evolved to a position that is 'more trade union' and 'less lobby'". On the other hand, it is also recognized that the ETUC has adopted "stances more in favour of campaigning and with content more focused on struggle", and so "there are important and positive developments in the path of a project that is more connected to workers and less to the activity of trade union leadership, such as the European manifestations of the ETUC, in Portugal and in other countries, as well as various converging actions at the European level" (CGTP 2003e: 49; 2004b: 94). That is, despite keeping the criticism (demonstrated in all ETUC congresses), the CGTP tends to be more favourable to the ETUC, but especially in the issues that reveal the ETUC's convergence with a "spirit" of struggle, combativeness and counter-power, the key items in CGTP intervention.

Apart from the slow integration of the CGTP into the European trade unionism protagonised by the ETUC, the stance of the Portuguese organization concerning the two other structures of European trade unionism – the EIFs and the EWCs – was not much more effective. On the one hand, 10 years after the affiliation to the ETUC, the affiliation of the sectoral structures of the CGTP with the sectoral structures of the ETUC turned out to be slow. Of the 13 federations affiliated to the CGTP, only 6 (that is, less than 50%) are affiliated to the EIFs of the ETUC (CGTP 2004c). On the other hand, the CGTP has adopted an attitude of some prudence concerning the EWCs, admitting that they would hardly avoid arbitrariness in company restructuring processes (CGTP 1995: 2). Besides, for many of its leaders, the EWCs were *not* the great conquest of the European trade union movement and "they are not a priority of our daily action"²⁴. In the 9th and 10th Congresses (1999 and 2004), without minimising the importance of the EWCs, the CGTP stated that they are "one of the possible forms of adapting social structures of workers' representation to the changes undergone by the economic rules and structures themselves" (CGTP 1999a: 131).

²³ CGTP International Secretary (interview, September 24, 2003, Lisbon).

²⁴ CGTP member of the EWCs Department (interview, June 6, 2002, Lisbon) and member of the campaigning, working conditions and EWCs Departments (interview, March 19, 2004, Coimbra).

The EU and Portuguese Sovereignty

The congresses held by the CGTP in recent decades have provided us with an overall view of the positions it has adopted in relation to the EU, although in general it has dedicated only a modest amount of time to consideration of European matters. From the positions adopted by the CGTP, either at its congresses or as part of its activities between congresses, it is clear that there has been a long-standing dualism between a stance that affirms national interests and one that is defensive towards the EU.

The CGTP began working with Community organisations in the mid 1980s. In 1986, the election of representatives to the Economic and Social Committee was, according to the union confederation, a new event, since this EU consultative body began to accept representatives from union organisations that were not affiliated to the ETUC (CGTP 1989b: 84). At the 5th CGTP Congress (1986), the amount of time devoted to the issue of “Europe” and, to be more precise, of Portugal’s entry into the EEC was still very slight. The view of Europe and European integration was influenced in particular by the following objectives: defending national sovereignty and the interests of Portuguese workers resident in the country or living as emigrants within the EEC; defending the interests of European workers against those of the TNCs; criticism of EEC funding for Portugal; and the EEC as synonymous with the reinforcement of capitalist domination (CGTP 1989a: 27). The first critical positions adopted by the CGTP towards the EU were not exclusively its own, as a confederation, since certain other sectors which formed the traditional support base of the CGTP ended up developing strongly critical perspectives on the European project. As a matter of fact, certain sectors where CGTP had found support would end up 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 into the EEC, for it would mean national disturbances and the reinforcement of capitalist domination.

During the transition from the 1980s to the 1990s, the collapse of the Eastern Bloc emerged as a factor within world politics that would force trade union organisations with communist leanings to confront new strategies and new union actors. Even so, in the case of the CGTP, the collapse of the Eastern Bloc was not enough to eradicate the key role played by the Eastern “soviet-style leadership” (CGTP 1989b: 27), which explains why the crisis in socialism was considered less serious than the crisis in capitalism that had created class conflict, unemployment, poverty, suffering, marginalisation, violence and an increase in the Third World external debt. In the *Programme for Union Action* for the early 1990s, it was, however, almost obligatory for the CGTP to discuss the subject of “The EEC and the Internal Market”, even if it did so with the aim of underlining the dangers inherent in European unity for the sovereignty of the country.

“The consequences, in political and constitutional terms, of Portugal joining the EEC are basically well-known – it has contributed towards consolidating the powers of the ruling class within Portuguese society and has attempted to stall the project for democratic change in the country, threatening socialism, as enshrined in the Constitution.

[. . .] There are real threats and dangers to the economic independence of the country [. . .] The logic of European capitalism is to develop the larger and more competitive European companies by taking greater advantage of economies of scale and reductions in production costs, which is the prime objective of the “Internal Market” project [. . .]. The “challenges” which the internal market presents to Portugal are so serious and have such complex and disturbing implications for our economy, our potential for development and our national sovereignty that they have become a major issue in Portuguese society” (CGTP 1989a: 20; 21; 22; 23).

In fact, it may be said that at the 6th Congress (1989), under the slogan which from that time onwards never ceased to figure as one of the Confederation’s key themes – “*Por um Portugal Democrático, Desenvolvido, Solidário e Soberano*” (“For a Democratic, Developed, Solidary and Sovereign Portugal”) – the CGTP virtually condemned union involvement in Community institutions from the outset, since the main objective of Confederation activity was the “defence of national sovereignty and the rejection of supra-nationality imposed by monopolies”, in order to “preserve political and organisational class independence” (CGTP 1989a: 27).

At its next Congress (1993), it maintained a critical view of the process of building Europe, which it termed “secretive, class-based, elitist and anti-democratic”, and, moreover, beset by an excess of transnational initiatives (CGTP 1993: 19). On the subject of the possible attribution of political powers to the EU, it argued the following: decisions emanating from Community bodies should not threaten the sovereign values of national institutions; the subsidiarity principle should not be ruled by the priorities of the supra-national powers; European institutions should be made more democratic and this should be reflected in the adoption of anti-social dumping policies, the safeguarding of the rights of citizens (the right to work, protection, the environment, freedom of expression, association, etc.) and a balance of power between Community institutions. The main concerns in relation to EMU were focused on strong opposition to the monetarist basis for the criteria for nominal convergence and the rejection of a “multi-speed” Europe (CGTP 1989b: 86). Regrets were also voiced about the misuse of Community funds and the Maastricht Treaty was criticised for failing to create a “European Workers’ Treaty”. In addition, in relation to transnational agreements which had a particular impact on the mobility of the workforce and on international workers’ solidarity, the CGTP criticised the Schengen Agreements for “instituting persecutory police measures instead of rules based on solidarity, tolerance and cooperation with people and countries outside the Community” (CGTP 1993: 108).

For the first time, on the eve of affiliating to the ETUC, the CGTP dedicated a more substantial amount of time to discussion of the ETUC. Even so, as a kind of “forestalling” move, it did not fail to remind the ETUC of its responsibilities in terms of combating racism and xenophobia within Europe and of the need for the European Confederation to open its doors to workers from Eastern Europe, in order to establish itself as an internally more pluralist organisation. In my opinion, it was in the middle of the last decade, as a result of joining the ETUC, that the CGTP began to show some signs of a change in attitude towards the EU. This did not exactly constitute a greater acceptance of the EU, but there were at least signs of a greater willingness to discuss European issues. As Emilio

Gabaglio (the former General Secretary of the ETUC and therefore one of supporters of CGTP affiliation to the ETUC) argued, European integration was no longer rejected by trade union organisations with communist leanings and it began to be seen as an economic and political fact (Gabaglio 2001: 10).

At the 8th CGTP Congress in 1996 perhaps the only new item of note was the inclusion, within the Confederation's *Programme for Action*, of a subject entitled "European negotiations", which was related to the fact that the increasingly European profile of companies meant that the process of collective bargaining needed to be more fully developed on a European level. Even so, "campaigning", as the lifeblood of the trade unions (Silva 1995: 96), was still emphasised (particularly on a national level) over the option of bargaining, in which class conflict played a secondary role. Moreover, it was not by chance that the CGTP once again denounced the way in which negotiations for Portugal's entry into the EEC had been carried out. As is patent in the 8th 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 1996: 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 1996: 103).

Within the realms of EMU and economic and social cohesion, criticism of the "monetarist logic", the project to establish European Central Banks and the misuse of Community funds and programmes persisted. The criteria for nominal convergence were considered "absurd and unreasonable" since they intended "to apply identical measures at the same time to Portugal and, for example, Germany or Luxemburg" (Lança 1996: 39). Moreover, it is curious to note how a transnational issue – such as EMU – was seen by the CGTP as a factor which blocked its own position in national negotiations. In fact, in December 1996, the refusal of the CGTP to subscribe to the *Acordo de Concertação Estratégica* (the Strategic Conciliation Agreement) that was signed by the state and other employers and union organisations (the UGT), was influenced by the fact that the agreement proceeded along the lines of Maastricht criteria and embraced an entrepreneurial culture interested in solving the problems of competitiveness at the expense of a cheap and poorly qualified workforce (Silva 2000: 199).

Within a political, economic and social context characterised by the intensification of the processes of neoliberal globalisation (in which institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation), the 9th CGTP Congress (1999) once again adopted a critical stance towards EMU. When confronted with the arrival of the single currency, the "Euro", as part of the third phase of EMU (started in January 1999), the CGTP affirmed that "one of the most serious consequences of the process of European integration is the

gradual transfer of significant sections of national sovereignty to Community bodies". EMU played a crucially important part in this process, but was not inclined to "safeguard against the specific situation in relation to the development of the productive forces in each member state", since "a monetarist logic prevails, in which criteria for nominal convergence are considered the only ones that will ensure monetary union" and provide for "a multi-speed project", unacceptable to workers (CGTP 1999c: 92; 94; 1999b: 1). The economic and social cohesion project defended by the CGTP therefore envisaged a systematic and transparent supervision of the impact and results of structural funds and Community programmes and initiatives.

In the eyes of the CGTP, the European social model presented three main challenges: 1) "to know how far we are able to resist the pressures of neoliberal deregulation and establish a new balance in the labour market"; 2) "to respond to the many unknown factors that enlargement will bring, particularly those arising from a lack of economic and social cohesion"; 3) "to successfully combat the break-up of social networks", in particular ruptures between generations, the employed and the unemployed, men and women, those retired and those still working, majority and minority groups and those included in or excluded from society (CGTP 1999c: 97; Silva 2000: 254).

Finally, in its 10th Congress (2004), the CGTP once again recalled the difficulties involved in the processes of European integration, particularly since the start of the third phase of EMU (1999): the failure to fulfil the Stability and Growth Pact; the increase in monetarist policies and the predominance of neoliberal thinking within the various decision-making centres (CGTP 2004a: 7). After all, "since its 5th Congress, the CGTP-IN has defined the process of European integration as corresponding to the current phase of development of the capitalist system, whose central elements are the free circulation of capital, liberalisation and deregulation" (CGTP 2003d: 1; 2003e: 38). Even so, it was recognised by the CGTP that, to the extent to which it was accompanied by a "still incomplete" social model, the process of European integration could be seen as a "first, albeit tentative, response to the problems which neoliberalism poses to the people" (CGTP 2003e: 38). From the point of view of the CGTP, it is necessary for European governments to distance themselves from "the more deregulatory and anti-social models emanating from other centres of capitalism" so that the EU could present itself as a true alternative to neoliberalism (Silva 2004: 3), just as it is also necessary for the European institutions to stop Americanising labour relations.

Therefore, the process of building Europe resulting from a revision of the Treaties,

"must take into account the possibility of the Union affirming itself as a project which stands for cooperation, cohesion and peace amongst sovereign and equal peoples! Equal in terms of access to the mechanisms of power, equal in opportunities to define Community policies and equal in claiming guarantees that their own interests and essential concerns are respected" (Lança 2004: 1).

For the CGTP, however, the work of the European Convention destined to review the EU Treaties, which the CGTP (in agreement, to a certain extent, with the UGT in this matter) considered had not been fully and seriously debated within Portuguese society, could only represent a missed opportunity to bring the EU

closer to workers and other citizens since, from the outset and as a matter of principle, it had not guaranteed the reinforcement of economic and social cohesion. As it did not contain the elements required to reinforce Social Europe, “given that it has not altered any of the mechanisms that are used systematically to block any advances in this area”, the Convention project eventually left Social Europe vulnerable²⁵ to the prevailing neoliberal tendencies within the EU institutions, “representing a qualitative leap forward in the process of European integration along the path towards a federal Europe” (CGTP 2003d: 2). Moreover, given that the idea of a “European Constitution” is considered “nothing less than an International Treaty, subject to the constitutional rules of the member states”, the CGTP is also critical of the fact that the “federalist line” has succeeded not only in putting forward the idea that it is a Constitutional project (which, for the CGTP, it is categorically not²⁶), but also in imposing (by misapplying in many cases, provisions made by the European Convention Steering Committee) “choices that are more appropriate to a state than an non-state body” (CGTP 2003d: 3). For the CGTP, Article 10 is particularly illustrative of this, since it envisages the possibility that “the Treaty may prevail over national Constitutions, so that states may no longer have recourse to constitutional sovereignty (Article 10)”.

Therefore, given that it is essential that the Treaty “continues to uphold the principle of equality amongst states, meaning that Portugal and the Portuguese people can continue to define, defend and decide their own essential interests” (CGTP 2004b: 76), the CGTP has considered it fundamental to maintain the right to veto as a final mechanism for affirming sovereignty; to continue the system of rotating presidencies in order to respect equality amongst the member states; to preserve the principle of one member of the Commission per country, thus rejecting any differentiation which would, in practice, create a system of “full members” and “assistant members”; to strengthen the role of national parliaments in Community matters by introducing controls on legislative initiatives emanating from the European Commission; and to maintain Portuguese as an official working language (CGTP 2003d: 4).

The 10th CGTP Congress also voiced its habitually serious concern over the “social dimensions” of the EU, ultimately the only area capable of ensuring some balance within the EU. According to the CGTP, one of the central components of the social sphere, the European social model – i.e., the “set of values and institutions that have essentially emerged out of the activities and campaigns of the workers”, whose fundamental elements are a “high level of social protection, recognition of the social rights of workers, free collective bargaining as a regulatory element within the labour market and the existence of public services” (CGTP 2003e: 40; 2004b: 79) – is being seriously threatened by a number of risks, including

²⁵ Although the proposed new Treaty includes a Charter of Fundamental Rights, its contents are still very basic and there is a risk that provisions relating to its (as yet undefined) interpretation may restrict its scope and that the “Charter may be used as a bargaining chip in the delicate negotiations that will unfold” (CGTP 2004b: 76).

²⁶ “We are looking at a proposal for a reconstituted Treaty (an altered combination of the texts scattered throughout the various EU, Rome, European Single Act, Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice treaties) and not a Constitution” (CGTP 2003d: 3).

rising unemployment; increased poverty and inequality; increasingly insecure forms of employment and work and the privatisation of companies and public services. The latter, which was taken up as part of a general appeal launched by the CGTP at the Congress to reinforce the role of the state, implies, from the Confederation's point of view, regulation on a European level of services that are of general interest, which in turn implies "safeguarding basic principles, such as equal and universal access, democratic control, accessible prices, quality and a pluralist media" (CGTP 2003e: 41; 2004b: 81).

Another process which, according to the CGTP, may threaten "Social Europe" is the enlargement of the EU. From the point of view of the Portuguese Confederation, enlargement will widen the differences between countries in the EU: wages in many of the new EU member states are much lower than the European average, so that there is a greater risk of wage dumping; market deregulation is a major factor; collective bargaining is only in its infancy in these countries, etc. Although the CGTP has stated that it is not opposed to the enlargement of the EU²⁷, it has stressed that its non-opposition depended on the safeguarding of "the will of the respective peoples". This return to concerns over national states and national sovereignty has, moreover, been defended throughout the new institutional organisation of the EU, as anticipated. Also on the subject of enlargement, Florival Lança considers it imperative that this should be reflected in an increase in the Community Budget to avoid incurring two major risks: firstly, the risk of allowing the interests of the developed countries to dominate in the markets of the candidate countries, especially those in Eastern Europe, without paying due attention to cohesion mechanisms, which would mean Portugal occupying an increasingly peripheral position in relation to the developed core; and, secondly, the risk of weakening political structures, without which it would be impossible to ensure the redistribution required to guarantee levels of economic, social, territorial and inter-regional cohesion (Lança 2004: 2).

The issue of enlargement will therefore have repercussions on the economic policies of the EU. Within this area, the CGTP considers that the intensification of economic integration, the establishment of the internal market and the introduction of the Euro have created a new economic framework which is reflected in the greater coordination of economic policies and the subordination of the economies of the poorest countries to those of the richest. In addition to the intro-

²⁷ Whereas the CGTP's support for enlargement may be considered conditional, the UGT's support happens to be much clearer and unequivocal, although it has also spoken of the need to safeguard solidarity between peoples and not use it as a pretext to reduce existing levels of protection within the Community (UGT, 2000: 27; 104-105; 107). In general, it may be said that the fears expressed by the CGTP in relation to the enlargement of the EU seem to correspond, to some extent, with the views of the Portuguese people. In a survey carried out by the Catholic University for RTP (Portuguese Radio Television) and the *Público*, the majority of Portuguese people (43%) thought that the enlargement of the EU to 25 countries would have more negative than positive effects on Portugal. The factor which contributed most towards producing this pessimistic view of enlargement was, for 64% of the respondents, that of competition from a cheaper and qualified labour force coming from the new EU member states (*Público*, April 26, 2004).

duction of a single monetary policy and exchange rate within the EU, budget policies have also been subject to the restrictive regulations of the Stability and Growth Pact. According to the CGTP, the major economic policy options are based on liberal concepts of restrictive budget and wages policies. The CGTP therefore repudiates the monetary policy of the Central European Bank, an institution which it does not recognise as having democratic responsibilities and which seeks to stabilise prices and combat inflation without taking economic growth and employment into account. Equally, it considers that budgetary policy, although still within the ambit of national jurisdiction, is subject to restrictive Community rules in relation to the payment of deficits and has shown itself inadequate from the outset at dealing equally with countries with very different levels of development and at sustaining economic activity (since countries cannot increase the public debt). In assessing excessive deficits, the nature of the expenditure and the need for the less developed countries to make the biggest social and economic investments in order to make up for lost ground should be taken into account. The CGTP is therefore critical of budget restrictions being used as a pretext to impose cuts in social policies (education, health, social security, social welfare, the public sector) and demands “an urgent and serious reform of the Stability and Growth Pact” in order to correct injustices and ensure that the economic policy of each country contributes towards the creation of jobs and the promotion of social justice (CGTP 2004b: 44-45). For the CGTP, reforming the Stability and Growth Pact is even more important given that Germany and France have decided not to abide by it, claiming they need to defend national interests.

Finally, I would like to highlight one more subject which the CGTP has already discussed and which will have a strong impact on the future of the EU: the phenomenon of migration. This has been a constant feature of the CGTP’s consideration of transnational issues in past Congresses and it is still a relevant issue today. The CGTP recalls that Portugal is the “only country in the EU where there is still a strong wave of emigration, existing parallel to rising immigration”, in particular from Eastern Europe and Brazil. This verification of a “dual migratory movement” – which can be explained by the fact that Portuguese development is still essentially based on sectors requiring intensive labour, low salaries, a lack of technology, no demand for skilled workers or advanced technical and professional qualifications, no professional training, unqualified managers, etc. (Trindade 2004: 1) – serves therefore as a basis for criticising restrictive immigration policies (in relation to asylum and legal status cases for example) as befitting the notion of “Fortress Europe”, and for defending the harmonious integration (i.e. emigration) of Portuguese workers abroad.

* * *

It seems evident that “European integration” did not create a convergent trade union vision among the two main Portuguese trade union confederations. It would be perhaps an exaggeration to say that UGT and CGTP possess diametrically opposed positions *vis-à-vis* the EU. After all, both of them associate the “European social model” to the defence of labour rights, public services of general interest, full employment, jobs with quality, welfare, social protection and solidarity, free collective bargaining, etc.

However, while the UGT has always affirmed itself “pro-EU” and has shown, following the ETUC, a continuous strategic *opening* to the EU, the CGTP has always placed itself on the opposite side, rejecting the “federalist line” of the EU and assuming the defence of national sovereignty. Even today CGTP did not abandon a discourse of structural *closing*, even if that discourse represents a valuable critical contribution concerning the perspectives to follow either by European trade unionism or by EU institutions. One should say, however, that some UGT trade unionists admit signs of change on the part of CGTP concerning the process of European construction. As the then UGT international relations secretary told me in an interview at the end of 2001:

“CGTP has stopped having a position against the European Union. They may have a position against the Euro, which is the EMU, but not against the EU. What they say is that they wish for a more social European union, once the EMU privileges basically the economic and monetary dimensions. That is, CGTP is critical of the paths of the EU and not of the existence of the EU, which, although it may not seem so, is a substantial advancement”²⁸.

As regards the integration within the European trade union structures, the duality is also a reality. While the UGT has integrated itself fast and easily into the ETUC, CGTP has integrated the ETUC in a slow and complex way. As for the rest, the critical opinions that it sustains today concerning the ETUC may be seen in parallel with the criticisms concerning the EU’s institutional development. The adoption of more favourable positions concerning Europe on the part of the CGTP will be perhaps easier especially if such positions could become the reflection of the CGTP’s capacity to influence the ETUC’s decisions. I think that one might also say that there is a progressive approximation of the CGTP to some of the ETUC positions, especially if the latter shows itself predisposed to support *street* actions (strikes) instead of mere *office* negotiations.

In April 2004, thirty years after the (re)instauration of democracy in Portugal, a survey performed by the Catholic University for the newspaper *Público*, RTP (Portuguese Radio Television), RDP (Portuguese Radio Diffusion) and for the Commissariat of the Commemorations of the 30th anniversary of the 25th of April, revealed that only 9% of the Portuguese consider that Portugal’s accession to the EEC was the most important chapter in Portugal’s history²⁹. This withering opinion of Europe seems to confirm a priority of the Portuguese for national matters to the detriment of the transnational. The trade unions’ alert to the necessity of more debates about the EU, notably the EU Treaties revision process (which, according to CGTP and UGT, wasn’t minimally debated in the Portuguese society) is a way of reminding the Portuguese, workers or non-workers, trade union members or otherwise, that their destiny is also a destiny as European people.

²⁸ UGT International Secretary (interview, October 23, 2001, Lisbon).

²⁹ Portugal’s accession to the EEC is situated more or less at the same level as the restoration of independence in 1640 (with 10% of answers), the implantation of the Republic (with 8%), and the arrival of Vasco da Gama in India (with 7 %). The 25th of April 1974 is, by far, the event that is considered as the most important in Portugal’s history, with 52% of votes (*Público*, April 25, 2004).

In my view, the two defeats suffered by the European project in the Constitutional Treaty referendums that took place in France and the Netherlands in mid 2005 served only to consolidate rather than change the dual positioning of the two Portuguese trade union confederations *vis-à-vis* European integration. The socio-political convictions of the CGTP were even reinforced, as can be seen in the words of its General Secretary: “the Treaty cannot be separated from the concrete reality of Europe and its connection with the neoliberal dynamic that sweeps the world. It is impossible to debate the Treaty without debating the democratic deficit which characterizes the European Union”. In an even more incisive way, it can be said, according to Carvalho da Silva, that “the European Constitutional Treaty (Constitution) project is dead, no matter how much some people, escaping from reality, try to mend this or that issue in order to have it approved at a more convenient moment” (Silva 2005, *Diário de Notícias*, June 22). The UGT, despite rejecting (like the CGTP) the liberalization of services which is associated with the “Europe of Bolkestein”, continues to reaffirm its support to the ratification of the European Constitutional Treaty. The UGT considers that the results of the French and Dutch referendums were deeply influenced by “internal factors that have nothing to do with the text of the Treaty” (UGT 2005: 1), and that they also represent a withdrawal of citizens caused by their lack of participation in the decisions of the European Union.

As a consequence, it was not a surprise, even for the most “pro-European” citizens, that the Portuguese government cancelled the referendum scheduled for the end of 2005, although the polls pointed to the probable victory of the “Yes”. Like the referendum, Europe is still waiting for better days!

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