

Lisbon printer speaks in Liverpool

Workers' control in Portugal

BY COLIN MCKAY

WHILE PORTUGAL was under a Fascist dictatorship for 48 years, the British press took little interest, except when the Duke of Edinburgh or some other dignitary was visiting 'our oldest ally'.

Since April 25, 1974, when Caetano was overthrown, the Portuguese people have been struggling to build a decent society where people have control over their own lives, and British newspapers have daily reports about 'democracy under attack' and the 'danger to freedom'.

They have taken a sudden interest in democracy and freedom. The kind of democracy they refer to is that where you put a cross on a ballot paper once every five years and then do what you are told. Their freedom is the freedom to exploit, where the few can make fortunes out of the work of the majority.

MEETING

At a public meeting on November 17 at Gregson's Well Hotel, there was an opportunity to hear the other side of the argument when a printer-worker from the Portuguese newspaper, Republica, which is under workers' control, gave an account of current events in Portugal.

He described how there have been two parallel political struggles in Portugal — one between the various political parties for control of the government and the other at the grassroots level by tenants, workers, peasants and soldiers attempting to take power in their own commun-

ities through direct action.

The popular power movement has been growing steadily with workers' committees being set up in most factories, estates and barracks. Militants from all socialist parties have been involved, in spite of the party leaders attempting to distort situations for their own ends. The Socialist Party leader, Mario Soares, for example, has portrayed the takeover of Republica by its workers as being inspired by the Communist Party alone. This interpretation has been readily accepted by the British press. Their version of events was that Republica was a moderate democratic newspaper owned by the Socialist Party, then seized by a bunch of nasty communists. The account of the Republica worker is slightly different.

The newspaper was originally owned by the Socialist Party, but they did not openly admit this. The party already owned two national newspapers in which they put forward their political views, but they wished to give the impression that Republica was neutral so that its reporting would be more acceptable.

The workers got fed up with all the news being favourably slanted towards one political party with the pretence of independence, so they first asked the management to print openly that it was an official paper of the Socialist Party.

This was refused so the workers decided to take over and produce a paper in the service of the people, independent of all parties. That they have achieved this can be seen in the special English language version of the paper, in which criticisms of all parties are made when they are seen to be acting against the interests of the people.

The way in which Republica is run seems somewhat more democratic than having a single editor in the pay of a political party or a press baron. A workers' assembly directly elects a committee for the routine running of the paper. This cannot be elected unless at least 50% of the workers are present for the vote.

DECISIONS

The members of the committee are all delegates and are immediately recallable if they act against the wishes of the assembly, which has ultimate decision-making power. The aim of the paper is to serve as a forum for all engaged in the movement for popular power. One of the editorial statutes states: "The workers of the paper Republica recognise as their legitimate source of information, correspondence from the workers, residents, unemployed, soldiers and sailors' committees and all the representative base organisations of the Portuguese working people."

The progress of Republica has not been easy and part of the reason for the worker's visit to Britain has been to build up international support to counteract the attacks on the paper. Some of the problems he mentioned are shared by workers in Britain when they attempt to set up co-operatives. The supply of newsprint in Portugal is monopolised by a multinational company and when the workers took over, supplies were stopped. This was only overcome by appealing directly to workers of this company, who made sure supplies were re-started.

A worker from the Kirkby co-operative, KME, pointed out that they had similar problems of obtaining materials and credit from firms who are hostile to the idea of workers' power.

The paper has only a rudimentary distribution network and can only reach 30% of the country because the commercial distributors refuse to handle it. At present it relies on six old vans, some of which are usually broken down, and there is no money available to buy more.

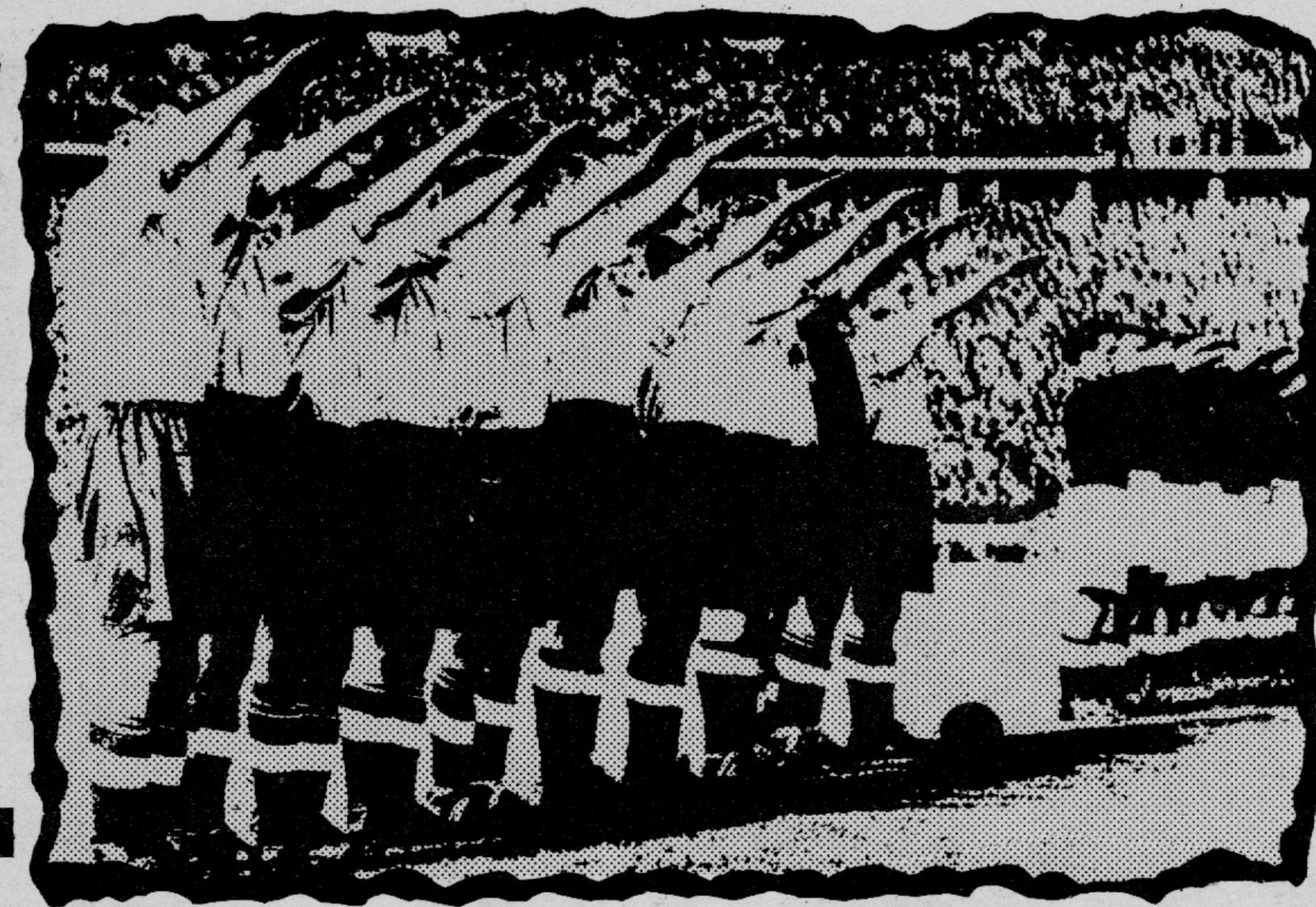
PROTECTION

The greatest danger to Republica is that the sixth provisional government now in power, the most right-wing since Fascism, will attempt to destroy the paper by physical force. Ironically this may have been averted by the government's action over Radio Renascenca. When this radio station was taken over by its workers, the government's answer was to blow it up. Soldiers were sent to Radio Renascenca, having been told by their officers they were being used to guard against right-wing attacks, and then police were infiltrated to plant explosives.

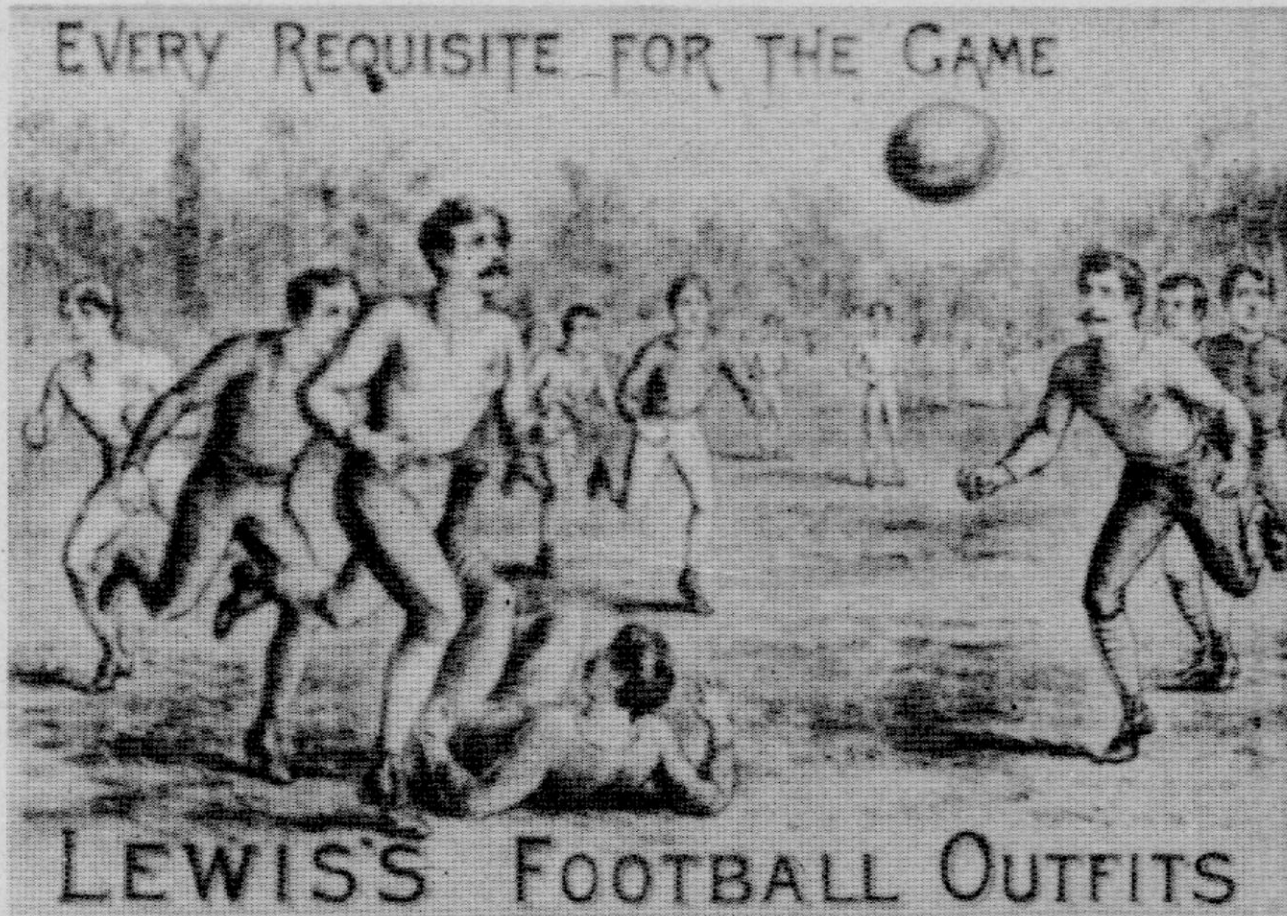
British newspapers heralded this as a triumph for law and order (it's usually called terrorism) showing that the government could maintain discipline in the army. What they did not report was that the soldiers were so disgusted at the part they had unwillingly played that they held a mass meeting at which they decided to guard the Republica offices against any similar attacks. The paper is now guarded day and night by sympathetic troops.

Anyone wishing to buy English language copies of Republica should contact the Solidarity Campaign with the Portuguese Working Class Liverpool Committee: 2a Belvidere Road, Liverpool 8. Films on the current situation in Portugal, including the World in Action film on Popular Power are available for loan from them.

ALL IN THE GAME...



Right: Nazi salutes from the England team at an international with Germany in the 1930s.



"The pools, the transfer system and the amount of money involved in the gates have turned football into something like a national industry." — *The Times, 1937*

From playing the game to riches and fame

WITH THE FOUNDATION of the FA in 1863 the version of football developed in the public schools was widely encouraged. Ex-public school teachers and clergy taught these new rules of football in the working class areas where they worked. Many of today's clubs were founded in this way, including Everton FC which, in 1878, grew out of St. Domingo's Church, and Blackburn Rovers which was founded in 1874 from Blackburn Grammar School Old Boys.

By Andy Wiggins

By the 1880s the dominance of the 'old boy' public school teams such as the Wanderers and Royal Engineers was being challenged by the large number of sides which had sprouted in working class areas around the workplaces.

In 1879 Darwen, a team of local cotton mill workers, were drawn to play Old Etonians, recognised as one of the strongest sides of the day, in the fourth round of the FA Cup at the Oval. A public subscription had to be raised locally to pay for their journey to London. They drew twice before losing. For the third game both Old Etonians and the FA had to give financial support so that Darwen could play.

At the same time as this expansion in the game was occurring, the hours worked by most industrial workers began to decline and, in particular, Saturday afternoons became accepted as the time when cultural and recreational activities could be pursued.

With growing numbers of workers attending football matches, which were still played on a 'friendly' basis it became increasingly clear that in order to maintain a successful team 'back-handers' would have to be paid to the better players.

It wasn't long before the issue of professionalism, a dirty word to the public school educated rulers of the game, was raised, and in 1883 Accrington were expelled from the FA for making payments to a player. More disputes followed until, recognising the inevitable, the FA accepted professionalism in 1885.

Improved transport and communications, as well as the free Saturday afternoons which most industrial workers enjoyed, increased the demand for more organised and regular football, and in 1888 twelve leading clubs met to establish a Football League. This regular fixture programme of professional teams created a situation ripe for commercial and political exploitation.

Parliamentary reform in the 19th

Century, ending with the 1884 Reform Act, meant that the vast majority of working men had the vote. Thus when in the 1880s and 1890s the game of football was adopted by large numbers of industrial workers as their own, local politicians and businessmen anxiously sought seats on the boards of clubs.

Politicians clearly recognised the vote-catching potential which a seat on the local side's board of directors offered and local businessmen too were fully aware that shares in football clubs offered prestige which would be very good for business.

Into politics

A more recent example of a man who mixed football, business and politics is John Moores, founder of Littlewoods pools and for many years chairman of Everton.

He was a Conservative councillor in Liverpool for five years before the war. He stood — unsuccessfully — for Parliament at Clay Cross and Nun-eaton.

Moores once said: "In Liverpool, outside the council chamber, the councillors are not so much Conservatives and Socialists, as Evertonians and Liverpoolians. Football unites them all."

By the 1920s schoolboy comics, fag cards and football accessories were all cashing in on the boom which the game was enjoying.

In recent years the motor industry has sponsored two competitions, both of which have been abject failures. The Ford Sporting League folded up after just one season when Oldham Athletic not only won every monthly prize for topping the sporting stakes but also collected a cheque for £50,000 as overall winners.

Oldham modernised their ground with the money but Ford, who had expected much more competition and publicity for their money, made the very unsporting gesture of dropping

FOOTBALL is more than a game. For centuries governments tried to suppress it as "worthless" and "subversive"... but without success.

Then in the 1880s local businessmen and politicians became directors of the first professional clubs.

It was a way of gaining political and commercial prestige — as well as making lots of money.

Increasingly, governments too came to realise the value of football as a means of recruiting troops, boosting morale at home and national prestige abroad.

But few players and fans can learn the history of the game — and its side-effects — in the popular press. This is the second in a series of articles designed to plug the gap.



In Doleful Memory OF **EVERTON,** WHO FELL Fighting for the Cup.

When shall we be in London town Sing my laddies, oh! Not this year for we are down, Sing my laddies, oh!

SARDONIC tribute to Everton after their defeat in the 1893 Cup Final.

being a director of Arsenal he sits on 32 other boards including Hambros Investment Trust, River Plate and General Investment Trust, and West London Property Corporation.

In the 1890s the average wage of the top players was on a par with that of skilled artisans who earned thirty to forty shillings per week. Most players still had very strong social and cultural links with their working class supporters and football offered them a slight, temporary improvement in earnings rather than upward social mobility and financial security.

The FA and Football League's persistent refusal at this time to recognise the players' union reflected their clear business interests and their paternalistic approach to their employees.

It wasn't until 1946 that the League reluctantly increased the maximum wage to £10 for winter and £7 10s for summer. Compared to the number of spectators attending matches (35 million in 1946-7) these wages were scandalously low.

Only when George Eastham successfully fought a High Court case in 1960 against his club, Newcastle United, and after a strike threat by the Professional Footballers' Association, was the maximum wage finally abolished and players given the opportunity of negotiating higher wages more freely.

The development of football into a business enterprise has meant that the modern footballer is now regarded more as a marketable commodity than as a skilled craftsman. The transfer system illustrates this point.

The gifted player is today a real

financial asset to a club. He may, however — if the club's overdraft is too large and the bank is impatient — have to be sold to realise capital. Although it seems unlikely that present day transfer fees will quickly rise to the ridiculous level of two years ago (how on earth could anyone, let alone Bob Latchford, be worth £350,000?) this is a far cry indeed from the days of the first four-figure transfer in 1905.

Players' rights

The constant repetition of set-piece moves in order to attain maximum profitability (i.e. goals) has caused many players to lose their flair and desire to play football. Instead they regard what they do as work.

The present contract system which ties a player to a club also means that he has no bargaining power if, for some reason, he is in dispute with the club. He may be transfer-listed, dropped, disciplined or refused a transfer request without any explanation, and — as at Liverpool under Shankly — he may even be taken to spend the night in a hotel before a match to ensure that vital energy isn't sapped by having sex.

All this may change if, as has been hinted recently, players fight for total freedom of contract at the end of this season.



FIRST four-figure transfer. The transfer of Alf Common (above) for £1,000 from Sunderland to Middlesbrough in 1905 caused a great sensation.

his scheme.

The Texaco Cup met with a similar fate when, in the face of a glut of different competitions, it became clear that fans were not prepared to watch games whose only function seemed to be providing Texaco with cheap publicity.

More importantly, perhaps, TV coverage of the matches was virtually non-existent.

Like a business

Today every professional club in the Football League is run on strict business lines, as the chairman of Bradford City once testified:

"Directors direct, managers manage and players bloody well play."

Many directors, in any case, have other axes to grind as Peter Dennis Hill-Wood can illustrate. Besides



ABOVE: Two of the three Free Press greetings cards. Now available from 48 Manchester Street and bookshops. Price: 7p each

George wanted the **Best** — so his 'dream house' architect specified **COLD SHIELD** sealed unit double glazing

George enjoys home comforts. In winter he makes in luxury his 'glass house' a practical proposition. It came to choosing double glazing for his luxury 'glass house', permanently sealed glass-air-glass barrier. It keeps inside warmth and outside cold apart 24 hours a day, and cuts heat loss through windows by up to 50%.

TOP: Early commercialisation of the game... a poster advertising football equipment at Lewis's in Liverpool.

ABOVE and RIGHT: George Best, in his heyday could be used to glamourise anything from double glazing to Harold Wilson.



"Directors direct, managers manage and players body well play" — director

How Liverpool began

JOHN HOLDING, a Liverpool alderman and businessman, was involved in the founding of Everton Football Club. His brash methods caused a split in the club as to whether or not they should become a limited company. The issue was resolved when he forced Everton to move from their pitch at Anfield Road.

Then, with a pitch but no team, he recruited players from Scotland to form Liverpool Football Club in 1892. There is no truth in the rumour that Shankly was the captain of this "team of Macs"!

Next month: FOR KING, COUNTRY AND TEAM