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## **The Portuguese trade union confederations vis-à-vis the European integration<sup>1</sup>**

### **1. Introduction**

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 mined the country during decades in several areas) to democracy that the trade unions recovered their lost liberty. It was yet in the context of the 70's of the twentieth century that the two main national trade union confederations were born and progressively grew stronger, the *Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses* (CGTP, the General Confederation of Portuguese Workers) and the *União Geral de Trabalhadores* (UGT, the General Workers' Union). With them were also born the main political-ideological cleavages that still characterize today, in general terms, the Portuguese trade union movement. On one hand, CGTP (created in 1970), closer to a communist oriented political project. On the other hand, UGT (created in 1978), more 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 80's on, the European integration project would “interfere” in the Portuguese trade union agendas. On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1986, the accession of Portugal to the then European Economic Community (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, the

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<sup>1</sup> This is a reduced version of the paper “Portuguese trade unionism and European integration: some contributions for a dual vision” presented at the workshop *Trade union attitudes towards European integration: a comparative perspective* (Oxford, European Studies Center, St Antony's College, June 4, 2004) within the context of the network *Formation et Développement de l'Expertise des Ressources en Europe du Sud* (FEDERES) of the project *Initiative Communautaire INTERREG III-B, Programme Operationnel Sud-Ouest Europeen*. The discussion presented in this paper is both part of a broad research of the author about the transnationalisation of the trade union discourses and practices in Portugal and in Brazil (accomplished in the ambit of a PHD thesis still in preparation), as well as of the research project “Trade unionism, social dialogue and industrial relations: for the expansion of democracy at work” (proj. N°POCTI/39689/SOC/2001), funded by FCT (Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology).

European integration would represent another pretext for the assumption of distinct positions on behalf of CGTP and UGT, in this way confirming a scenario of *dual trade unionism* also in what concerns to European integration. Opposing the anti-European position of the first, stood the European position of the latter. Opposing the higher predisposition to integrate itself in the European and international trade union structures of the first, stood a stronger fear of the latter in defining such organic liaisons.

Based on the “European challenge”, this paper aims to systematise some of the more recent positions of CGTP and UGT in what concerns to the European Union (EU). I will start to refer myself to the positions of UGT upon European integration. However, I will spend more time with CGTP attitudes towards EU. Beyond being the largest Portuguese trade union organisation, CGTP is also the one that has placed the most reserves upon the process of European construction, the one that warned the most to some of the “dangers” associated to the institutional evolution of the EU and the one that has had revealed more difficulties concerning the integration within the European trade union structures. In the case of CGTP, two vectors of analysis will be taken in account: on 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 CGTP within European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), as well as the positioning that the Portuguese trade union organisation is assuming in the framework of ETUC’s instances (above all at congresses, where CGTP participates as a full right 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.

## **2. The UGT attitudes towards European Integration**

Created in October 1978, UGT appeared in reaction to the monopoly detained by CGTP in the Portuguese trade union universe. Composed essentially by office, bank and service workers unions, UGT was aided by the Socialist Party (PS), the Social Democratic Party (PSD), as well as by other political and financial supports brought from abroad, namely of social democrat trade union confederations – “UGT has always had a close links with the union movements of central Europe and Scandinavia” (Barreto and Naumann, 1998: 410) –, of the German SPD or of the Ébert and Nauman Foundations (Eisfeld, 1983). At the same time that it came to rival politically and ideologically with CGTP, UGT – product of a “coalition of mainly service sector and

white-collar unions” (Stoleroff, 2000: 460) –, opened way to a long lasting logic of competitiveness in the inner core of the Portuguese trade union movement.

As I referred elsewhere (Costa, 1997: 50), the constitution of UGT signified the birth of a trade unionism at national level that, almost simultaneously, was caught by a process of internationalization and europeanization of its structures. That is, the definition of formal organic connections to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), to whom it joined as soon as 1979, and to ETUC, to whom it joined in 1983, allowed flowing to UGT a set of external pooling effects without the trade union confederation accomplishing a true consolidation of its internal organisational models. Thus, not just “our identity of political-union viewpoints like those of ICFTU is total and without reserves”, as in relation to ETUC “we see ourselves entirely in their principles, statutes and political-union practice” and “we have an identity of viewpoints with ETUC in what concerns to trade union action” (UGT, 2000: 119-120). Specially in the case of ETUC, UGT congratulates itself with the fact of always having actively participated in its governing bodies and initiatives. As for the rest, that strategic and structural participation within ETUC’s framework is a key vector of UGT’s international relations.

In my opinion, this international opening of UGT and the European vocation which was born with it, reinforced by its immediate integration within the goals and structures of ETUC, instigated from early on a favourable positioning of the Portuguese trade union confederation in face of the challenges emanated from the EU. It is not by chance that UGT is proud of being the first social partner to support Portugal’s request to adhesion to the EEC “when such was not in fashion” (UGT, 2000: 119). Associated to the process of European integration was, from early on, the expectation of a set of “advances” of various order for the country, namely in what matters to the process of development and gradual approximation to the average social and economical conditions of EU resulting of a set of technical and financial supports deriving 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 the 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. On this regard, according to Alan Stoleroff (2000: 454), the European integration has largely created unfavourable conditions for union development in detriment of the capital and the state. By exposing relatively under-developed Portuguese economy to new forms of competition, the European integration led capital and 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 that, 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 since that the very constitution of ETUC only occurred 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 there that resides precisely the pretext to reclaim higher levels of social protection (namely in what concerns 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 UGT, in countries like Portugal that must be a reason for constant claiming by the trade unions, so that the still persisting differences between Portugal and EU (in terms of unemployment, wage levels, qualification of the labour force, poverty and exclusion, etc.) can diminish.

The impacts deriving from Portugal’s integration in the EU are considered by UGT as globally positive: the adhesion of Portugal to the EEC, on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1986, revealed itself a decisive factor for the economical and social development of the country. Despite the different economic cycles, to which corresponded different speeds in the convergence process of the Portuguese economy in relation to the communitarian economy, “the balance of Portuguese growth is positive” (UGT, 2000: 9). For that

reason, there are no doubts that “Portugal today is better off because more developed, and the European integration was fundamental to attain this desideratum. In the European construction the advances were significative and Portugal, through its legitimate representatives, ratified the Single European Act, Maastricht Treaty, the Amsterdam Treaty and the Nice Treaty” (UGT, 2003 : 1). Therefore, UGT’s leader (Proença, 2004: 1) reinforces this position precisely pointing out that integration in EU and the latter successive advances always functioned as moments of national mobilization that lead to the convergence with the European average and the sustained improvement of the working and living conditions. The productivity rose emphatically, having Portugal better results than the EU, right after Ireland. The wages and incomes increased. Unemployment decreased. This favourable situation suffered, although, some inversion in the last two years, in which unemployment increased more than in any other EU country, the real salaries decreased, the country came into disagreement vis-à-vis the EU. For the UGT leader, only in 2005/2006 it is predictable that such situation can be overcome, despite the fact that Portugal continues to receive an important part of communitarian funds.

The structural evaluation of the European integration is, after all, considered by UGT as globally very positive. For UGT, now arises the necessity of promoting new advances in the European construction, namely in the context of the present Treatys’revision process, dictated by the European Convention since the Laeken Summit, in December 2001. With the analysis of the of the European Constitution project, which UGT considers not to be a first European Treaty, but rather a revision and systematization of the existing Treaties, some animosity in institutional terms was brought on thereupon, for understanding that the French-German axis ended up being benefited in detriment of small countries like Portugal. For UGT, such is due both to an insufficient discussion of the options underlying the revision of the voting methods in the European Council, as well as to poorly defined options in terms of future shocks with National Constitutions, namely through the article 10<sup>th</sup> that allows Governments to put in doubt 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 UGT: a) in detriment of unanimity, the enlargement of the votings by majority in social, fiscal or environmental issues; b) the privileging of the capacity of decision in a Europe of 25, instead of decision blocking mechanisms that lead to

paralysis or to indefiniteness; c) the advancement with reinforced cooperations, following decisions taken during the Portuguese Presidency of the EU, but without arising 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 UGT, this organization considers that the Treaties' revision project contains very important advances in what concerns to European citizenship and to the deepening of a social dimension of EU, advances that, according to 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 in what concerns to social issues. At once because in its Article 7<sup>th</sup>, it recognizes the Charter of Fundamental Rights, that 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 in the Constitutional Treaty are integrated 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».*

*With no doubt, the main demands of the European trade union movement consubstantiated in ETUC were [well] received. Thus our support to the Treaty project in what concerns to the social area” (UGT, 2003: 4-5).*

In short, beyond the support for the integration (with judicial value) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the Treaty, the fixation of goals as full employment, instauration of a judiciary basis for general interest services, the European Union's mandate in terms of economic, social and employment coordination, and yet the recognition of the social partners and the social dialogue role are still some of the points that resume the satisfaction of UGT with the Treaty project.

Just as a conclusion, one would say that “UGT supports and always will support the construction of the presently denominated European Union. In this area as well as in others UGT was never neutral nor grey (...), we are European and 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 in what concerns to European matters, reason by which the realization of a referendum that could enable a reinforcement of the European project should be stimulated to debate with detail the social interest issues that appear in

the Constitution's project (UGT, 2003: 7; Proença, 2004: 2). For UGT, the path to follow in the future passes through the creation of an "authentic Constitution. It is important to continue to deepen European construction, settled 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, durable 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).

### **3. The CGTP attitudes towards European Integration**

CGTP is an organization of the utmost relevance in Portuguese society, having been a major role in combating Salazar's regime. The roots and principles of CGTP are based upon 'the glorious organization and struggle traditions of the working classes' and the organization sees itself as "a trade union class organization, unitary, democratic and of the masses" (Silva, 2004: 1). The "class nature" of CGTP – linked to the recognition of the "determining role of class struggle in the historical evolution of mankind" – is after all the key concept which generates a set of principles – unity, democracy, independence, solidarity and mass trade unionism – all of them "inseparable and interdependent, which direct and characterise the organization's options, both in terms of the definition of their claims and programmatic objectives and in terms of the definition of its forms of action and struggle, as well as also in its structure and organization" (CGTP, 2004d: 7).

CGTP's faithfulness to the class principles and interests defended at the national level has determined its international contacts. That is, the historical organization's alignment with World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) reproduces the political plan and positioning defended at home, the same being true of the relationship between UGT and the ICFTU. CGTP's international relations were therefore almost exclusively limited to WFTU, a fact which could be witnessed in the early eighties when *Solidarnosc* was created in Poland. As it had refused to condemn the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, CGTP did not condemn the illegalisation of 'Solidarity' by the socialist regime, nor did it condemn the repression of its leaders and activists, justifying Jaruzelski's coup in terms of it being included in a set of actions which aimed at consolidating socialism (Castanheira, 1985: 815). As a consequence of that, CGTP was

closer to the WFTU and simultaneously more distant from other European trade union tendencies which promptly condemned those events. In that context, the refusal of the CGTP's request to join the ETUC in January 1979 acquired a deeper meaning, and all the more so because, as Gobin points out (1992: 41), one of the specific resolutions of the ETUC Fourth Statutory Congress (which took place in Haye, April 19 to 23, 1982) took the form of an accusation (and indignation) against the military coup of 13 December in Poland which led to the abolishment of democratic and trade union rights and the imprisonment of a large number of *Solidarnosc* trade unionists. The only curiosity behind that proximity between CGTP and WFTU resided in the fact that there was no formal affiliation, "for reasons of prudence and balance within the federation and because it would be a sort of announced death of unity"<sup>2</sup>.

### ***3.1. The slow and complex integration within European trade union structures***

There aren't many doubts that the Portuguese's destiny lies in Europe. At least, that seems to be evident in the words of some of the CGTP's 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 of being accomplished with the organisations of Southern Europe, in particular Spanish, than with others"*<sup>3</sup>;

*"Within our priorities are, in the first place, those which occur in the European context"*<sup>4</sup>;

*"We have a priority which is the European Union, the European Union trade unions"*<sup>5</sup>.

However, this "natural" discursive integration in Europe did not represent, to CGTP, an integration of the same kind in the main European trade union structure, the ETUC. That is, in terms of organic relationship, CGTP's positioning exemplified very well how is difficult to articulate "trade unionism in Europe" with "European trade unionism"<sup>6</sup>. For that reason, the success story of UGT's affiliation with ETUC was for a

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<sup>2</sup> Kalidás Barreto (former CGTP leader), interviewed by *Expresso* newspaper on August 17 1996.

<sup>3</sup> CGTP General Secretary (interview, March 31, 2000, Lisbon).

<sup>4</sup> CGTP International Secretary (interview, March 2, 2000, Lisbon)

<sup>5</sup> CGTP Trade Union Training Secretary (interview, April 6, 2001, Lisbon).

<sup>6</sup> 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

long time the insuccess story of the CGTP's affiliation with ETUC. Elsewhere I have proceeded a very detailed analysis of the CGTP affiliation with ETUC (Costa, 1997:143-248; 1999: 153-280). In this paper I recover only: the main obstacles to CGTP's affiliation with ETUC; the factors that were important to CGTP's acceptance in ETUC; the positions assumed by CGTP at the ETUC Congresses.

### *3.1.1. Obstacles to CGTP's affiliation with ETUC*

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

*i) the UGT's veto.* During more than ten years, the UGT used the "right to veto" to sustain the CGTP admission to ETUC. The "right to veto" is a complex issue because, in fact, the ETUC Statutes do not include that specific procedure, although, in 1979, the ETUC Executive Committee had manifested the view that it would be important for affiliated organizations to be heard whenever new applications for affiliation from the same country were submitted. That 'right' has always been a practice or even an informal resource used by the organizations affiliated with ETUC to de-authorize certain applicants, although it was mainly incorporated by either the German DGB or by the British TUC (Groux, Mouriaux and Pernot, 1993: 35), two trade union confederations of great influence within the ETUC. However, other national trade union confederations have used that 'law out of books' – France was an example of that opposition, with CFDT and the FO resisting the CGT (whose affiliation with ETUC took place in March 1999)<sup>7</sup> – and this is not even an exclusive practice of the confederate threshold.<sup>8</sup>

By making it difficult for CGTP to join the ETUC for years, UGT was reproducing in the ETUC arena – which the latter had joined in 1983, after having

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countries. In its turn, 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).

<sup>7</sup> Interviews with a member of the CGTP Executive Committee (October 1996) and with a leader of the *Federação de Sindicatos do Mar* (Federation of Sea Trade Unions), CGTP (August 1996).

<sup>8</sup> The veto became a habit for the ICFTU federal organizations as was the case of the International Federation of Commercial, Clerical, Professional and Technical Employees, 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

become affiliated to the ICFTU in 1979 – the very imprint of their internal confrontations at national level, a fact which resulted in not very favourable critical judgements on the part of CGTP. Because it was an immediate product of both the ICFTU and the ETUC (both of which were organizations which did not mirror CGTP in ideological terms) the UGT easily maximised the emerging opportunities it saw, or was given, soon after it was founded. In truth, “UGT was, in itself, a project breaking out of the eggshell, shall we say, just like the image of the little chicken being born, and, therefore, like a little chicken being born ... fragile. Therefore, UGT itself needed international support to grow up and consolidate itself. Besides all that, UGT, which had always been linked to the International Socialist trade union World (...), also needed to fight CGTP at home ...”<sup>9</sup> Besides that, it should also be noted that “the field was ready for us, with ample support from the Germans, all the Northerners, the Spanish, the French, the Italians”<sup>10</sup>.

*ii) the ETUC's resistances.* At the beginning of the eighties, the ETUC refused the first formal CGTP application for affiliation with ETUC, because it didn't 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 ETUC –; 'organizational criteria' – to be a representative organization in the country of origin; to represent workers of different categories and sectors of activity –; 'geographical criteria' – a possible previous affiliation with an Western European intergovernmental organization –; or, 'general criteria' – respect for the ETUC's statutes, objectives and political practice; availability to co-operate at European level; respect for the opinion of the affiliated confederations regarding their own country's applicants<sup>11</sup>. 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

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is a new national applicant' (interview with a leader of the *Federação de Sindicatos do Mar/CGTP*, August 1996).

<sup>9</sup> A member of the General Secretariat of UGT and of the Board of the *Sindicato dos Bancários do Sul e Ilhas* (interview, June 1996).

<sup>10</sup> A member of the Secretariat for International Relations of UGT (interview, October 1996).

<sup>11</sup> Annex including the 'affiliation criteria' set by the ETUC (December 7, 1979) to the letter addressed to CGTP by Mathias Hinterscheid (General Secretary of the ETUC), December 14, 1979.

your affiliation would damage ETUC's internal cohesion rather than reinforce its political impact'<sup>12</sup>.

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 ETUC: "the main reason to refuse CGTP was its attitude concerning Europe (...). The trade unions that are against the European Union can hardly join ETUC (...). One cannot accept a trade union that is against the European Community, one can't admit a trade union that is against ETUC's foundations"<sup>13</sup>.

It even seemed existing a direct correspondence between UGT's veto and ETUC's resistances. 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 by its representatives. The following could be read concerning the comment on the relationship between the two Portuguese confederations: 'there is no institutional relationship between UGT and CGTP, since the latter insists in calling itself the only confederation. Often did UGT make proposals for conversations with CGTP-IN in order that they might lead, at least at certain levels, to a unity of action' (ISE, 1988). Notwithstanding the fact that it aims at producing a global image of the Portuguese trade union panorama, the ETUI brochure was after all manifestly selective. That seems to be apparent also when it declares that "the administrative bodies of CGTP-IN are mostly made up of PCP [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 CGTP-IN after the 25th April 1974' took the form of a brutal decrease in the wage range and it seriously limited the expression of minority groups (ISE, 1988: 58).

*iii) the lack of interest of 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

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<sup>12</sup> Letter by Mathias Hinterscheid to CGTP, February 5, 1982.

<sup>13</sup> Deputy General Secretary of the ETUC (interview, February 2, 1998, Brussels).

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 adherents of the FUT as well as by the “left” 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 discussable, since if there existed a strong consensus, such a consensus was more brought from the outside than from the inside. It is evident that there had always to be a minimal internal consensus for a affiliation to exist, since, otherwise, there wouldn’t even have been affiliation requests. However, CGTP’s affiliation in ETUC, being strongly conditioned by the availability of the central communist line, did not anchor itself in a strong consensus, since that dominant political line in CGTP was always the strongest opposition.

### *3.1.2. The external factors that favoured CGTP’s integration within ETUC*

When, on December 1994, ETUC’s Executive Committee approved CGTP’s affiliation, the latter saw its past impediments ended. Which where, then, the factors that determined CGTP’s affiliation with ETUC? If we look at the motives invoked by CGTP to join ETUC, which consist of two formal applications for memberships (the first, in 1979, the second in 1992), we can verify that they were mainly focused on ‘national issues’: representativeness, the historical fight against fascism or the defence of the workers’ interests and humanitarian values. However, the real motives for integration within ETUC were strongly influenced by external factors, once there was not a strong interest of the communist sectors of CGTP (as suggested above) and once “the positions of CGTP had their origin in international rather than national factors”<sup>14</sup>. 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 CCOO affiliation process in the nineties (those three factors being more closely associated with the period closer to the affiliation).

The political and economical importance of Portugal’s accession to EEC couldn’t be ignored by CGTP. Indeed, in the mid eighties, CGTP seemed to fear (even

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<sup>14</sup> Founding member of CGTP (socialist tendency) (interview, July 1996).

if not affirming publicly in an effusive way) that if it missed the “European Train” it might somewhat stay set aside from the new forms of social dialogue that were liable to stimulate the unity of action of workers and trade unions at European level. On the other hand, the centrality of EEC’s influences on economic, financial and political national life – namely through access to structural funds – could not leave anyone impassive. Even if not *with* Europe, 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, as well as to the draw back of the decisional mechanisms in the economic, political and financial areas, that, in the meantime, on the trade unionism level, CGTP wasn’t always capable of capitalizing to its favour as it aspired. Maybe, precisely because of this, in ETUC’s Executive Committee on December 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> 1994, which approved CGTP’s affiliation in ETUC, CGTP’s leader, Carvalho da Silva, didn’t forget to remember that “Portugal’s entrance in the European Economic Community relaunched 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 facts 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, namely through the WFTU, to which CGTP was closely connected and strongly influenced by (...) When the soviet Bloc fell, Portugal also joined Europe, the EEC. The Eastern Bloc falls in 1989 and we join the EEC in 1986 and all that facilitated the tendencies that supported CGTP’s insertion in ETUC, making our reasons victorious”<sup>15</sup>.*

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

*“In fact, I should really tell you that I did not have this job that I have here in the international department and I had “semiclandestine” contacts already, the word is a strong one, but that’s how it is, with the Foundation’s representatives (...). I had regular contacts with them to help the Foundation analyse some of the questions that had to do with us, because we were reliable sources for the knowledge of Portuguese reality (...). And I am telling you about contacts I had which were not of my own responsibility, they were of their responsibility, of the Friedrich Ebert*

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<sup>15</sup> Founding member of CGTP (socialist tendency) (interview, July 1996).

*Foundation. Whenever they wanted to know about something with rigour, it was us they would contact*<sup>16</sup>.

Fourthly, and as far as the end of the opposition from UGT is concerned, we also have a factor which is external to CGTP, even if it is internal to the Portuguese trade union movement. According to an interview with an important member of the National Secretariat of UGT, “it was possible for CGTP to join the ETUC only because it had UGT’s support”<sup>17</sup>. The same leader goes on stating that ‘CGTP itself was forced to recognise UGT as an organization because UGT consolidated hardly, with difficulty, but it managed to consolidate as a trade union project, a trade union organization’. From these statements it can be concluded that it was in exchange for a certain ‘recognition of the other’ imposed on CGTP from the outside that the conditions were gradually created for its international recognition.

Finally, the “CCOO’s admission into the ETUC in December 1990 speeded up that of the CGTP, and this in turn helped to ensure 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 to accept the CGTP were: end of the opposition from UGT; the fall of the ‘Eastern Bloc’; the “recommendations” of the European Commission; and the direct involvement of certain ETUC individual protagonists.

The ETUC was informed by the UGT trade unionists that UGT was not against the CGTP affiliation anymore. UGT came to recognise publicly that it would assent to the affiliation of CGTP with ETUC. A short press release bearing the title ‘UGT supports CGTP-IN affiliation with ETUC’ read: “by invitation of the General Secretary of UGT, José Manuel Torres Couto, a work lunch was held in Brussels, on October 28 with the presence of the General Secretary of The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), Emílio Gabaglio, and the Co-ordinating Secretary of CGTP-IN, Manuel

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<sup>16</sup> CGTP ‘International Relations’ officer (interview, March 1996). It seems undoubtedly true that ‘in the past that would be unthinkable, because the word among the communist trend of CGTP was that they were the real enemies, for, in truth, it was with the money of Friedrich Ebert Foundation that we got UGT’ (CGTP founding member, socialist tendency, interview, July 1996).

<sup>17</sup> The UGT blockade was in itself a stimulus for CGTP to display a more combative image and try to be more convincing in projecting it abroad. Therefore, with the end of the UGT veto, CGTP was able to find irreversible conditions for affiliation. As a Deputy General Secretary of the ETUC emphasised, ‘the authorisation from UGT was a determining element in the process’ (interview, February 1998, Brussels).

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 within ETUC. This was a "globalising factor" which was not indifferent 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 can be understood. Even if the debates around the issue of the EEC enlargement could be considered as constituting important concerns for the ETUC as far back as the seventies, with the WFTU crisis and the falling apart of the Eastern countries, the issues concerning the ETUC's organizational register as well as its territorial activity are back in the spotlight (Groux, Mouriaux and Pernot, 1993: 58). As a matter of fact, "the ETUC's geographical coverage has been 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).

Besides the ending of UGT's opposition and the fall of "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. As a matter of 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 union organizations. Those matters had to do with the Commission's mandate to promote consultations with the 'social partners' at Community level so as to allow the possibility (mentioned in Article 4 of the Protocol) that the dialogue between 'social partners' at Community level can lead to agreements and contractual relationships. Therefore, the representativeness of both the employer and the trade union 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 sum, the ETUC is definitely the most representative trade union confederation of a general character at European level” (Comissão Europeia, 1993: 18). The fact that France and Portugal were the only two countries where there were reservations as to the question of representativeness allows me to say that the decision to accept CGTP into the ETUC, which happened after the Commission’s study, may well not have been a mere coincidence<sup>18</sup>.

Lastly, the admission of CGTP into the ETUC has to do with the direct involvement of certain individual protagonists in the process. An example is Emílio Gabaglio, whose election as General Secretary of the 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 determining role of the General Secretary of the ETUC, comrade Emílio Gabaglio, who, since he was elected, took the matter into his hands, thereby also contributing to improve the relationship between all the components of our trade union movement”. He was a man who “belonged to the left of Christian democracy, with a past of trade unionism and a personal history of permanent intervention, possessing a view of trade unionism as a counter-power”<sup>19</sup>.

### *3.1.3. The positions assumed by CGTP at the ETUC Congresses*

In December 1994, when it was admitted within ETUC, 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 ETUC

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<sup>18</sup> This argument was implied in some interviews, namely with a former UGT technician and advisor (August 1996), with a technician of the CGTP Department of International Relations (January 1996); on this argument, according to which such institutions as the European Commission did play an important role in the reinforcement of transnational trade union collaboration which was eventually favourable to the ETUC, see Jensen, Madsen and Due (1995), Martin (1996: 8) and Turner (1998: 211), among others.

<sup>19</sup> CGTP leader (International Relations Department) (interview, January 1996). This idea was reinforced, among others, in the interviews I made with a former head of the CGTP International Department (July 1996), with a member of the CGTP Executive Committee (October 1996) and with an Deputy General Secretary of the ETUC (February 1998); on the fact that the role of the ETUC lobby sometimes undermined the national co-ordination of trade union strategies, see Groux, Mouriaux and Pernot (1993: 61) and Goetschy (1996: 258).

confirmed the incompatibilities between CGTP and ETUC. The public positions assumed at the ETUC congresses are an example of that. At the 8<sup>th</sup> ETUC Congress (1995), a ‘political document’ (titled ‘For a Strong, Democratic, Open and Solidary European Union’) was the basis for a clear “dissenting vote” on the part of 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 an  
Europe at different speeds.  
As the document itself recognises, the European integration appears to have  
become fragile to the eyes of its workers and citizens.  
In our opinion, that fragility is precisely due to the predominant power of  
the federalistic logic defenders in the past, where they tried to impose  
solutions which failed to consider the different realities, cultures, values and  
sensitivities which exist in the various European countries.  
Europe at different speeds is a notion that denies the whole meaning of  
building the Community, namely in the eyes of the workers from the least  
developed countries of the European Union (...).  
We unfortunately conclude that the document submitted does not entirely  
address or answer these questions and that is the reason why we cannot  
give our assent to it”.*

In a short comment of that political resolution on the European Union, CGTP highlighted precisely the main ‘hot issues’ that had influenced their decision, confirming the contents of the above quotation: the federal logic of European integration; Europe at different speeds; and the unanimity transformed into a majority for all decisions. For CGTP, “if the results of the votes indicated the defeat of Europe at different speeds<sup>20</sup>, in spite of not reaching the two thirds, and the defeat of the majority issue by 2/3, the truth is that all the federalistic logic, with the present EMU nominal convergence criteria, is maintained” (CGTP, 1995: 5). Besides, the CGTP considered that some items of the ETUC’s central document (“Placing Employment and Solidarity in the Heart of Europe”) were dangerous and therefore justified an abstention position. The introduction of the concept of “positive flexibility” was an

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<sup>20</sup> In fact, an amendment proposal which was submitted to the Congress with the aim of altering the expression “and therefore different speeds” (which ended the sentence of the last paragraph of chapter 2, ‘item 4’) was accepted, and it therefore was not included in the “final resolution” of the Congress.

example. For the ETUC, “what is central to this concept is the notion that not only the entrepreneurs need flexible labour, but workers also need flexible entrepreneurs, that is, entrepreneurs who are willing to, and capable of adapting to the workers’ needs, for they increasingly need to articulate their professional activities with their family responsibilities, or even other private commitments” (CES, 1995:18). On the contrary, according to CGTP “all flexibility, be it functional or regarding the working time, if it is compulsory and universal, we must refuse it”<sup>21</sup>.

At the 9<sup>th</sup> ETUC Congress (1999), although forsaking the “vote against” position of the previous congress, CGTP maintained an abstentionist and critical posture face to the political documents of ETUC:

*“Since the first approach to the ETUC’s congress documents we verify that 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 EU, which, according to us, the congress documents don’t do sufficiently. And that is a prejudice to workers, because the proposals for action in social area (that are essentially in the congress documents), won’t be effective in a 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 in every phase of the European construction process and that has divided the «unionists» from the «federalists» advises, in our opinion, that on behalf of unity and respect of plurality of ETUC as a whole, this problem (...) wouldn’t 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 facing this analysis that in this congress we’ll adopt a position of abstention concerning political resolution, voting favourably the remaining documents” (CGTP, 1999b: 1-3).*

Finally, at the 10<sup>th</sup> ETUC congress (2003), CGTP began by pointing out as positive the fact that, by its pressuring, it has managed that concepts like “balanced federalism”, “European Constitution”, “transnational collective bargaining”, “European trade union” did not take part of the final documents of the Congress (CGTP, 2003c: 2). The references to balanced federalism had already been object of strong critics on the part of CGTP in its participation in previous ETUC Congresses since, by principle,

federalism, be it a balanced version or of another kind, is denied by CGTP. In its turn, the reason for CGTP rejecting the European Constitution was the safeguard of national sovereignty, being this a matter always present (as I will emphasize in the following section) in the transnational discourses of CGTP. In third place, the 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 up on the last position, the idea of European trade union can never overlap the idea of national trade union.

In some areas, however, CGTP proposals have revealed incompatible with those of ETUC, and were not accepted by the latter. In the document *Making Europe work for the people* (in a section titled “A Constitutional Treaty for an Enlarged Europe”), CGTP proposed that ETUC would appeal 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 – that in programmatic terms is always analysed with great caution on the part of CGTP, was not included in the final documents of ETUC, even if, according to the Portuguese trade union confederation, that absence could imply “doctrinaire unresponsibilisation and open way to populism, demagoguery, lies and doubtful publicity in political terms.”<sup>22</sup> In the document *Programme for Action* (at the section “The globalisation” of the Report “Our vision of Europe”), CGTP defended that the struggle against the neoliberal conceptions of globalisation should be made on behalf 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. Still in the same 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”), CGTP proposed that in the negotiation between social partners the workers interests were 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’s document, the necessity to “develop positive strategies in matters of flexibility” (ETUC, 2003b: 14) wound up being presented.

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<sup>21</sup> CGTP International Relations Secretary (interview, March 1996).

<sup>22</sup>CGTP International Secretary (interview, September 24, 2003, Lisbon).

This last aspect, concerning the continuity of the positive flexibility (that after all took part of the two main documents of the 10<sup>th</sup> ETUC Congress), intensified the tension between CGTP's and ETUC's political positioning. In fact, at the proposals of alteration advanced by CGTP the idea was to exclude the expression "flexibility" from the strategies destined to reinforce European industrial relations (in coherence with what it defends at the national plan and with what it also defended in other ETUC congresses in which it participated). But other points that prevailed in ETUC's final documents and that CGTP contested and considered polemical were the following: on one hand, in the *Programme for Action* (in what concerns the discussion on "globalisation of social justice"), one could read that 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, in the document *Making Europe Work for the people* (and concerning the discussion of the topic "commercial negotiations"), ETUC claimed that it did not oppose itself to commercial liberalisation hence the *core labour standards* were respected (ETUC, 2003a: 35).

It will not be exaggerate to say that the ideological factors still interfere in CGTP's organic relationship with ETUC, leading CGTP often continuing to assume today a defensive attitude towards 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 CGTP has difficulties in following up"<sup>23</sup>. For example, in front of the necessity to invoke the protection of European social model, CGTP considers that ETUC not always criticizes the neoliberalism in a completely clear way (CGTP, 2003e: 49; 2004b: 94). In fact, the divergence between CGTP and ETUC (and, consequently, between CGTP and UGT), concerning the form of facing economic liberalisation, seems evident. Thus, in the same way that UGT wishes for a "society with market and not a market society" (UGT, 2000: 7), also "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 was said above. The CGTP international relations secretary informed me precisely of that divergence concerning the form of facing the market's role:

*"There is here a deep divergence between what CGTP defends concerning this matter and... I won't say ETUC because it is abusive to also say ETUC, but what the majority of ETUC's organisations defends (...) the problem is*

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<sup>23</sup> UGT International Secretary (interview, October 23, 2001, Lisbon).

*this isn't just commerce (...) it isn't merely a problem of technicians that discuss trade mechanisms, let's say, of commodities, when the debate passed from mere commercial relations to other type of issues such as investments, for example. Thus, most of ETUC's organisations have a vision 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 some respect and some rules, right? And we have a distinct vision. (...) We privilege the Social Forum in detriment of the Economic Forum (...)"*<sup>24</sup>

Even though 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, reason by which not just the “market society” but also the “society with market” aren't 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 above, the years of familiarity within ETUC and its institutions has “softened” CGTP's position concerning ETUC. After all, it is admissible, on one hand, that particularly next to European institutions, ETUC “has evolved to a positioning of «more trade union» and «less lobby»”. On the other hand, it is also recognized that ETUC has been adopting “more campaigning postures, with more struggle contents”, 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 ETUC, in Portugal and in other countries, as well as various converging actions at European level” (CGTP, 2003e: 49; 2004b: 94). That is, despite keeping the criticism (demonstrated in all ETUC congresses), CGTP tends to be more favourable to the ETUC, but specially in the issues that reveal the ETUC's convergence with a “spirit” of struggle, combativeness and counter-power that are the rule of CGTP intervention.

Beyond the slow integration of CGTP in the European trade unionism protagonised by the ETUC, the posture of the Portuguese organization concerning the two other structures of European trade unionism – the European Industry Federations (EIFs) and the European Works Councils (EWCs) – was not much more effective. On one hand, 10 years after the affiliation with ETUC, the affiliation of the sectoral structures of CGTP with the sectorial structures of ETUC revealed itself slow. Of the 13 federations affiliated with CGTP, only 6 (that is, less than 50%) are affiliated with EIFs of ETUC (CGTP, 2004c). On the other hand, CGTP has adopted an attitude of some

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<sup>24</sup> CGTP International Secretary (interview, September 24, 2003, Lisbon).

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”<sup>25</sup>. In the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Congresses (1999 and 2004), without minimising the importance of the EWCs, 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).

### ***3.2. 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 longstanding 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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 transnational companies (TNCs); criticism of EEC funding for Portugal; 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 whereupon CGTP had found support would end up

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<sup>25</sup> 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).

by determining the rhythm of new policies related to transnational issues. Cerdeira and Rosa (1992: 86) point out the fact that, in 1987, the majority forces within the Federação dos Metalúrgicos (the Metal Workers Federation) and the União dos Sindicatos de Lisboa (the Union of Lisbon Trade Unions) were opposed to CGTP accepting the entrance of Portugal in the EEC, for it would mean national disturbances and the reinforcement of capitalist domination.

During the transition from the 80s to the 90s, 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 90s, 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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 Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) were focussed 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 East 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 Emílio Gabaglio (the former General Secretary of the ETUC and therefore one of supporters of CGTP affiliation to the ETUC) has 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 8<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> Congress ‘Programme for Action’, ‘Portuguese membership of the EEC was negatively marked by the negotiations of the Accession Treaty (...). Being a less developed and a more dependent country than the other EEC member States, Portugal should have negotiated the Accession Treaty in such a way as to guarantee the time needed for agriculture, fishing, industry and services to adapt, modernise and restructure themselves so as to be able to face stronger competition both from the EEC countries and from third countries with privileged relations to the EEC’ (CGTP, 1996b: 102). To emphasise that notion, it is also stated that ‘not everything “that comes from Europe” is either modern or inevitable. The dominant EU guidelines are subordinated to the interests of monopoly groups interested in ensuring an ample basis in the process of capitalist accumulation’ (CGTP, 1996b: 103).

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 9<sup>th</sup> 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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 vulnerable<sup>26</sup> 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

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<sup>26</sup> 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).

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 not<sup>27</sup>), 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<sup>th</sup> 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<sup>th</sup>)”.

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 10<sup>th</sup> 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 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,

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<sup>27</sup> “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

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 EU<sup>28</sup>, 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

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not a Constitution” (CGTP, 2003d: 3).

<sup>28</sup> 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* newspaper, 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 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 introduction 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 phenomena of migrants. 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 East Europe and

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the respondents, that of competition from a cheaper and qualified labour force coming from the new EU member states (*Público* newspaper, April 26, 2004).

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.

#### 4. Conclusion

It seems to be evident that the “European integration” didn’t create a convergent trade union vision between the two main Portuguese trade union confederations. It would be perhaps an exaggeration to say that UGT and CGTP possesses 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, meanwhile UGT has always affirmed itself “pro-EU” and has evidenced, following ETUC, a positioning of continuous strategic *opening* concerning EU, CGTP has always placed itself in opposite side, rejecting the “federalist line” of 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 to the existence of the EU, which, although it may not seem so, is a substantial advancement”<sup>29</sup>. This recognition of UGT of changing signs concerning the

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<sup>29</sup>UGT International Secretary (interview, October 23, 2001, Lisbon).

EU on the part of CGTP may signify an approach between both in what respects to transnational matters, allowing, who knows, the compensation of some divergences between both in matters of national campaigning.

In what concerns the integration within the European trade union structures, the duality is also a reality. While UGT has integrated itself in an easy and quick way in ETUC, CGTP has integrated in ETUC in a slow and complex way. As for the rest, the critical opinions that it sustains today concerning ETUC may be seen in parallel with the critics concerning the EU's institutional development. The adoption of more favourable positions concerning Europe on the part of CGTP will be perhaps easier especially if such positions could become the reflection of CGTP's capacity to influence ETUC's decisions. I think that one might also say that there exists a progressive approximation of CGTP to some of the ETUC positions, specially if the latter shows itself predisposed to support the claiming *street* actions (strikes) in detriment to 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 *Público* newspaper, RTP (Portuguese Radio Television), RDP (Portuguese Radio Diffusion) and for the Commissariat of the Commemorations of the 30 years of the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, revealed that only 9% of the Portuguese consider that Portugal's accession to the EEC was the most important fact of Portugal's history<sup>30</sup>. This withered opinion concerning Europe seems to confirm a priority of the Portuguese for the national matters in detriment of the transnational. The trade unions alert towards the necessity of more debates about EU, namely concerning the EU Treaties revision process (which, according to CGTP and UGT, wasn't minimally debated in the Portuguese society), imposes itself as a manner of remembering the Portuguese, workers or non-workers, trade union members or not, that their destiny is also a destiny as European people.

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<sup>30</sup> Portugal's accession to the EEC is situated more or less at the same level as the restoration of the independence in 1640 (with 10% of the answers), the implantation of the republic (with 8% of the answers), and the arrival of Vasco da Gama in India (with 7 % of the answers). The 25<sup>th</sup> of April of 1974 is, by far, the event that is considered as the most important of Portugal's history, with 52% of opinions in that sense (*Público* newspaper, April 25, 2004).

## 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

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