

# Notes On the Portuguese Revolution

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IN HIS SPLENDID HISTORY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION, Leon Trotsky comments that at times revolutionaries are not aware of the revolution. That is what happened with the Bolsheviks in February 1917. According to the organizer of the October insurrection, "the February revolution started from below overcoming even the resistance of the revolutionary organizations."

We are reminded of this by the Portuguese situation. Here, too, only a few revolutionaries seemed to be aware that the military coup of April 25, 1974 against the Caetano dictatorship was but the initial phase of a revolutionary process that would destroy the last European colonial empire in Africa and raise the banner of socialism in Western Europe for the first time since the Spanish revolution of 1936.

The initial instinctive distrust of an army which had been indispensable to the long dictatorship and its colonial wars, the secondary role of the workingclass and its organizations in the early stages, the uproar in the media about the "revolution of the pinks," and the weight of the Armed Forces Movement (MFA) in the new situation, created a skepticism and uncertainty in revolutionary circles. For some, hardly anything had changed; for others, the revolution was reduced to a democratic or "political" revolution tightly controlled by the military caste and the bourgeoisie. Wild enthusiasm of certain reformists and bourgeois democrats in the wake of the successful coup apparently served to narrow the vision and understanding of many Portuguese revolutionaries. They did not fully comprehend that the April 25th coup was a transcendent event, one that made the impossible possible. A dead end colonial war and the reactionary policies of the dictatorship had submerged the country into such a morass that the downfall of the Caetano regime could not possibly result in a peaceful transfer of power from one section of the bourgeoisie to another. Army unrest, perceptible since at least 1960, revealed by the escalation of protests and desertions, strikes in the large industrial centers during the first quarter of 1974 and the obvious inability of the bourgeoisie to resolve the colonial dilemma eliminated the possibility of peaceful, evolutionary change.

WHAT IS THE CHARACTER OF THE REVOLUTION? Are we witnessing meaningless chaos; or a merely bourgeois democratic revolution; or a permanent revolutionary process in which the democratic tasks must be combined with socialist ones, requiring the workingclass to take power and establish an authentically revolutionary government? That is the key question.

Initially, the general feeling, even for those who saw April 25th as the beginning of a revolutionary process, was that the fall of the Portuguese dictatorship would be something like the overthrow of the Spanish monarchy on April 14, 1931: a relatively slow revolutionary process with serious class confrontations that would affect the relationship of forces in Portugal and Europe. But this is not the world of 1931. The crisis of Portuguese society today is much more profound than the Spanish one in 1931. The officers who took power on April 25 understood that. Since they knew that despite their advanced slogans their credibility in Portugal and Africa was quite limited, they reestablished civil liberties, encouraged the masses to take to the streets, communicated with the leaders of the labor movement and revolutionary parties and groups and reached out to the national freedom movements of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea. Rarely in modern political history has there been such radicalism in the initial phase of a revolution. We know that the Armed Forces Movement turned to General Spínola who had achieved a certain popularity by calling for a reexamination of colonial policy in his book *Portugal y el futuro*. The choice of Spínola was designed to inhibit and placate the reactionary factions of the army and the bourgeoisie. But the Spínola period was a brief one. The attempts at bourgeois stabilization and transformation of the colonial empire into a kind of "Commonwealth of Nations" were a resounding failure. The effort to mobilize the "silent majority" in September 1974 was fruitless thanks to a popular counter-mobilization which forced Spínola to resign. The momentum of the revolution accelerated, especially after an obscure attempt at a rightist coup on March 11. Two days later, with Spínola and his officers already in refuge in Franco Spain, the Council of the Revolution, under workers' pressure, was nationalizing Portuguese banks.

In the period immediately following the elimination of General Spínola, Portugal experienced the reorganization of the workers' and peasants' movement (parties and unions), the creation and growth of grass roots organs in the factories and neighborhoods (Workers and Tenants Commissions), and the birth of a revolutionary military left in the barracks and the fleet. It is classic that in the early phase of a revolutionary process the traditional organizations reappear and new groups emerge which correspond to objective needs or reflect existing forces in the international workers' movement. The Portuguese experience is no exception. What is new in Portugal are the organizations which are independent of Social Democracy and of Stalinism such as the Left Socialist Movement, the Popular Socialist Front, the LUAR, the Revolutionary Party of the Proletariat, the LCI, and the Maoist groups, all created during the clandestine struggle and made up of a new generation of workers and students. (Their multiplicity and atom-

ization underline the difficulties involved in building the needed, coherent revolutionary party.) The proliferation of Workers and Tenants Commissions is even more important, demonstrating that working people in Portugal as elsewhere do not trust the traditional workers' organizations to give real content to workers' democracy. The emergence of a popular revolutionary military left in the army, navy and air force and rank and file based committees in the military units further confirmed the radicalism of the revolutionary process and gives the lie to the insidious comparisons made in the European press between developments in the Portuguese armed forces and the elitist phenomena of Nasserism and the Peruvian military "revolution." ;

All this is the political and practical expression of an intense revolutionary process in which the masses have moved on different fronts: the dismantling of the corporate state built by Oliveira Salazar (frontal attack on the PIDE, the Portuguese Legion and the organs of the single party, moves against the municipalities and removal of mayors and governors); destruction of the corporate trade union organizations and the hierarchy in the factories (moves against union locals, proclamation of free unions and establishments of workers' commissions, occupation of housing projects in the countryside, expulsion of bosses and fascist technicians from the factories) and the improvement of living conditions (wave of general demands based on substantial increase in the minimum wage, decrease of working hours and other measures); and the establishment of the first forms of workers' control of production in the most important factories.

Thus, from the beginning, the movement as a whole went far beyond elementary democratic and economic demands; it attacked not only the corporate political and social structure but also the capitalist system of property relations and power. The "immoderate" character of many of the demands which, according to some leaders of the MFA and the Socialist and Communist parties, could "completely disorient the Portuguese economy," and the fact that workers were resorting to militant strikes to win their demands made it clear that the mass offensive was openly anti-capitalist. Thus socialism came to be spoken of everywhere, if not as an immediate demand, at least as a not-too-distant perspective. The notions of "transition to socialism," of a "Socialist Republic" were advanced and the world was astonished at the spectacle of generals and admirals tranquilly talking on European television about Portugal moving toward socialist revolution. Even the rank and file at Armed Forces Movement meetings discussed documents that raised the issue of the revolutionary transformation of the country.

IT IS DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE what part demagogy or mysticism plays in some of these statements. Nonetheless, they are significant. If social-

ism is so much invoked, even though the ends are not always clear, it stems from the realization that the solution of Portugal's problems, after nearly a half century of dictatorship and fifteen years of colonial war, cannot be found in a limited bourgeois democratic revolution which would try to resolve the problems the bourgeoisie was incapable of confronting. It would, with the aid of international high finance, attempt to promote the kind of capitalist development that other European countries have gone through in the last thirty years.

PORTUGAL IS THE MOST BACKWARD OR "UNDERDEVELOPED" COUNTRY in Europe, an enclave in Western Europe even more marginal than Spain. Having maintained its colonial empire much longer than could logically have been predicted, it has lived closer to the realities of Africa and the so-called "Third World" than to Europe's. The Portuguese bourgeoisie, paralyzed by the memory of a great dead past, by the stagnation of Salazarism and the colonial illusion, was incapable of participating in the process of capitalist development of the 1950s and '60s. At the beginning of the '60s, international finance capital showed Portugal an economic direction similar to the one imposed on Spain. But the colonial war was an even greater obstacle to change than the Franco dictatorship.

The technocrats who tried to change Portugal's direction in the '60s met with enormous resistance and were finally displaced. Those bourgeois groups protected by the corporate state and determined to maintain colonial domination at any price pressed the continuation of the war, rejecting any political resolution. During its time the Salazar regime contented itself with promoting limited industrialization based on foreign investment in those sectors where the value of labor power was very low (textiles, chemicals, electronics) and in high organic composition industries (steel, shipyards, petrochemicals) thus intensifying the country's subordination to international capitalism.

Even more catastrophic was the dictatorship's agrarian policy. The system of large landed estates in the south and tiny farms in the north was maintained almost intact. The emigration of over a million people, most of them peasants, was hardly of consequence in terms of "modernization" of the countryside. If anything, it served to aggravate the stagnation, offering cheap labor to the European bourgeoisie and increasing the foreign currency reserves and subsistence resources of the farm communities of the north. It explains the deterioration of Portuguese agriculture and the constant increase in agricultural imports.

The weaknesses of the Portuguese political, economic and social system and the regime's final crisis over colonial domination had to culminate in a revolutionary explosion. Given the total economic, political, social, intellectual and moral crisis of Portuguese capitalist so-

ciety and the resounding failure of 50 years of corporate dictatorship, it was inevitable that the upheaval should shake the foundations of all institutions, all structures and all the values of the country and its ruling classes.

In an era in which bourgeois democratic revolutions are a thing of the past, the revolutionary process aimed, even if confusedly, at resolving the colonial question in a radical manner by the withdrawal of Portuguese troops and by recognizing the independence of Guinea, Angola and Mozambique and by the resolution of pending democratic tasks (agrarian revolution, the reorganization of the army, relations with the church, emancipation of women, liberation of youth, dismantling corporate structures and the democratization of society). It had to move against the foundations of the capitalist regime via the nationalization of banking and heavy industry, economic planning, workers control of production and the workplace. In sum, the revolution had to move toward the socialist transformation of society under the direction of the workingclass.

Thus everyone talks about socialism in Portugal. Cunhal has said on various occasions that a bourgeois democratic regime is impossible in Portugal. Soares, the favorite of German social democracy has acknowledged on more than one occasion that social democracy cannot be the "formula for Portugal." Nor is it accidental that various military leaders have proclaimed more or less the same thing and that even the present head of government, Admiral Azevedo, rejected "social democracy as the final objective" in his first ministerial statement. Because today in Europe social democracy is translated as the maintenance of the capitalist regime.

But in times of revolution the distance between words and deeds tends to be much greater than in more stable times. Portugal is no exception. The socialist idea seems to triumph everywhere . . . and all too frequently it is given the lie by facts. Instances abound. The most important and most discouraging is that the Communist Party on the one hand and the Socialist Party on the other, far from helping the struggle for socialism, have endangered the revolutionary process in Portugal. We say this quite apart from the ravings of some groups which claim to be Maoist and play a completely negative role.

Cunhal and the leadership of the Communist Party have acted, except for slight differences in time and place, in accordance with the purest Stalinist orthodoxy, just as the Spanish Communist Party did during the 1936 revolution or the Communist parties of the "people's democracies" of Eastern Europe did in 1945-1950. Their strategy views the revolution as bourgeois democratic and, given the weakness of the bourgeoisie, the CP, with the support of the MFA, could march rapidly toward the installation of a "people's democratic" regime, the Sta-

linist euphemism for bureaucratic "socialism." The CP's tactics have consisted in following every turn of the MFA with total opportunism, infiltrating the state apparatus, the local or provincial organs of power, the media and gaining control of the labor movement by the imposition of their "Intersindical." These tactics which were at first also accompanied by attempts to penetrate the Socialist Party and by the technique of denunciation and repression of revolutionary organizations, show extraordinary similarities to those employed by the CP of Spain in the 1937-1939 period. (The "liberal" Spanish CP leader, Carrillo, knows something of this.)

Cunhal's strategy and tactics have failed for various reasons. The infiltrations, the attempts to absorb some and exclude others, provoked revulsion toward the methods of Stalinism. The leadership of the Socialist Party, supported by social democracy and several European capitalist governments, resisted Cunhal's pressures without the kind of vacillation that might run the risk of favoring the revival of reactionary forces. The existence of a strong anti-Stalinist revolutionary current in the labor movement, among the youth and in the Armed Forces blocked CP "mobilizations" at crucial moments like those in Lisbon and Oporto last July. But in the final analysis, Cunhal has had to pay the price for "peaceful coexistence." It is clear that the Kremlin bureaucracy did not want to risk an "adventure" in Portugal and the obedient Portuguese CP opted to yield as publicly requested by Kissinger, Ford and Schmidt on several occasions.

The CP's last turn was made in great confusion by entering the Azevedo government after the fall of General Goncalves and its short-lived participation in the United Revolutionary Front. Now the Cunhal leadership has inaugurated a "double" policy: on the one hand it participates in a government which is trying to put the brakes on the revolutionary process, on the other, it pays lip service to the workers' demands.

IF THE FAILURE OF CUNHAL'S STALINIST POLICY is obvious, the apparent triumph of Soares' social democratic policy is destructive to the interests of the labor movement and of socialism. Since modern social democracy scorns theory, Soares and his colleagues have not taken the trouble to theorize about the Portuguese revolutionary process. For them, formed ideologically in the shadow of German social democracy (the SP was born in Bonn in 1971, as *Le Monde* with a hint of scandal has recently reminded us), the objective was and remains to contain the revolution, to shape Portugal into a parliamentary bourgeois democracy in the image of Italy or Germany, and to tie its fate to the little Europe of capitalist monopolies. Despite all their proclamations in favor of socialism, their rejection of a social democratic orientation as illusory, and notwithstanding their occasional defense of the Workers' Commissions and despite

their electoral alliance with Maoists in the unions, events have proven the bourgeois democratic character of Soares' and his Party's politics.

For Soares, Portugal is threatened with chaos wherein a kind of irresponsible "anarchopopulism" might prevail, advantageous only to Stalinism or a would-be military dictatorship, the first step toward the transformation of Portugal into "another Albania." Soares, backed by European social democracy and bourgeoisie, has exploited the real dangers of Stalinism and taken advantage of the wide disgust with Stalinist methods and has exploited all the contradictions and weaknesses of the revolutionary process, all in order to impede the progress of the Portuguese revolution. It is a policy which the deposed Spínola had consciously sought: the mobilization of the fascist bishops and the frustrated small farmers of the north against the revolution and the reappearance of the reactionary forces which had been hidden and silent since April 25, 1974.

THE GOVERNMENT OF ADMIRAL AZEVEDO NOW SEES ITSELF as the corollary to the counteroffensive started by Soares on July 10, the day the socialist ministers withdrew from General Goncalves' cabinet. The Costa Gomes-Carvalho-Goncalves triumvirate seems to have evaporated with the disarray of the MFA and the crisis of the Council of the Revolution. The decentralization of power has been replaced by a concentration and reinforcement of the government apparatus. The new government rhetorically proclaims socialism but sets as its goal the "re-establishment of discipline" in the barracks, the fleet, the factories and the countryside. The enterprise is difficult and risky; as difficult and as risky as the attempt to integrate Portugal into capitalist Europe by liquidating the revolutionary process. But Portugal is not Italy or Germany. It has specific problems which cannot be resolved by the "western capitalist route." Which is why, if the attempt is made to take that road it runs the terrible risk of reviving the reactionary bourgeois forces that sustained the Salazar and Caetano regime and with it the opportunity to impose a new rightist dictatorship by means of violence. Portugal cannot and must not become "the Chile of Europe."

The present retreat is undeniable and has been greeted with sighs of relief by the imperialists and all the bourgeois forces which have done so much to bring it about. But the labor and revolutionary forces have not been defeated. The workers who occupy the factories or control their management, the agricultural workers of the south who have seized the big estates, the workers who control the banks and the newspapers are not going to let themselves be dispossessed without resistance. The "re-establishment of discipline" in the barracks and the fleet will continue to be fought by the Committees or Councils of soldiers and sailors which have recently proliferated and have been setting up coordinating centers locally and nationally. The revolutionary military left is linked more

closely than ever with the Commissions of Workers and Tenants, composed of effective and broadly popular forces.

All these forces, including the revolutionary political organizations, are too diverse and dispersed to fill the role demanded by the present phase of the revolutionary process. The Front of Revolutionary Unity created in the wake of the great demonstration in Lisbon of August 20 is too heterogeneous and lacks a clear political perspective regarding the grass roots Commissions, the military left, the Communist and Socialist parties. About these parties: the critique of social democracy and of Stalinism, indispensable and correct though it be, must not decline into such abusive and false oversimplifications as "social imperialism" and "social Fascism," which could lead to a rupture with the Socialist and Communist workers.

The defense of the Revolution demands the regrouping of the revolutionary forces, above all of the Marxists, a positive orientation towards all workers' organizations, support of a single workers' front, an alliance with the revolutionary military left, and a transitional program (not a catalogue of maximalist demands) appropriate to the situation and to the aspirations of all the oppressed and exploited sections of the population. The victory of the Revolution is impossible if the working class and its vanguard organs are incapable of winning the confidence of the masses in the countryside (including the north and center, manipulated by the Church and the reactionary caciques) and the petty bourgeoisie of the cities, and of demonstrating daily that the only perspective is the victory of socialism.

September, 1975

### **Postscript**

The ebb in the tide of the Portuguese Revolution dating from the June 10, 1975 withdrawal of the Socialist ministers from the Goncalves government led to the rightist consolidation of power—the real coup of November 25, 1975, the revolutionary movement's first important defeat since the Caetano dictatorship fell in April 1974.

There has been a good deal of discussion about the significance of the November 25 events. The bourgeois press sees them as a kind of "putsch" by Goncalvist officers in league with the Communist Party, but all serious observers reject that interpretation. Tanco's sergeants and soldiers were not trying to effect a "coup d'etat" but the resignation of their commands and to curb the process of "normalization" of the Armed Forces begun by the Azevedo government and organized by the clandestine "high command" of the then Lieutenant Colonel Ramalho Eanes who had been for some time working in the shadow of the Presidency and the army high command. It was this "high command" which attacked the paratroops, striking out at the military revolutionary left.



Had the military left and the revolutionary organizations intended a coup d'etat, events would have evolved quite differently and serious armed clashes would probably have occurred, but that is not the way it was. The revolt of the paratroops surprised everyone, especially the revolutionary organizations. It is true that, at first, the CP leadership and certain revolutionary groups, each in its own way, tried to take advantage of the paratroops' uprising to "win positions," as we have been told by an eyewitness to the events. However, Cunhal immediately retreated (which is why certain officers and soldiers have accused him of treason) and the revolutionary organizations, disconcerted, wavered between various contradictory positions. In any case, there was no real attempt to mobilize the workers or to mount an offensive against the government in order to take power.

It is clear that the rightist and centrist forces took advantage of the situation to dismantle the revolutionary military left, "re-establish discipline" in the barracks, and brutally change the relationship of forces, thus dealing a heavy blow to the revolutionary process. So the November 25 attack was essentially a rightist coup. Everything which has happened in Portugal since then confirms this view.

The change in the relationship of forces is clearly expressed in the centrist and rightist offensive against the conquests of the revolution (agrarian reform, nationalizations, workers control of production, democratization of the army, workers and tenants commission, etc.) and against those forces which were predominant earlier, including Melo Antunes's group and certain tendencies in the Socialist Party.

The new policies of the Azevedo government, particularly the repression directed against the military left and the revolutionary organizations, the recent "redistribution" of the press, the "austerity" measures which lower the workers' living standard, the reappearance of Spínola elements on the political scene, and the bloody incidents in Oporto have aroused a certain pessimism in workers' and revolutionary circles. There is already talk of a "resurgence of fascism" and of an imminent "Pinochet coup." Such views are an exaggeration.

The November 25 coup places the revolutionary process in danger. Everything will be more difficult now. But the blow to the revolutionary left, a fact of the greatest seriousness, was not accompanied by a similar blow to the labor movement. The working class and the revolutionary peasants maintain their forces intact. The reactionary elements have not succeeded in imposing the government they wanted, nor did they crush the revolutionary impulse. A counteroffensive is possible if the workers' and revolutionary organizations understand these experiences, unite their forces, strike back at the opportunist machiavellianism of Stalinism, and develop a program to meet the needs of the people, to defend the achievements of the revolution and raise the perspec-

tive of socialism. All this is especially urgent now that the clouds are beginning to clear over Spain, auguring a convergence of the greatest importance in the struggle for liberty and socialism throughout the Iberian peninsula.

*Translated from the Spanish by Richard Schoen*

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# Neo-Stalinism: The Achilles Heel of the Peace Movement and the American Left

Julius Jacobson

THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT OF THE LATE SIXTIES AND EARLY SEVENTIES REFLECTED more mood than cadre organization, an expression of mass revulsion to a seemingly irrational imperialist adventure of untold horrors and atrocities, brutalizing Americans and Vietnamese alike. As the war escalated, so did the disillusionment of the American people; it is probably fair to say that toward the end of the war, a majority of Americans were opposed to the continued military presence of the U.S. in Indochina.

Out of this huge reservoir of disaffection and opposition, hundreds of thousands responded to the calls for action by small traditional pacifist groups, newly coalesced anti-war committees and radical organizations. Not only large numbers of student youth, whose instinct for self-preservation reinforced their moral opprobrium and fervor, not only ex-radicals whose lost youthful social passions were rekindled, but a response from vast numbers of housewives, academics, lawyers, doctors, assorted professionals, men of the cloth and women in nuns' garb who took to the streets, many of them prepared for confrontation with the authorities and civil disobedience.

Despite its militancy and sacrifices, the energies of this huge protest movement were largely dissipated almost immediately with the end of the war. For a number of reasons: First of all, the movement remained, unfortunately, a single issue movement. As such, its reason for being simply disappeared with the war's end. Second, it was always a middle class movement. As such, the movement lacked the social cohesiveness and economic motivation that could facilitate its transformation into a broader, deeper and more permanent movement of social protest. More succinctly: the anti-war movement failed to attract the working class. Had it done so would have been no guarantee that the movement could survive in other forms; but without a working class base any effort to channelize the energies of the movement into new *mass* forms of social protest would be abortive. For the U.S. working class (as in other industrial countries—there is no “exceptionalism” here) remains an exploited class, a propertyless class, a near majority class, a socially organized class, and a permanent class.

To emphasize the middle class nature of the peace movement can in no way be interpreted as an attempt to belittle it. For this writer, at least, the movement was magnificent and inspiring. It took as much courage—perhaps more—for a student and professional to endanger his or