THE THORNS OF THE PORTUGUESE REVOLUTION

By Kenneth Maxwell

DURING the early hours of that remote Portuguese spring of 1974, a graffito appeared at the Technical Institute of Lisbon. It read: "Revolution of roses: petals for the bourgeoisie, thorns for the people." Twenty months later, with Portugal on the brink of civil war and Angola plunged into fratricidal warfare, it is surprising anyone should have been so sanguine. There would be thorns enough for everybody. Real political, economic and strategic assets were threatened when Premier Marcello Caetano was packed off to a comfortable exile in Brazil. If this was not perceived at the time, it was because these assets had been taken entirely for granted for so long, and the end was so sudden and effortless.

But change is peaceful only as long as it is not opposed, and once the issues at stake in Portugal and Africa became clearer, opposition was inevitable. Although the uprising on April 25, 1974, was not yet a true revolution, it was no ordinary coup d'état either. It brought down Europe's oldest dictatorship, ended Europe's oldest empire, and thrust to the forefront a very curious hybrid, a group of young European military officers, profoundly influenced by the theory and practice of national liberation struggles outside Europe, who saw themselves as a revolutionary vanguard. That much should have been clear at the time. It was not. Portugal's Western allies were unprepared for what happened, and during 12 critical months the panicked, makeshift and defensive measures the Western powers devised as policy have established precedents with very profound and dangerous implications for the future.

Four interrelated sets of factors made Portugal a critical fulcrum. Each is essential to an understanding of the sometimes baffling reactions to events in Lisbon over the past year.

II

The Portuguese had led European overseas expansion. Discovering the wind systems of the Atlantic, perfecting techniques of navigation and adapting their ships for long-range voyages, the Portuguese opened the trade routes to Africa and the Indian Ocean. By so doing, they initiated the explosive interaction of cultures, peoples and economies that have made the modern world.

Portuguese claims to Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Angola thus

reached back to the fifteenth century, but the geographical delineation of these territories and modern economic exploitation of their natural resources were more recent. Portugal's African empire, more than the Portuguese ever cared to admit, was an empire by default, consisting of regions that more powerful competitors during the halcyon days of imperialism could not agree to divide among themselves. Angola and Mozambique no less than the Belgian Congo or the Rhodesias were creations of the nineteenth-century scramble for Africa.

From the beginning, moreover, Portuguese overseas expansion had been a cosmopolitan affair. Portugal provided the men, rarely the capital. Lisbon's possessions in southern Africa with their vital rail and port facilities, and Angola in particular, which, outside South Africa, is potentially the richest territory in the continent, were intimately linked into the vast interlocking mining, financial, commercial, and industrial complex of southern Africa. There, British, Belgian, German, French and South African interests have jostled, combined and competed since the 1890s. This international penetration would not disappear once the Portuguese had gone. In fact it was likely to intensify, particularly if the Western and South African interests felt themselves threatened.

Portugal was the last European power in Africa to cling tenaciously to the panoply of formal dominion. And this was no accident. For a long time Portugal very successfully disguised the nature of her presence behind a skillful amalgam of historical mythmaking, claims of multiracialism, and good public relations. The reality was something different. As the late Amílcar Cabral, founder of the liberation movement in Guinea-Bissau, said, "Portugal could not afford neocolonialism." Economic weakness at home made intransigence in Africa inevitable. It was precisely through the exercise of sovereignty that Portugal was able to obtain any advantages at all from its "civilizing mission." And these advantages were very considerable: cheap raw materials, large earnings from invisibles, the transfer of export earnings, gold and diamonds, protected markets for her wines and cotton textiles.

The problem was that this limited the options of decolonization. Portugal faced real losses if control of her African territories was ended, and these would be difficult to sustain without major social and economic change at home—change which for political reasons the Salazar and Caetano dictatorships were not prepared to contemplate. The consequence of this situation, however, denied Lisbon the chance for a clean exit. There was precious little room, for example, to manufacture the sort of commonwealth-style departure which had

enabled some other European powers to cushion the end of empire by leading their people to think that nothing was altered while at the same time beguiling the former colonies into believing that everything was new. Such a plan was actually laid out in General António de Spínola's *Portugal and the Future*. But this "Lusitanian Federation" was 20 years too late.

Intransigence in the defense of empire, even if it had a certain logic from the Portuguese point of view, was sustained only at very great cost. During the decade and a half that the world's attention was focused on Southeast Asia, a bitter struggle had been going on in Portuguese Africa. By 1974 a million and a half Portuguese had seen service overseas. One in every four adult males was in the armed forces. In Africa, a 200,000-strong Portuguese army facing defeat in Guinea-Bissau found itself severely pressed in Mozambique and stalemated in Angola. It was the junior officers of the bloated and demoralized military establishment that finally pushed the Caetano regime over. A coup d'état was the only way they could see to end the colonial wars they had spent most of their professional lives fighting. If they opened a Pandora's box in the process it was partly because with time the difficulties which would follow the collapse of Portuguese rule in Africa had accumulated.

The white settler population had grown rapidly in the 1960s, especially in Angola. By 1974 it numbered some 350,000, only 20 percent of whom had been born there. For the most part the new settlers were peasants with minimal education and few skills. Despite some expensive government attempts to establish white agricultural settlements, almost all the poor whites ended up in cities where they dominated commerce and semi-skilled jobs to the exclusion of Africans.

Elsewhere in the continent, the 1960s had produced much disillusionment with the venal regimes and military cliques that dominated many of the newly independent states. With time and experience, therefore, the ideological content of the anticolonial struggle was refined, and it moved beyond nationalism to a more explicit Marxian critique of dependency and its mechanisms. In the Portuguese colonies in particular these issues were paramount in the thinking of the liberation movements. In part this was because of the peculiarities of Portuguese colonialism, and in part because of the accelerating penetration of large-scale foreign capital into the region after 1965.

This intensification of ideological consciousness was perhaps inevitable. The issues in Portuguese Africa were after all real and not theoretical, fortified daily in an armed struggle which the rest of Africa with the exception of Algeria had not experienced. It was

inevitable also that the liberation movements—PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau, FRELIMO in Mozambique, and the MPLA, FLNA and UNITA in Angola—developed their own heterogeneous international contacts, arms suppliers and diplomatic supporters: Algeria, Cuba, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, China and Scandinavia, Western church groups, even, during the early 1960s, the United States. Since those movements most strongly influenced by Marxian analysis—PAIGC, FRELIMO and MPLA—saw the struggle with Portugal as only part of their problem, and because they focused on what they believed to be the realities of economic power rather than its vectors, a latent hostility to the West, especially Western Europe, was built into their philosophy. It was a distrust only encouraged by the surreptitious aid the Western powers gave to Portugal in Africa, aid that increased as the end neared.

The process of decolonization—which was what the revolution in Lisbon was initially all about—was thus bound to be an extremely complex, dangerous affair, with racial, economic and ideological overtones that reached far beyond the boundaries of Portugal and her African territories. Very little that passed in Lisbon between April 1974 and November 1975 can be understood without considering its African dimension.

III

Portugal was nevertheless a West European nation. The appearance of isolation from the European mainstream was more a political than an economic or social phenomenon. In fact, the intensification of the wars in Africa had been paralleled by a growing integration of Portugal into Europe. The form which this integration took, however, had a very direct relationship to the problems that followed the April 1974 coup. Although Africa helped to politicize enough young officers to form the nucleus for a radical military movement, the fact that the Caetano regime fell so easily was the result of severe social and economic tensions within Portugal herself. Revolutions never occur in isolation. Several recent developments had linked Portugal's fortunes very closely to the industrialized core of Western Europe and in consequence had made Portugal peculiarly vulnerable to Europe's economic woes.

Portugal had always been a country of emigration, but beginning in the late 1950s and accelerating through the 1960s to a peak in 1970, there had been a dramatic shift away from traditional recipients like Brazil toward the European Common Market. Between 1960 and 1971, 900,000 Portuguese emigrated. By 1975 some million and a half

Portuguese nationals were resident abroad, at least 700,000 in France, 115,000 in West Germany. These are staggering figures for a country like Portugal with a total population not much in excess of 8.2 million. Moreover, two out of every three people who left the countryside did so to go abroad. Their departure helped create something of a statistical illusion, often interpreted at the time as "development," since there was a dramatic decline in the proportion of the work force engaged in agriculture; it fell from nearly 50 percent to under 30 in the last decade.

Such figures did not so much reflect the growth of industrial and service sectors (though growth did take place) as the collapse of Portuguese agriculture. And the inadequacy of domestic agricultural production brought a steep rise in food imports. Furthermore, the hemorrhage of people perpetuated the archaic social and familial arrangements of the small peasant proprietors of the north, where otherwise intolerable population pressure and the multiple subdivision of property would have resulted. The remittances of the overseas Portuguese also had a very significant economic impact, and represented by the early 1970s a sum equal to 70 percent of the country's merchandise exports. Little of the money was used for productive investment. Rather it helped to bloat the money supply and fuel inflation, or was invested in property or land which also helped to raise prices.

More recently there was a marked growth in the number of skilled workers leaving. In 1973, for example, they made up as much as 34 percent of the 120,000 people who emigrated that year. Not surprisingly, alone among the 24 OECD countries, Portugal experienced a population decline over the past decade. With the demands of the colonial wars requiring the government to hold conscripts for longer and longer terms of military service, severe labor shortages resulted in the modern sectors of the economy. With some irony, Portugal was reduced to importing workers from the Cape Verde Islands, giving Lisbon a sizable black minority, something which, despite its grandiose claims to be the capital of a multicontinental and multiracial nation, it had singularly lacked since the sixteenth century.

Tourism expanded rapidly during the 1960s. In the year before the coup over four million foreigners entered Portugal, almost half as many people as Portugal's total population. Spaniards were most numerous (some two million) but Great Britain and the United States accounted for 45 percent of the tourist trade. Tourism had also set off a speculative boom in construction and real estate operations, but it had some dubious social consequences. In the Algarve (exceptional in

the south for being a region of small peasant landowners) many Portuguese found themselves virtually expropriated in a very short period. Holiday villas, sometimes whole complexes, were built on public lands corruptly transferred to private ownership by venal municipal authorities. Resentment was no less because it was concealed for fear of the ever present secret police. To be sure the building boom provided many construction jobs: 244,000 workers in 1973, or 11.7 percent of the nonagricultural labor force. But tourists are fickle creatures not encouraged by militants marching through city streets. As the revolution was radicalized, the tourist boom deflated. And with it construction ended.

The other major source of construction finance had been the emigrants. Over the past decade neat little houses had sprouted throughout the country on the outskirts of villages and towns, where they stood empty for years on end, ready for the return of the prodigals. These comparatively luxurious and empty accommodations were tempting targets when the structures of authority collapsed, since there was almost no public housing and most Portuguese lived without the most basic facilities. A vicious circle resulted. The new Portugal needed the money of her overseas workers and their goodwill. But the occupation of "vacant" properties soon alienated them from the regime, since many emigrants lost both their savings and hopes for the future. Very soon they became a major source of financing for the clandestine right-wing opposition.

The 1960s had also seen substantial foreign investment in Portugal. The Export-Import Bank helped finance the new suspension bridge built by U.S. Steel over the Tagus River. The bridge opened up the possibility of industrial development in the sandy pine-forested peninsula between the Tagus and Setúbal, as well as easing access to the heavily industrialized working-class towns that sprawl along the south bank of the Tagus opposite Lisbon. Furthermore, the bridge provided a link to the site of the petrochemical port and refining complex planned for Sines, and to the tourist zones of the Algarve. Official West German investment went to a new airport at Faro and into a very expensive irrigation scheme in the Alentejo. The Faro airport, in turn, encouraged the growth of a very large expatriate community along Portugal's southern coastline. The World Bank invested in electrical power supply facilities. And private foreign investment, a mere two percent of total private sector investment in 1960, climbed to 20 percent five years later. On the eve of the April 1974 coup three quarters of private investment came from the United States, Great Britain, West Germany and Belgium.

The industrial development of the 1960s was of a new type, however, not always looked upon with favor by the older Anglo-Portuguese interests which had long been the dominant foreign presence in Portugal. But even they were not immune to the change. Many of the most famous port wine companies found themselves subsidiaries of much less distinguished parents. The result was a small social revolution, for the multinationals exhibited little of the sense of social obligation that had been central to the ethos of locally established and paternalistic predecessors. The type of industrial expansion favored by foreign investment during the 1960s, moreover, was extremely vulnerable both to political change in Portugal and to changes in the world economic situation.

The growth and profitability of industries that had attracted the most foreign capital during the past ten years were closely tied to the character of the political system. This was because the absence of free trade unions and collective bargaining guaranteed exceptionally high profits by assuring exceptionally low wages. This was, of course, precisely why these industries were established in the first place, and the Caetano government made no bones about these "attractions" in its search for foreign businessmen. Wages in Portugal were seven times less than those in Sweden, five times less than those in Britain; even these figures are deceptive, for the majority of employees in the factories were women whose wages were often less than half those of men, and averaged about two dollars a day. The European Free Trade Association agreement to which Portugal was a founder signatory in 1959 made Portugal especially attractive to enterprises that imported most of their raw materials and reexported their product.

Two major types of enterprises were attracted by these conditions: electrical appliances, and components of one sort or another, assembled in Portugal by such companies as Timex, ITT, and Plessey. Or the garment industry, where 15 of the 25 major companies were under Swedish ownership. The electronic and component assembly plants employed about 16,000 at the time of the coup, the garment factories some 70,000—this in an industrial work force of about one million.

It was no accident that it was in these types of industries that the most bitter disputes erupted after the coup last year. Long and acrimonious strikes occurred in the Timex and ITT plants in particular. Nor was it very surprising, given the working conditions, that grass roots workers' movements first erupted in the garment industry, where the first workers' takeovers occurred in Swedish-owned plants late in 1974. This development had dangerous implications for the general employment situation, because once free collective bargaining became

a possibility much of the attraction of Portugal vanished. Profit margins were bound to deteriorate under a more democratic system that allowed workers' organizations. Since most of the factories concerned were dependent on imported materials and were part of a chain of assembly plants spread throughout several different countries, the temptation to strip assets was very great. Those who moved quickly got out. In the garment industry, which was more often under individual ownership, many entrepreneurs simply packed their bags and went home. It was not very surprising that this happened. Entrepreneurs were in Portugal to make money, not to finance a social revolution. But what was left behind was a fledgling workers' movement, since those employed had nowhere else to go and sought as well as they could to carry on. And once problems of credit arose, this in turn led to pressure for the nationalization of the banks.

But as if these problems were not enough, the great show projects of the Caetano regime, which had seemed so logical when initiated during the euphoric 1960s, were singularly inappropriate for the 1970s. Portugal had based her most modern sector almost exclusively on oil. The great Lisnave dry dock facilities built by the Portuguese monopoly CUF in association with two Swedish and two Dutch shipyards were predicated on an expanding and prosperous tanker business. But since the 1973 Yom Kippur War and the world recession that came in its wake, the world's tanker capacity has increased by a quarter while world trade in oil has decreased by over ten percent. The complex at Sines was based on refining and petrochemicals and the expansion of motor vehicle assembly plants. The Western economic crisis made none of these projects particularly viable; nor could revolutionary Portugal well afford them. But the groundwork had been laid, and it was too late to turn back.

Thus, there was much serious maladjustment in the Portuguese economy, which the revolution could only exacerbate. And beneath it much social tinder to be ignited when Caetano fell and with him the whole apparatus of a highly repressive state. Individually the problems were serious enough, cumulatively they were disastrous. Uncertainty and violence led to the collapse of tourism, and with it construction and the real estate boom. Takeovers of empty houses alienated the emigrants, who withheld their remittances. The old textile industry, which employed some 120,000 people simultaneously, lost its source of raw materials and its markets. Growing unemployment first hit women, whose earnings, small as they were, had been a vital element in increasing the small internal market. The contraction of purchasing power helped in turn to create more unemploy-

ment. Government measures that prohibited the dismissal of workers drove many firms into bankruptcy and escalating demands for credit from the nationalized banks. And with demobilization of the armed forces, more were added to the rolls of the jobless. Portugal entered the winter of 1975 with some 500,000 unemployed, only 17,000 of whom received any form of social security. And on top of these were some 300,000 Angolan refugees in the country, destitute for the most part, their money worthless. It was almost as if Portugal was doomed to face the worst of all possible worlds at the worst of all possible times. It was a sober background against which to implement a democratic revolution.

IV

Although it was not apparent at the time, the April 25th coup had not been made by the army as a whole, much less by General Spínola. It was organized and carried through by the Armed Forces Movement (MFA), which remained central to the political process during the first year of the revolution. Its development, radicalization and eventual fragmentation provided a motor for the revolution without which very little that has happened in Portugal can be explained. But from the beginning it was a shadowy organization and even after the abortive countercoup on March 11, 1975, when it was "institutionalized," i.e., given formal legal recognition with a revolutionary council and assembly composed of representatives of the three services, its deliberations remained secret.

As the intrusion of party and factional disputes into the MFA escalated after January 1975, the newspapers were full of self-interested leaks, yet much of its debate remained a mystery to the public at large, and since tapes of its proceedings were stolen in the course of intra-army maneuvering it may well be that no reliable record of its activities will ever exist. While the MFA held center stage, however, it was one of the unique elements in the Portuguese situation and one of the least understood.

It was also some considerable time after the April coup before the importance of the MFA was recognized at all, despite the fact that its program formed part of the constitutional arrangements as guidelines for the revolution, and its political committee moved en masse into the Council of State.

During the autumn and winter of 1973, the movement had been formed by junior officers, who in the beginning had been brought together by what they considered threats to their status from the Caetano regime's attempts to expand the officer corps by allowing con-

script officers to take up regular commissions. Once it was organized, wider political questions intruded upon the purely military concerns; above all, there was the intolerable pressure of the wars in Africa where most of those involved had spent their entire professional lives. It was the MFA that somewhat reluctantly chose General Spínola to head the new regime. They would have preferred General Costa Gomes, whose political views were closer to their own, but Spínola's broader popular appeal and the international attention which followed the publication of his book in February 1974 gave him the edge. The problem was that as soon as Spínola was established in office it became evident that he was far from being a puppet. He possessed his own ideas about the direction Portugal should take, and diverged from the coordinating committee of the MFA on the two dominant concerns that faced the country: decolonization and the economy.

Spínola wanted Portugal to move rapidly toward a social democracy on a West European model, with rapid economic development, improved living standards, rationalized and modernized financial and business structures, and an opening toward and eventual participation in the European Community. These were the objectives laid out in the economic plan he commissioned from Erik Lundberg of the World Bank. It was a view close to those of the more advanced sectors of the Portuguese business community, especially Miguel Quiná and António Champalimaud, who had become increasingly irritated with the Caetano regime and welcomed the change. It was an ambitious program, but as with so much in the Portuguese situation, it was at least a decade too late. In an expanding world economy, with abundant investment, rising tourism, emigrant remittances and the ability to impose labor discipline, Spínola's program might just have worked. But when the favorable circumstances had existed, Portugal was bogged down in an unwinnable war and the opportunity was squandered. By the mid-1970s the world economic recession, the collapse of the state's repressive apparatus, and the generalized hostility to radical change in Lisbon from those whose aid would be most needed—all these made it a pipedream. And the problem was only compounded by the hostility in Washington to the new regime as a consequence of the emergence of an aggressive and well-organized Communist Party.

Above all, Spínola's program was predicated on the achievement of a slow and orderly disengagement from Africa. For while Portugal was herself in chronic deficit in her foreign transactions, the balance of the escudo area as a whole showed a healthy surplus. This surplus was based preeminently on Angola's earnings: for the process of ex-

pansion and development in Portugal to succeed, Angola's retention for a number of years seemed essential.

But the MFA had made the coup to end the war not perpetuate it, and the manner of decolonization brought the fundamental conflicts between Spínola and the MFA into the open. The African liberation movements were acutely aware of the splits under the surface in Lisbon. They were aware, too, of the strong resentment and antagonism within the Portuguese armed forces to any continuance of the wars. They also knew the men involved, unlike Portugal's Western allies to whom almost all the members of the MFA, including most of its leaders, were totally unknown quantities. FRELIMO in Mozambique and PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau in particular, by a combination of stepped-up military pressure and local ad hoc arrangements with the MFA security network, known as COPCON, organized under the command of General Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho, the man who had coordinated the April coup for the MFA against Caetano.

The struggle in Portugal, however, was by no means one-sided, and through the first five months each side sought to strengthen its power base, the MFA expanding from a little under 200 members in March to some 2,000 by September. Spínola tried to build a base among the emerging political parties and the elite units of the army but it was for him a path of continuous retreat. In the showdown over the independence of Guinea-Bissau, he was forced to accept Colonel Vasco Gonçalves, one of the few more senior officers of the MFA's coordinating committee, as prime minister. And when he tried to rally popular support in September 1974, he was blocked by COPCON.

The September showdown forced Spínola from the presidency and opened the way for the transfer of power to FRELIMO in Mozambique; but it also brought a new element into the political equation. When the crisis had broken on September 28, 1974, the Communist Party and its allies had moved efficiently and rapidly to organize a blockade of Lisbon, thus preventing the thousands expected for the demonstration in support of Spínola to assemble. It was clear, then, that whatever the army might wish or the leaders of the MFA have intended, the intrusion of political and party divisions was unavoidable. And once the Right and Center were effectively neutralized after the failure of another murky attempt by Spínola to regain power in March of 1975, the struggle for power began in earnest within the Left and inside the MFA itself. It was almost inevitable that this should happen since the MFA, by "institutionalizing" itself, had made its revolutionary council and assembly in effect a parallel executive and legislature. Then, on April 25, 1975, one year after the coup,

the constituent assembly elections provided for the first time another source of legitimacy, incarnated by the Socialist Party led by Mário Soares, followed closely by the Popular Democrats, the party Spínola had seen as his political base and led by one of his closest political associates, Francisco Sá Carneiro.

But the atmosphere at the time was permeated with a dangerous sense of unreality: there was a widening divorce between the highly theoretical and ideological quality of debate at the center and the heightened tensions in society at large. The linkages among the central authorities were undermined and a type of "popular power" emerged at a local level to replace them. This in turn overly accentuated regional polarization and hardened political positions. Since popular power and the rule of local vigilantes could just as easily be of the Right as of the Left, the resulting volatile situation had a much more immediate impact on the development of Portugal than the protracted and endless debates in the assembly on the new constitution or within the armed forces on which of the many roads to socialism they wished to follow. The far Left and the far Right were the first to realize this. Both the political parties and the more traditional military officers sensed the threat in these developments—especially the Communist Party and its military allies which had based their strategy on the seizure or subversion of the existing institutional structures.

The failure to perceive the split that was occurring between the attitudes of the political and military leaders and the mood of the country outside Lisbon was aggravated by the peculiar way in which the African situation and the collapse of the economy affected the chronology of the revolution. The pressures emanating from Africa were undoubtedly the most important in the short run, but economic issues are likely to dominate the second stage of the revolution that is beginning as disengagement from Africa is completed. The fact that the economic crisis could be postponed so long was due to Salazar's last gift to Portugal, the large gold and foreign currency reserves he had so avidly accumulated. These reserves, which stood at $2.8 billion at the end of 1973 ($1.2 billion in gold), provided a cushion that helped the revolution postpone the consequences of its actions. Or at least they allowed a series of far-reaching and radical transformations to be promulgated without much apparent pain to the population at large.

This contributed to the sense of unreality which lasted well through the late summer of 1975. The reserves helped to obscure the fact that real change was occurring that would in time have to be paid for, and not merely by its immediate victims—conservative military officers,

expropriated landowners, great industrialists and banking magnates. A very high degree of sacrifice, austerity and disciplined collective action were unavoidable if a socialist revolution was to be made to work. Whether or not the Portuguese people, or a sufficiently large number of them, would be prepared for that route was a question that had been largely avoided.

Thus, the fact that the struggle often appeared to be largely verbal posturing was, of course, quite false. A real conflict over the nature of the economy and the process of decolonization lay at the base of the series of severe and protracted military and political crises that have rendered successive provisional governments virtually impotent. But the projection of the struggle into a major concern for both the Right and the Left throughout Europe was not diminished by its highly ideological nature. It was no accident that the issues that most caught foreign attention were concerned with freedom of the press in the case of the newspaper *República,* and freedom of religion expression in the case of the episcopacy's radio station in Lisbon, *Rádio Renascença.* Each served to point up sensitive concerns, especially in France and Italy, that lay very close to the surface of uneasy alliances of the Left between Social Democrats and Communists. The Portuguese Socialists of all Portuguese political groups were the most keenly attuned to Western politics and knew how to exploit these concerns in their own interest.

But the comparisons were decidedly forced. In France and Italy, the Communists and Socialists were in opposition and functioning within long-established parliamentary regimes. In Portugal, at the time that the disputes erupted, both the Communists and Socialists were members of a coalition government during a transitional period each described as "para-democratic." And a bitter power struggle was in progress at local and national levels between them for the control of unions, municipalities, the communications media, and within the military itself.

Perceptions were nevertheless important—as important at times as what happened. Outside help and money were welcomed by all Portuguese groups. After half a century during which Portugal seemed totally irrelevant to the outside world, suddenly the most convoluted dispute of her smallest political faction became a weighty matter of absorbing interest. It did not matter that this had as much to do with the political and economic situation elsewhere in Europe as with the developments in Portugal. The preeminence rested in the belief that Portugal had become a mirror suddenly held up at a most embarrassing moment wherein Europe could see herself. Ideologists of both the

Left and the Right saw what they wanted to see, whereas reality most of the time was very obscure, not least to the political and military leaders in Lisbon suddenly thrust into the international limelight. In any case, Portugal, unlike Cuba and Chile, was close by and relatively cheap to get to. Few luminaries could resist the chance to go see for themselves—from Jean-Paul Sartre to General Vernon Walters.

Both the Left and the Right initially underestimated the radicalism of the Armed Forces Movement and then paradoxically placed too much hope on its staying power once the revolution had moved from euphoric celebration to acrimony and factionalism. It would have been particularly surprising, however, if Alvaro Cunhal, Secretary General of the Portuguese Communist Party, whose major theoretical contribution is a lengthy polemic on petit-bourgeois radicalism, had ignored the possibility of the MFA's renewed concern for hierarchy and discipline once its own position was threatened by incipient rebellion in the ranks. The Communists, therefore, despite temporary tactical alliances, first with General Spínola, and then with the MFA, also made sure that their militants or sympathizers were placed in key roles within the military and made special efforts to control the two most sensitive organs: the Fifth Division, responsible for propaganda and the indoctrination of "cultural dynamization," and the Commission that had been established after the coup to dismantle the secret police.

The mistake Cunhal made was in thinking that power could be achieved by the seizure of institutional structures, and that such structures, inherited from the corporate quasi-fascist dictatorship, were transferable in the fluid situation that followed the April coup. He, along with many of the political leaders returning from exile, seriously underestimated the real revolutionary potential in the situation—which was not entirely surprising for nothing like it had been seen in Europe since the turn of the century. In fact, it was the institutional elements that disintegrated most rapidly. And the Communists, by being associated with them and by attempting in many cases to prop them up, were badly mauled in the process.

What this meant was that the initiative in political terms was often taken by the radical Left—a complex and often bitterly divided collection of small groups that included several Marxist-Leninist parties, Maoists, revolutionary leftists and anarchists in all but name, as well as advocates of popular power. These groups, marginal to the political process in most European situations, became very significant in Portugal, often because they tended to reflect what was happening at local or neighborhood levels better than the more formal and tradi-

tional political parties. Moreover, as the spring and summer of 1975 wore on and the struggle between the Socialists and the Communists intensified, they began to gain adherence among the military, and most notably the commander of the MFA's main security force, General Saraiva de Carvalho.

These groups were, of course, as opposed to the Communists as to anyone else. For the radical Left saw the Portuguese Communist Party as a group of "social fascists," by which they meant reformists in their policies and authoritarians in their behavior. When the long struggle between Socialists and Communists for which the *República* case had provided a symbolic issue was ended and the Communist ally, Vasco Goncalves, had been forced out of office, the major incentive for the unholy alliance between the Socialists and the radical Left ended as well. For if the radicals saw the Communist Party as misguided comrades that might find redemption, they saw the Socialists as thinly disguised fascists and class enemies.

The establishment of the Sixth Government—leftist but anti-Communist—brought back the Socialists and the Popular Democrats and many of the original members of the Armed Forces Movement who, led by Major Melo Antunes, had conducted the struggle with Gonçalves over the summer. But the new situation was a very critical one. The crisis had split the MFA wide open. The army had withdrawn its delegates from the armed forces assembly since they believed the assembly to be too heavily influenced by the Communists, and throughout the country the armed forces themselves had fragmented to such an extent that almost every unit found it necessary to define itself politically.

The specter of civil strife became very real for the first time. The removal of the Communist Party effectively from government power and the gradual purge of its militants and sympathizers, which began throughout the armed forces, placed it squarely in the opposition for the first time since the April 1974 coup. Faced with this situation, the Communists chose to take a revolutionary route that they had so far avoided. The alliance between the Communist Party and the radical Left brought with it the Communist Party's formidable organizational capacity, and this, added to the high degree of armed capability already apparent among radical leftist groups, posed an immediate and serious threat to the new government. The moderate Left within the government has thus been faced with the problem of moving against the radical Left or seeking to disarm it or running the risk of being overthrown by it. The radical Left, of course, sees the moderate Left's reaction as an immediate threat to its own position and

also foresees that the longer it waits the more vulnerable it will become. Hence, it has every incentive to act sooner than later, especially as the government is establishing an elite military intervention force loyal to it. This threatens to circumvent the remnants of the COPCON security force under Carvalho.

Outside the present political spectrum, the far Right, taking advantage of these splits and hoping that one or another of the leftist factions will do its work for it, awaits the chance to return. Highly organized both outside and inside Portugal, the Right has been strengthened during the summer by the adherence of General Spínola, now titular head of the "movement for the liberation of Portugal." But if either the radical Left or the far Right were to attempt to overthrow this government, or if the government itself moved against the strongholds of the Communists and their radical Leftist military allies in Lisbon and the South, a civil war would be almost impossible to avoid. No group has the capability of easily or quickly destroying the other, but each has an incentive to seek to do so. As the groups in conflict have clearly defined popular and regionally concentrated power bases, control heavily armed paramilitary groups and command the loyalty of regular military units, the result could only be a protracted and bloody struggle.

V

It remains to consider the policies and impact of external powers—West European countries, the United States, and the U.S.S.R. How have they approached the situation? What might the Western countries have done differently, both in respect to Portugal herself and in respect to the former Portuguese territories in Africa? What has been the Soviet role? And what are the remaining options for the West in the situations that have now emerged, or appear imminent?

Portugal faces the Atlantic at the far western tip of Europe; her Atlantic islands are strategically placed astride the shipping lanes between Europe, the Mediterranean and the Americas; her African colonies had port and bunkering facilities that potentially were among the best on the Indian and South Atlantic Oceans. Together these comprised vital geostrategic assets, the possession of which had been critical to European expansion overseas from the beginning and were among the elements that accounted for Portugal's head start. Ironically, with Europe's retraction the value of these positions had increased. They were vital counters on the board, more appreciated when threatened than when securely held.

Thus, the geostrategic position of Portugal and her possessions

made certain that the Portuguese revolution and the emergence of a strong Communist Party which participated in government were bound to raise questions that would involve the superpowers. The balance of power was threatened where least expected, where the forces at play were least susceptible to manipulation, or where involvement once it occurred was likely to escalate far beyond the initial commitment. This was not the result of any unwillingness to manipulate, but of a failure to identify the actors involved. Some time ago Henry Kissinger is supposed to have said: "I am not much interested in, nor do I know anything about, the Southern portion of the world from the Pyrenees on down"[1] From the U.S. point of view this was a pity. It was dangerous too, because it made U.S. policy especially vulnerable to the pressures of special interests, private advice and traditional prejudices that might lead in directions that were not in the long run in the best interests of the United States.

The fundamental problem was that the Portuguese democratic revolution and the impact it had in southern Africa struck U.S. diplomacy of the Nixon-Kissinger era at its most vulnerable point. Apparently peripheral to Washington's immediate concerns, such as détente and the Middle East, the Portuguese situation involved no less important issues—the whole posture of the United States toward social change in the world and toward the coming conflict in southern Africa. Neither of these basic problems was susceptible to management by deals among governments in the Northern Hemisphere, and the intrusion of such great-power concerns could only place the United States on the side of reaction in each area. Nonetheless, Portugal tended to be seen by Washington through the perspectives of the Middle East and of détente and to become entangled in each. The Azores with its U.S. base at Lajes had taken on a new lease on life when all of the other NATO allies and Spain refused refueling facilities to U.S. aircraft airlifting supplies to Israel during the Yom Kippur War. Détente became involved because Kissinger thought it easier to deal with the Portuguese Communist Party through Moscow and because he needed to demonstrate, especially at the time of the Helsinki accords, that détente worked.

The belief that Moscow could control the leftward movement of the revolution was based on a misreading of the course of events in Portugal. In any case the Portuguese themselves, as a result of the reactions to the Communists' own authoritarian behavior and tactics, were about to oust them from many of the power positions they

[1] Cited by Richard A. Falk, "What's Wrong with Henry Kissinger?" *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, October 1, 1974, p. 18.

had seized in the immediate aftermath of the coup. Moreover, the viability of détente had been evoked in a situation where it was unnecessary to do so. The Communists were in trouble for quite other reasons, and the Western allies' belligerent statements produced for domestic consumption served for no more than that. The Russians had nothing to give, although they reaped certain advantages by appearing to do so.

The problems caused by Communist participation in the Lisbon government were particularly acute for the Western powers since Portugal had been a NATO member since 1949 (though Salazar at the time had been careful to state that Portugal's participation did not signify acceptance of what he regarded as the vague and wordy evocation of liberal and democratic principles in its charter). The timing of the fall of the Caetano regime, however, was particularly embarrassing. The rapid buildup of Soviet naval power in recent years and the threat that this posed in the South Atlantic and Indian Oceans had led to growing concern for the security of the sea lanes around South Africa. NATO, in particular, originally mainly under pressure from British conservatives and its own naval circles, had hoped that its southern flank might be extended into the southern Atlantic. Because Portugal was also a NATO member, the fiction, therefore, that her colonies were an integral part of the metropole also became a convenient fiction for naval strategists. As a senior State Department official testified in December 1974, there was contingency planning directed to the "sea routes for strategic commodities including oil which are being shipped through the Indian Ocean, around the Cape and through the South Atlantic."[2] These plans involved the strategic port and airport facilities of Portugal's African territories.

The sudden emergence after the coup, therefore, of a regime in Portugal that welcomed Communist participation in government was seen as a major threat to the Western allies' strategic position in the Atlantic. And the reaction in NATO circles was immediate. Portugal was no longer made privy to certain classified information and, at the time of the meeting of the nuclear planning group, strenuous efforts were made to discourage Portuguese participation. Portugal did not push the point, which temporarily resolved the crisis.

A second problem that the Communists posed was similar to that which had been perceived by many Westerners in the government of

[2] Letter from Linwood Holton, Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations, to Hon. Charles Diggs, Chairman, Subcommittee on Africa, Foreign Affairs Committee, published in "Review of State Department Trip through Southern and Central Africa." Hearings before the Subcommittee on Africa, Foreign Affairs Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, 93rd Congress, Dec. 12, 1974, Washington: GPO, 1974, pp. 153–54.

Salvador Allende in Chile—that is, again, the precedent involved. The fear was that if Communist participation in a government worked, then the barriers that might prevent similar participation in Italy and France would be removed.

This concentration on strategic considerations and on the Communist aspect—most pronounced in Washington, but present to some degree in all the Western capitals—led the West to equivocate about wholeheartedly supporting the first government of General Spínola, the one government since the coup which offered a chance, however slight, of gradualist change in Europe and Africa. In effect, through ignorance of the deeper revolutionary forces at work—and above all of the depth of the economic problems—the West lost the chance to come forward at once with a program of practical assistance that might have helped stabilize the situation.

When eventually the European Community began seriously discussing economic assistance, Spínola had long since been forced from the Presidency. The aid was intended not in order to stabilize the pro-Communist Vasco Gonçalves government but to encourage the formation of a new one that would respect democratic liberties. It was too little, too late—it helped to bring Gonçalves down but did little to prop up the Sixth Government, since the aid remained a promise not a reality. The accompanying American threat that a Communist-dominated Portugal might be no longer welcome as a NATO member likewise had little effect. By the summer of 1975 the West was reduced to fragmentary efforts, through Socialist parties, to shore up the position of Soares. While such interference in Portugal's domestic affairs was understandable as a response to Soviet assistance to Cunhal, and as an action directed against an unpopular minority bent on the seizure of power in the face of a clear rejection by the majority of the electorate, its usefulness was negated by the inability of the West, at this late date, to do anything constructive about the social and economic forces that were swinging the pendulum back and forth ever more sharply.

Perhaps one should not place too much weight on the impact of Western policies since April 1974. It is the failure over decades to deal with Portugal effectively that lies at the root of the present parlous situation. But it was the legacy of those past policies that carried over to prevent the West, especially the United States, from reacting sooner in ways that might have helped steady the course of what would in any event have been a far-reaching revolution.

Now, with civil war apparently impending, the dilemmas of Western policy are even more acute. What not to do seems clearer than

what ought to be done. Certainly it would only compound the tragedy if any Western country, above all the United States, were now to support, or appear to support, a far Right action under Spínola—a desire already imputed to Washington by many liberals in Europe. The specter of the Spanish Civil War looms large, and it would be the strongest test yet of détente to persuade the Soviet Union to join in a common policy of noninterference by external powers. On the other hand, if by some miracle civil war is avoided, it should be the West's policy to go forward with massive economic aid without being too choosy about the exact role that individuals associated with the Communists may be playing in a government that somehow manages to govern.

The implications of Western reactions to events in southern Africa are no less dangerous. The hostility to the MPLA clearly involves more than the objection to its ideology and the fact that it is supported by the Soviets. Its politics are in the same tradition and grow from the same background as those of FRELIMO in Mozambique and PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau (which have also been supported by the Russians). In neither of these latter cases was independence under the leadership greeted as a threat to the West, or as unsettling to détente, or worthy of solemn warnings to "extraterritorial powers" to keep their hands off.

Angola, moreover, is directly involved in most sensitive issues in southern Africa; the Benguela railway is the main outlet for the copper belt on which the prosperity of both Zaïre and Zambia depends. Already both countries are in serious trouble as a result of the decline in world copper prices, and the impact of the closure of the Benguela railway as a result of hostilities in Angola gives both a major stake in the outcome of the fighting. President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia is the main hope of South Africa in its policy of "détente" with Black Africa. And the serious economic threat to Kaunda's regime that results from war in Angola is of serious concern both in Pretoria and Washington.

General Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaïre, who is America's main "ally" in Africa, has since the deterioration of the situation in Angola become the object of a major economic rescue operation. The proposed massive increases in U.S. aid are also of some interest to Mobutu's brother-in-law, Holden Roberto, leader of the FNLA, the "pro-Western" group in the Angolan struggle. But while all the Angolan liberation movements have regional and tribal characteristics, the FNLA is by far the most openly tribally based, and Zaïre and Roberto are seen throughout much of Africa to greatly resemble the nationalists who failed so dismally to fulfill the promise of African emancipation after the

end of colonial rule in the 1960s. There is therefore no way that the struggle in Angola can be isolated from its broader ideological implications, and a struggle that pits the FNLA against the MPLA is bound to polarize Africa ideologically, and place the Western opponents of MPLA, and the United States particularly, in opposition to the most dynamic and progressive forces in the continent.

Because the southern African business and financial interests also see their positions threatened in Angola, U.S. policy has already been placed in parallel with that of South Africa. And for the first time this raises the specter of open U.S. involvement in the confrontation that the United States itself sees as inevitable in the region, though the United States itself recognizes no "vital security interests in the region."[3] As Admiral Bierman, the South African Chief of the General Staff, wrote in 1972: "It is imperative that a superpower should be involved in the strategy of the southern hemisphere . . . we must persuade the West that communist penetration into the Southern hemisphere is a direct threat to Western Europe and the rest of the free world."[4] Angola has achieved that "persuasion," and the consequences are staggering.

The irony is that the end of Europe's oldest territorial empire in Africa has recreated the type of situation that dragged Europe unwillingly for the most part into a partition of Africa in the nineteenth century. As Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher wrote of the first scramble: "Strategy is not merely a reflection of the interest which it purports to defend; it is even more the register of the hopes, the memories and neuroses which inform the strategist's picture of the world."[5] It also makes policy vulnerable to the forces in place locally, drags it after interests contradictory to its own best interests, and creates entanglements that are very difficult to escape from.

In both cases, southern Africa and Portugal, the belief apparently persists that ideology is somehow separate from the forces at play in the social and economic situation; and that these in turn can be manipulated from outside. More often the opposite is true, and outsiders unless very careful become prisoners of an uncontrollable course of events. And when this occurs, as it now seems to be doing, the threats to the international system are most dangerous.

[3] National Security Council Interdepartmental Group for Africa: a study in response to National Security Study Memorandum 39, Southern Africa AF/NSC-I G 69—Aug. 15, 1969, p. iii.

[4] Cited by Colin Legum, *The Observer,* London, December 17, 1972.

[5] Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism,* London: Macmillan, 1966, p. 470.