

## Under the whip of the counter-revolution

# Will the revolution in Portugal advance?

by Raya Dunayevskaya

National Chairwoman, News and Letters Committees

The counter-revolution that has put down the alleged "extreme Left attempt at coup d'etat" in Portugal is unfolding on all fronts, from the imposition of "discipline" on factory workers to the purging of MFA (Armed Forces Movement) and re-establishing a military hierarchy loyal to "it" — the capitalist government. The nationalization of radio stations except episcopacy's Radio Renascença goes hand in hand with trying to drive the peasantry off the occupied lands, and "reorganizing" all "far left" newspapers. So much for the Socialist Party's "struggle for democracy." Indeed, so far to the Right has this alleged "Left Centrist victory" over Communism moved that Socialist Soares and his Major General Antunes themselves fear an outright fascist return. Hence, they are denouncing, not too loudly, "blind anti-Communism."

What they mean is not the establishment of any genuine workers' democracy or releasing of workers' revolutionary energies, but just the inclusion in the government of the Communist Party, which is as practiced as they are in class-collaborationism, and was the first to engage in strike-breaking action against the mass strikes that followed the overthrow of the fascist regime.

And the CP leader, Alvaro Cunhal, promptly acceded to them: "We have to face the new reality."

### The Nov. 25 Coup: Before and After

In a word, the Rightist move backward — the Nov. 25 coup — instead of being seen and fought as the whip of the counter-revolution that it is, is being whitewashed by the press as if that was the way to avoid a bloody Chile-type coup. But the only reason they do not dare yet roll history backward that far is because the mass movement is still intact, has not been taken over by any existing parties.

Moreover, the very fact of the spontaneous mass outburst of wildcat strikes, which arose upon the overthrow of the fascist Caetano regime and was not subordinated to any "Party", is the reason the masses are mastering new ideological insights. Thus, the majority first voted for the Socialist Party because they were running away from the Communist Party in revulsion against the latter's strike-breaking activity, but now these same masses are taking a second look at the class character of the SP-type of "democracy" and asking: was its espousal of democracy more than the left covering for NATO, as if Helmut Schmidt's West German type of "socialism" differs fundamentally from the open imperialism of Ford's CIA? They now see it not as any kind of workers' democracy; rather the howling for "sacrifice and hard work" is clearly a defense of the capitalistic system.

### New Questions

At the same time, many questions are also being raised about the Left and its "programs" void of a concrete philosophy of liberation. Hadn't all the "Left" acted as if General Spínola had been the real leader of the overthrow of the Caetano regime? Hadn't there been an underestimation of the nascent workers' and peasants' struggles, student revolts, women's movement, though there were many open instances since the mid-1960s of the restlessness in the land? Had any given full credit to the African Revolutions which led the Portuguese soldiers to undermine the fascist imperialistic regime at home?

The truth is that the revolution in Portugal began in

Africa, and not only because Portuguese imperialism was losing, but because the African revolutions, theoretically as well as practically, were shaking up the very ones who came to shoot them down. (1)

Moreover, the national liberation struggles weren't just the "accidental" springboards for the Portuguese revolution. Nor was it only the "cell form" of the African guerrillas which the Portuguese army copied when it began organizing its opposition. The revolutionary elements in the MFA were witnessing theoretical developments in the African revolutionary movement that moved beyond nationalism to Marxian socialism, to world relations. The "Left" leaders who rushed to Portugal, declaring most against "dogmatism," are the most dogmatic about their most empiricist programs—as if each slogan is "the" proof of socialist universals, and any deviation from any of them a capitulation to the bourgeoisie, a mere "Bonapartist caricature." (2)

### To Begin at the Beginning

The truth is — we must begin at the beginning — that even under Spínola's "leadership," the Portuguese revolution did not begin as no more than an ordinary coup d'etat. Not only was Spínola not the real leader, but neither was the whole Army. Rather it was the revolutionary sections of the MFA. Thus, whereas at the start the young officers organized on so narrow and reactionary a level as opposing the new conscripts becoming officers, once they organized new cells in the army, both the leniently with which the guerrillas treated them when they were captured, and the education that was being carried on in the national liberation army began changing the nature also of the MFA within the Portuguese Army.

The leaflets of the FRELIMO in Mozambique, the PAIGC in Guine-Bissau, and MPLA in Angola may not match the fraternization leaflets that the Bolsheviks wrote in 1917, but they certainly were an entirely new ground for fighting in Portugal, 1974. In urging the Portuguese soldiers to go home and make their own revolution, the national liberation forces were raising questions, including the role of women, that the "advanced" Portuguese had not even heard of. (3)

Because of its narrow beginnings, the radicalization of the MFA was underestimated by the Old Left, some going so far as to consider it no more than, as noted, "Bonapartist caricature." Others thought that the MFA's 5th Division, which was responsible for propaganda work and called for "cultural dynamization," was but an expression of pure and simplistic Maoism. But, in fact, with all mistakes, this never approached the sheer dementia of Maoism in Portugal, headlining its

(1) See especially the African struggles before 1974: *The Struggle for Mozambique*, Penguin Books, 1969, by Eduardo Mondlane, then FRELIMO president, is the most comprehensive by African leaders, and contains the first theoretical section also on Women's Liberation, plus quotations from women leaders. Return to the Source: Selected Speeches of Amílcar Cabral (PAIGC), Monthly Review, 1969. Cabral also wrote the foreword to Basil Davidson's *The Liberation of Guinea* which has the most beautiful pictures, including that of Carmen Pereira, a leading political commissar. As it happens, the current NY Times Magazine section (1-4-75) carries an article, *Suddenly, Angola*, which contains a poem by the third of the leaders of Portuguese Africa, Dr. Neto of the MPLA, whose most recent interview is reported in the Jan. 3, 1976 issue of the *Manchester Guardian*.

(2) The phrase as analysis of MFA appears in Tony Cliff's *Portugal At the Cross Roads*, a special double issue (No. 81-82, Sept. 1975). It is valuable because of 54 in-person reports, and has much material on PRP/BR, though it fails to mention that it is headed by a woman, nor is her name, Isabel do Carmo, mentioned anywhere, though the analysis extends over 48 pages.

(3) *The Struggle for Mozambique*, pp. 147-50.

From N&L, Jan-Feb 1976

paper: "Revisionism in power means social-fascism in power." (4)

A deeper look at new beginnings will, of necessity, lead us to the spontaneous mass movement; land seizures by revolutionary sections of the poor peasantry as well as the great proletarian strikes, of which there were no less than 100 the very first month after the overthrow of the fascist regime — the youth as well as Women's Liberation Movement, which has been paid least attention, though it is a pivotal force. (5)

When the SP-CP had, in 1969, organized the Democratic Women's movement, it was strictly limited to economic issues . . . not that "Equal Pay for Equal Work" was ever enforced even in 1974-75. Still, that movement, from above, kept eyes turned away from "feminist" issues, such as right to abortion, or other man/woman relations, though some Portuguese men were backward enough to oppose their wives using contraceptives because it could supposedly make them impotent! Even when women were complaining they were as afraid of their men at home "as of bosses in the factory," it did not move those "advanced politicians" to change the nature of their organization. The Women's Liberation Movement (MLM) thereupon arose on new ground, ground that didn't separate philosophic foundation from feminism or class struggles.

#### New Forces of Revolution, Focus: Women, Youth, Peasants

Amílcar Cabral, back in the 1960's when Portuguese economy seemed to experience its greatest "development" with the multi-nationals moving in on Portugal, said that Portugal, as the weakest link in world imperialism, "could not afford neo-colonialism." The only ones who seemed to listen to the African revolutionary were the Portuguese students, whose strikes came to a climax in 1968 and were against conscription as well as for academic freedom.

The more foreign capital began to move into Portugal, as a safe haven for profits and low-paid labor, the more contradictions undermined the regime.

Take the question of the 1973 Middle East War with the accompanying Arab quadrupling of oil prices. On the face of it, it seemed to have no relationship to anything happening in Portugal. But, in fact, fascist Portugal, with its monopoly CUF and in collaboration with two Swedish and two Dutch shipyards, had built the great showy Lisnave dry docks because they expected a most profitable tanker business.

The complex at Sines was based on refining and petrochemicals and the expansion of motor vehicle assembly plants. But where a 25 percent increase in tanker business was expected, a 10 percent drop in oil purchases was the consequence of the quadrupled oil prices. The Western economic crisis, which was global, deeply affected Portugal, facing defeat in Africa and massive unemployment and strikes at home.

The human factor of this equation was not only the suffering. Some new forces of revolution were born. First, no less than one and one-half million (out of a population of 8.5 million) had seen service in Africa where they had been politicized by the national liberation movement. Secondly, the miserable conditions in Portugal sent Portuguese workers also to West Europe. By 1974 no less than 900,000 Portuguese had emigrated to West Europe, with 700,000 in France and 150,000 in West Germany. This move to the big cities abroad for employment was glossed over as if it meant economic

development at home. Actually, the great number that left agriculture — there was a drop from 50 percent to 30 percent in agricultural production — meant not industrial development at home, but agricultural collapse. (6)

All these factors brought the women into production — industrial, agricultural — and into unemployment. They were the first to be hit by unemployment which, by 1975, numbered no less than 500,000. The women who established the Women's Liberation Movement (MLM) did not think that all their problems were "solved" by the existing parties and unions. Which doesn't mean they didn't actively participate in all of them. It does mean, as was proved all over again at the May 1, 1975, demonstration where they were attacked by the CP and other so-called Left men who did not stop from also attacking their children, that not only was an autonomous movement of women necessary, but the Old Left had to answer today: what happens after the revolution on the most fundamental man/woman relationship.

An MLM leaflet, calling for equal pay for women at the Via Longa brewery and Pao sugar factory, was forced to state: "It is not only the bosses that are exploiting us; it's our own comrades that are refusing equal pay."

Or, take the question of agriculture and the most reactionary Catholic hierarchy. Ironically, the entry of foreign capital — U.S., West German, Swedish, Dutch, French — built up not only big industry, like the Lisnave shipyards or the new airport at Farno, but also (in this case West German capital) an irrigation scheme in the Alentejo, which is exactly where the majority of workers were women, where the greatest activities, including the seizure of land, were most militantly fought for by women. Along with the militancy was the demand for a philosophy to fight against the ideological power of the Catholic and fascist tradition which had forced women into submission to God, man, family. They have a long tradition of strikes, arrests, imprisonments. Whether it is in the Alentejo district, where out of 10,000 unemployed, 8,000 were women, or in the cities where, besides industrial struggles, women are very important in health care, service, or in ideological struggles, where surely one of the most revolutionary groupings, PRP/BR, is headed by a woman — Isobel do Carmo — there is no way to escape the new, the pivotal role of women, the youth both on campus and in the army, or the poor peasants. On Feb. 9, 1975, 30,000 farm workers in Alentejo demanded confiscation of the properties of the owners attempting coups.

Instead of keeping away from "feminist" questions, the Old Left better learn to recognize new forces of revolution and new ways of emergence of those forces. Before the April, 1974 overthrow of the fascist regime, undercurrents of revolt arose among women, from literature to actual class struggles.

Thus, New Portuguese Letters (published here as The Three Marias and by no means "just literature" — though great literature it is) posed questions of human relations far more profoundly than the Old Left had. Their freedom from jail was by no means due only to the overthrow of the Caetano regime, but to the protests by the international women's liberation movement. (7) The symbol the women's movement, in agriculture especially, had chosen was Catarina Enfemia, assassinated by the National Guard during a strike for the eight-hour day.

Women became especially important in 1973 when a labor shortage sent them into textiles and electronics, and directly into the fight against multinationals: Timex, ITT, Plessey, and the garment industry (where Swedish

capital owned 15 of the 25 major companies). It is in textiles and electronics and shipyards where the grass roots workers' movement first erupted, and where none questioned the militancy of women workers. But they were asking not only for a fundamental change in labor conditions, but for different relations at home.

Or take agriculture. Women's wages averaged only 50 escudos a day, 50 percent lower than men's. Just as in Lisbon, women workers took over a laundry plant to make it a free service so that "working class women will be liberated from housework," so they were among the most active in the peasant seizures of land and cultivating it on a cooperative basis. The peasants came in their tractors to take part in the Aug. 20 political demonstration to unite with the workingclass tenants and squatters who were occupying houses. At Caixa the peasants occupied the land of the Duke of Lafões and turned that into a cooperative.

#### Dual Power? CRTSMs? Apartidarism (Non-partyism)?

As the mass strikes showed the very first month after the overthrow of the fascist regime, these were no ordinary strikes and some ended in occupation of factories, the most important being the workers occupying the Lisnave shipyards. But while there is no doubt that one of the great developments was that at the Lisnave shipyard complex, neither it nor the Revolutionary Councils of Workers, Soldiers and Sailors (CRTSMs) were nationwide.

Of all the parties that arose the one that was most indigenous and revolutionary, was the PRP/BR (Revolutionary Party of the Proletariat — Revolutionary Brigades). (8) So characteristic of the revolutionary situation is anti-partyism (apartidarism) that this group, a splitoff from the CP, tried to assign priority, not to the party, but to the spontaneous mass organizations. They called for, and were instrumental in organizing, Revolutionary Councils of Workers, Soldiers and Sailors. The critical question became: were they really developing spontaneously and on a national scale? Was it the type of mass outpouring, and an arming of the working class that one could say these instances of self-activity created actual dual power?

It simply wasn't true that there was such a self-mobilization of the masses that actually challenged the new, but very much still the capitalistic government. Nor was it true that even the most "revolutionary" sections of the MFA equalled the armed people, quintessential for a social revolution. And least of all was it true that the Constituent Assembly was anything approaching such high rhetoric. The vote was just a vote, a mere consultative one at that; that didn't challenge continued army rule. To say, as one (9) of the Trotskyist groups maintained, that the Constituent Assembly was a "step toward a workers' and peasants' government," is utter nonsense, reformist euphoria.

By the time Soares' "democracy" won and Goncalves was thrown out of government, it was the end also of the unholy alliance of SP and Maoists, not to mention the Catholic Church hierarchy which is the true winner as the counter-revolution unfolds its fascist face. A new united front of all Left groups (FUR included MES, PRP/BR, LUAR, LCI and others) warned, in its

Sept. 10 Manifesto, (10) that the reactionary escalation would end in a rightist coup. On Nov. 25 it did.

The first stage of revolution has ended.

#### Counter-Revolution in Portugal, Against Africa

The revolution in Portugal was born in the African Revolutions. The counter-revolution in Portugal is "coinciding" with the USA-CIA-South African conspiracy to try to recolonize Angola. As against the revolutionary appeal coming from Black Africa as well as Portugal, South African apartheid increased its falsehoods, along with its power, trying to make itself "part" of "The West." The one thing that characterized each of these total opposites (but hardly touched the revolutionary left in Europe that remained color blind as white), was its very organism, and not just the pragmatists' superstructure.

Thus, Admiral Bierman, South African Chief of the General Staff, wrote in 1972: "It is imperative that a superpower would 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." It is this which is now appealing to the Ford-Kissinger-CIA dirty tricksters and deep organic imperialists.

While Kissinger's preoccupation, first with South Vietnam and then the Middle East and Russian detente, had, in early 1970's, not bowed to a close relationship to apartheid South Africa, by the time Angola won its freedom, U.S. imperialism was all ears to the siren call of all imperialisms and racism: South African apartheid, which, for more time than we really know, was listened to by "Communist" China for whom nothing takes the place of their own nationalism which considers not the U.S. but Russia Enemy No. 1.

Thus South Africa has won its point, West, East. And now it is, not only the Ford-Kissinger-CIA-Moynihan cabal, but the journalists, and not only such as C. L. Sulzberger, but so-called English Liberals such as the actual head of the Liberal Party, Jeremy Thorpe, and the Manchester Guardian. (11)

All are out to brainwash about what type of government is in Portugal, and how Russia supposedly controls the MPLA lock, stock and barrel. Russian detente or otherwise, the cackle is out to teach us the "principles of geopolitics": how Portugal faces the Atlantic at the far western tip of Europe, while her islands are strategically placed astride the shipping lanes between Europe, the Mediterranean and the Americas, not to mention that her "African colonies" had the best port facilities for the Indian and South Atlantic oceans.

It is not that any of this is fooling the masses; it is not even fooling the Senate. But while the Senate and House will soon capitulate, American revolutionaries must not only oppose U.S. imperialism in Portugal and Angola (see "U.S. works with South Africa," p. 12), but the acts of solidarity with the Portuguese Revolution must not be separate from a serious theoretical summation of where the Portuguese Revolution was stopped, and how to try to advance under the whip of the counter-revolution.

#### Didialectics of Theory

As a first step in that direction, and in the hope that the discussion will dialectically develop, in Portugal most of all, let us begin with one of the points raised

(4) Maoist slogan, which appeared in the June 6, 1974 issue of *Lutte Populaire* is quoted in Robin Blackburn's *Lisbon: The Fall of Fascism* (New Left Review, London, No. 87-8, Sept.-Dec. 1974). It also contains as appendix *The Lisnave Workers' Communiqué*.

(5) *Portugal: A Blaze of Freedom*, Big Flame Publications, 632 Bristol Rd., Birmingham 29, England) is both the most objective and comprehensive revolutionary study. It is the only one of the analyses that has a substantial section on the role of women, and its glossary doesn't suffer from the sectarianism of either IS that doesn't mention Trotskyist groups, or the Trotskyist groups, which go on endlessly just on themselves.

(6) "The Thorns of the Portuguese Revolution" by Kenneth Maxwell, in *Foreign Affairs*, Jan. 1976.

(7) When Maria Barrera, one of the authors of *New Portuguese Letters* (The Three Marias), was in the States, she not only insisted the international women's movement had much to do with freeing her and her co-authors from jail, but insisted: "I believe, in feminism because for me it is the hope to change society." Her speech is reproduced in *News & Letters*, April 1975.

(8) Both PRP/BR's Manifesto and many other documents of the Portuguese Revolution have been reproduced by the People's Translation Service (1735 Allston Way, Berkeley, Cal. 94703) in *Portugal: Key Documents of the Revolutionary Process*.

(9) There are two Trotskyist groups in Portugal, one headed by the majority of the Fourth International Secretariat (Mandel), and one by the SWP (Joe Hansen). See *Intercontinental Press*, Sept. 8 for "In Defense of the Portuguese Revolution" by Pierre Frank, Livio Maitan and Ernest Mandel (24 pp) and the endless one about all the differences between the Fourth International and the SWP (70 pp) in the Oct. 13, 1975, issue of *I.P.* "For a Correct Political Course in Portugal" by Gerry Foley, Joseph Hosen and George Novack.

(10) *Lutte de Classe* (appears bilingually as *Class Struggle*) No. 31 and 32, Oct., Dec. 1975, takes issue with Tony Cliff's analysis, official Trotskyism and is itself Trotskyist. It doesn't shed new light but it is valuable in reproducing the most chauvinistic Maoist remarks both in France ("France needs a strong army"), and internationally by quoting *Humanité Rouge*. See especially 1-9-75 where the Maoists proclaim: "The two super-powers do not play the same role . . . The danger of the expansionism of Soviet social-imperialism is greater . . . from the activities of the 5th columns represented by the various revisionist parties."

(11) See especially "Black and Red Don't Mix; Can Black and White" by Geoffrey Taylor, *Manchester Guardian*, 12-14-75

in the Draft Program of the Revolutionary Party — Revolutionary Brigades: "It is also the organization capable of making a synthesis between theory and revolutionary practice." (12)

That cannot just be stated. It must be worked out, beginning with the voices and actions that came from below, and questions asked of "what happens after" even as they raised the struggle for workers control of production, CRTSMs, and the ways of self-defense to fight the myriad forms the counter-revolution is imposing, as Portuguese and as part of world capitalism, as it conspires to get back total power.

From the very first proletarian revolution, 1848, Marx had drawn the conclusion "From the first moment of victory, and after it, the distrust of the workers must not be directed anymore against the conquered reactionary party, but against the previous ally, the petty bourgeois democrats, who desire to exploit the common victory only for themselves." (13)

Instead of quoting endlessly what Lenin said on the

---

(12) The Sept. 10 Revolutionary United Front Manifesto was included as a separate page in People's Translation Service on Portugal.

(13) Karl Marx's 1850 Address.

Party in 1903 — a position he many times revised (14)— why not see how Lenin reorganized his thought when he was first confronted with the betrayal of the German Social Democracy and raised the perspective: Transform the Imperialist War into Civil War, not just as a slogan, but the new philosophic, dialectical question of transformation into opposite. (15) By 1917, "All power to the Soviets" was rooted in the philosophic reorganization and its political expression in *State and Revolution*: that there can be no new society unless production and the state is run by the population "to a man, woman and child."

To reduce that to a question of the Party, the Party, the Party "to lead," as everyone from the Communists, Maoists, Trotskyists (of all varieties) are doing, is to doom the resurgence of the revolution.

Stop to think as well as to do.

---

(14) For the modification in the party concept, 1903-1923, see Ch. XI on "Forms of Organization: The Relationship of the Spontaneous Self-Organization of the Proletariat to the 'Vanguard Party'" as well as Ch. XII on "What Happens After?" in *Marxism and Freedom*, pp. 177-209.

(15) Along with Lenin's *Philosophic Notebooks* (Vol. 38 of *Collected Works*), see his Critique of Bukharin's *Economics of the Transition Period*, reproduced as Appendix to that work (Bergman, publisher, NY).