Under the whip of the counter-revolution
Will the revolution in Portugal advance?

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The counter-revolution that has put down the alleged “extreme Left attempt at coup d’état” in Portugal is unfolding on all fronts, from the impeachment of “discipline,” on factory floors, 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 episcopal Radio Renascenscia 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 this has alleged “Left Centrist victory” over Communism moved the Socialist. Soares and his Major General Antunes themselves fear an outright fascist return. Hence, they are denouncing, not too loudly, “blind anti-Communism.”

If 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, Chilie-type coup. But the only reality 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 party.

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 subordinate 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 bowing for “sacrifice and hard work” is clearly a defense of the capitalist 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 Spinola 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 field? Had any given full credit to the “Socialist Revolutions” which the Portuguese soldiers to undermine the fascist imperialist 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 “call form” of the African guerrillas which the Portuguese army opposed 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 “dougmaatism,” 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 Spinola’s “leadership,” the Portuguese revolution did not begin as no more than an ordinary coup d’état. Not only was Spinola 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 reaction- ary a level as opposing the new conscripts becoming officers, once they organized new cells in the Army, both the leniency 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 Guinea-Bissau, and MPLA in Angola may not match the nationalist leaflets that the Bolshevists 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 asking: including the role of women, that the “advancing” 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 too 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,” but was an expression of pure and simplistic Maoism. But, in fact, with all mistakes, this never approached the sheer dementia of Maoism in Portugal, heading 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 Amilcar Cabral (Palo Alto, Monthly Review, 1969). Cabral also wrote the foreword to Basil Davidson’s The Liberation of Guinea which has the most brilliant piece, by Dr. Amilcar Cabral. The Guardian, 1975.

(2) The phrase as analysis of MFA appears in Tony Cliff’s Portugal. At the Cross Roads, a specific double issue of Monthly Review (Dec. 1974). It is difficult 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 who is her name mentioned anywhere, though the analysis extends over 48 pages.

(3) The Struggle for Mozambique, pp. 147-50.
new forms of Revolution, Focus: Women, Youth, Peasants

Amiclar Cabral, back in the 1960's when Portuguese economy seemed to experience its greatest "development" with the multi-nationals moving into Portugal, said that Portugal, as the weakest link in world imperialism, was the most fertile ground for a "modernity". The only ones who seemed to listen to the African revolution were the Portuguese. By the publication of the census in 1968 and were against conscription as well for the African liberation as a whole.

The more foreign capital began to move into Porto, as a safe haven for profits and low-paid labour, the more the African liberation growth. At the time, Portugal was not facing the same economic crisis as the other European countries. The crisis led to the rise in the cost of living and in the consumption of goods, which was reflected in the prices of goods. The crisis affected all sectors of the economy, including agriculture, industry, and services.

The colonial war in Angola and Mozambique dragged on, and the economy continued to suffer. The economy was in a state of crisis, with inflation and unemployment rising. The government resorted to austerity measures, including cuts in public spending and tax increases, to reduce the budget deficit.

The poor living conditions, the lack of basic services, and the high cost of living were factors that contributed to the growing discontent among the population.

The Portuguese government tried to alleviate these problems through various measures, such as the implementation of social welfare programs and the introduction of new technologies in industry and agriculture. However, these efforts were insufficient to address the underlying issues of poverty and inequality.

The crisis led to a greater demand for change, as the population became more aware of the injustices and inequalities of the system. The African liberation movements in Angola and Mozambique played a significant role in this process, as they promoted the idea of self-determination and the right to national liberation.

The crisis also led to a greater mobilization of the Portuguese population, as people became more aware of the need to come together to address the challenges facing the country. The crisis was a catalyst for the growth of the movement for national liberation, which sought to end the colonial rule and achieve independence for Portugal's African colonies.

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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 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 “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.

(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.

(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.5 on “What Happens After?” in Marxism and Freedom, pp. 177-209.

(15) Along with Lenin’s Philosphic 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).