

# Overthrowing Fascism: Portugal and “The Right to Rebellion”

Forty years have passed since April 25, 1974.

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Forty years have passed since April 25, 1974.

Today throughout the country the Portuguese people will celebrate the anniversary of the overthrow of fascism.

The goal of the military coup that morning was to end the colonial war. But within a few hours the torrential participation of the people changed the direction and purpose of the movement. That the masses took to the streets pushed the captains of April to make a revolution in which the alliance between the people and the Armed Forces Movement played a decisive role.

It was a revolution unlike anything known about before that time. In 18 months, in the context of a class struggle that grew ever sharper, Portugal made greater historical advances than it had in the previous three centuries. Since the 1871 Paris Commune there had been nothing like the April Revolution in Western Europe for making such enormous social gains in such a brief period. No prior agrarian reform had ever been so ambitious.

How far would this revolution go?

The question became meaningless because the rupture of the People-AFM alliance, devised and caused by the Socialist Party and supported by the Social Democratic Party (and CDS, their appendix), opened the door to the victorious counterrevolution in November 1975.

It was not foreseen, however, that the destruction of the revolutionary heritage would be so rapid and profound.

✖ Time Magazine, 11.8.1975: The “Lisbon Troika” was then formed by Otelo de Carvalho, Costa Gomes and Vasco Gonçalves. Four decades later, the ruling class, which had been swept out, is again in the seat of power. The government that represents this class, headed by a politician with a neo-fascist bent, is imposing measures on the country that in some cases are so reactionary that not even the fascist leader António de Oliveira Salazar would have applied them.

How was it possible to change the correlation of forces which reversed the course of history,

dramatically impoverished the country and made it regress decades?

Many years will pass before this question has a rigorous answer.

But it is bitterness born of rejection of the present and a repudiation of the current fascist government policy that will turn the gigantic demonstrations in Lisbon and Porto today into a massive protest of the Portuguese people.

Many of the military and civilians who had significant participation in the unforgettable days of April 1974 have already died. They could not have imagined that Portugal would project in the world today its current image, that of a surreal country, ruled by a bourgeois dictatorship with a democratic façade, whose government's policy leads to a quagmire.

The gang that misgoverns the country has created a language that fits its devastating strategy. It's a strange lexicon aimed at numbing the conscience of the victims. They call wage theft "sacrifice" and a brutal tax a "solidarity contribution." The people's indignation is hypocritically referred to as the "understanding of the Portuguese."

In a submissive media, commentators resume and popularize this language. The majority criticizes the tool to defend "austerity" as a necessary evil. Some comply with the job of confusing the people with devotion and skill.

In the heterogeneous government of Passos and Portas, the contradictions are permanent, reflecting the incapacity of the pilot at the wheel, who behaves like a personal servant of German Chancellor Angela Merkel.



A difficult problem, by João Abel Manta, O Jornal, 11.7.1975

A rampant corruption has settled in the Ministries, at the summit of senior management and in the national bank. Scandalous favors and prizes to the epigones of power are the counterpart to "sacrifices" imposed on workers and pensioners.

The news was not surprising that Gaspar [Vitor Gaspar, former Finance Minister] will have a monthly salary of EUR 23 000 (\$30,000) from the IMF. It is a reward for services rendered to big capital by the former finance minister. Imposing ever-larger inequality has indeed been almost an obsession for Passos and Portas. Today, the fortunes of the 46 richest Portuguese equal 10 percent of the national GDP (Correio da Manhã, April 4).

In evaluating the cabinet, I must admit that some ministers and secretaries of state had been ordinary citizens above suspicion before they entered the government. But today, with their participation and complicity in the criminal work in progress, there is not one that is worthy of respect. Words like hypocrisy, greed, lack of culture, ignorance, selfishness, cruelty, cowardice are inadequate to describe the actions and character of these people.

On the eve of the anniversary of the Revolution the parties that control the Assembly of the Republic are demonstrating clearly their reactionary ideology by opposing giving a voice to a representative of the captains of April to address the commemorative session.

One day, hopefully not too far away, it should become transparent that they collectively behaved as enemies of the Portuguese people.



Portrait of Captain Salgueiro Maia, one of the heroes of the Carnation Revolution, centerpiece of the mural done by four artists of the Underdogs platform outside the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities (FCSH) of the New University of Lisbon

What is to be done?

The old Leninist question is relevant and very current in today's Portugal, looted and humiliated, in which even the Armed Forces, the Police and the National Guard are already expressing their displeasure on the steps of the Assembly of the Republic.

I believe that the seeds of April are germinating after its long hibernation. The workers have not forgotten the prodigious achievements of the revolutionary generation, in the days when Álvaro Cunhal and Vasco Gonçalves — two of Portugal's great twentieth-century political figures, made their fundamental contribution to the advancement of democratic and national revolution.

The tide of resistance floods in every week, despite the alienation of much of the population. These struggles, now permanent, daily, are amplified by the outstanding participation of the CGTP union confederation and Communists. Yet the popular protest is still inadequate. The response to intolerable social and economic oppression needs to reach a much greater amplitude.

The philosopher John Locke, in the seventeenth century, in his theory of the liberal state, had already defended the right of revolution when tyranny offends the human condition\*.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948 also opens the door to the rebellion of the people when the rights set out and guaranteed by it are violated.

This is what the Passos and Portas government does today, without punishment, even with defiant arrogance. But until when?

Vila Nova de Gaia, April 25, 2014

\*Locke affirmed an explicit 'right of revolution' in his Two Treatises of Government: "whenever the Legislators endeavor to take away, and destroy the Property of the People, or to reduce them to Slavery under Arbitrary Power, they put themselves into a state of War with the People, who are thereupon absolved from any farther Obedience, and are left to the common Refuge, which God hath provided for all Men, against Force and Violence. Whensoever therefore the Legislative shall transgress this fundamental Rule of Society; and either by Ambition, Fear, Folly or Corruption, endeavor to grasp themselves, or put into the hands of any other an Absolute Power over the Lives, Liberties, and Estates of the People; By this breach of Trust they forfeit the Power, the People had put into their hands, for quite contrary ends, and it devolves to the People, who have a Right to resume their original Liberty." (Second Treatise of Civil Government) [Tlaxcala's Note]

Translation from John Catalinotto, [Tlaxcala](#)

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