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The 25 April as seen from abroad

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Contents

THE 25 APRIL AS SEEN FROM ABROAD

BOOK REVIEW

COVER
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THE 25 APRIL AS SEEN FROM ABROAD

The Carnation Revolution in the West German press[1]

Antonio Muñoz Sánchez

After having been one of the Estado Novo's main allies during the Carnation Revolution, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) became involved like no other country in supporting the military and political sectors in favor of establishing a liberal democracy in Portugal.[2] The Bonn Republic's interest in the Portuguese transition was not limited to the sphere of high politics, but also extended to public debate. Portugal had never occupied so much space in the FRG media as it did during the eighteen months of the *Nelkenrevolution* (Carnation Revolution) and it never did again. Despite this, and in clear contrast to the numerous studies on German policy towards Portugal during the 1974–75 period, there is very little analysis of the media coverage of the Carnation Revolution in the FRG. What's more, the scope of these publications is modest. In some cases, it amounts to no more than an impressionistic approach to the subject; in others, the empirical basis used is scarce, and still, in others, the period studied is limited to the first months of the revolution.[3]

The following pages provide an overview of the treatment the Portuguese revolution received in the FRG press. The main West German newspapers and magazines are analyzed, whose ideological line ranges from anti-communist conservatism to philo-social-democratic progressivism. However, publications linked to political parties or solidarity groups with Portugal, which proliferated in Germany during the revolution, will not be considered, with a single and very specific exception. The text is organized

ABSTRACT

The revolution of 25 April aroused public interest in Portugal for the first time in West Germany. Compared to other countries, however, the interest was rather modest. None of the Federal Republic of Germany's newspapers sent a correspondent to Lisbon to report on the day-to-day events of the revolution, as did some European newspapers and even *Neues Deutschland*, the official organ of the German Democratic Republic's ruling party. Through the newspapers, the citizens of West Germany received a partial, superficial and biased view of the events in revolutionary Portugal. The treatment of *Nelkenrevolution* (the Carnation Revolution) in the West German press says almost as much about Portugal as it does about the peculiar political culture of the Bonn Republic, which the Cold War deeply influenced.

Keywords: Portugal, Carnation Revolution, Federal Republic of Germany, press.

RESUMO

O 25 de Abril na imprensa da República Federal da Alemanha

O 25 de Abril fez despertar pela primeira vez na Alemanha Oci-

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dental interesse público por Portugal. Comparado com outros países, pode até ser considerado um interesse discreto. Nenhum jornal da República Federal da Alemanha nomeou um correspondente em Lisboa para narrar o dia-a-dia da revolução, algo que fizeram alguns jornais europeus e até o *Neues Deutschland*, órgão oficial do partido que orientou os destinos da República Democrática Alemã. Através da leitura dos jornais, os cidadãos da Alemanha Ocidental receberam uma visão parcial, superficial e tendenciosa do 25 de Abril. O tratamento dado à *Nelkenrevolution* (Revolução dos Cravos) pela imprensa da República Federal da Alemanha fala quase tanto de Portugal como da peculiar cultura política da República de Bona, profundamente marcada pela Guerra Fria.

Palavras-chave: Portugal, 25 de Abril, República Federal da Alemanha, imprensa.

around the main themes of the socio-political dynamics of the revolution that interested German publications. The focus is on Portugal, leaving aside the empire and decolonization itself, to which German publications paid little attention.

THE DISCOVERY OF 'EUROPE'S POORHOUSE'... WHO WISHED TO CEASE BEING ONE

The intense political, military and economic cooperation with the Estado Novo, promoted by the FRG from 1960 onwards, did not bring an end to the centuries-old remoteness of Germans from Portugal. For the average citizen of the Republic of Bonn, Portugal remained a distant and unknown country, of which they knew little more than the platitudes in travel guides. The strong anti-communism permeating the political culture of the FRG also contributed to a benign and superficial image of Salazar's dictatorship, which would outlive its founder. While in other European countries, the new *Zeitgeist* driven by the 1968 revolution awakened in public opinion a widespread rejection of the regimes in the south of the continent and of the Portuguese colonial war, in the FRG this change was far less pronounced. Only the far-left reproached Chancellor Willy Brandt for maintaining military support given to Portugal in its African crusade, and it was only after the international scandal in 1973 following the revelation of a massacre carried out by Portuguese troops in the village of Wiriyamu in Mozambique that the media and a section of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) woke up to this uncomfortable reality, calling for an end to the brotherhood of arms with Lisbon. Much weaker was the criticism of the policy of good relations with Estado Novo, even considered by the SPD to be a 'mild' dictatorship in the process of liberalization. The opposition of the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) and its two major ideological close newspapers, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) and *Die Welt* – together with the liberal *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ), the only German newspapers with correspondents in the Iberian Peninsula, based in Madrid and only occasionally visiting Portugal, were practically admirers of the 'unwilling dictator', Marcelo Caetano.[4]

Most German journalists who arrived in Lisbon after 25 April 1974, were therefore to immerse not only in a complex process of political transition, but also in the reality of a country almost unknown to them. The festive and optimistic atmosphere they encountered strucked them powerfully and, in the chronicles of the first few weeks, they commented quite often on the contrast between the Portugal awakening to freedom and the preconceived idea of that nation in Germany. 'An unimaginable democratic enthu-

siasm has erupted throughout the country', said the SZ in an article about the political purges.[5] 'The Portuguese: a sad, melancholic , quiet and introverted people – will this impression [...] suddenly no longer be correct?', asked FAZ.[6] *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (NZZ), a prestigious Swiss liberal-conservative daily that is also good read in Germany, went further: what if the melancholic Portugal was nothing more than 'the result of a 48-year dictatorship' and the real country was the one that was now resurging impetuously, in fiery political discussions in the streets and in the peaceful demonstrations that were beginning to spring up all over the country?[7]

This widespread unrest wasn't just a response to the desire of the Portuguese people to make the most of their regained freedom. Behind it there was a harsh socio-economic reality, to which all German newspapers paid attention. 'No country in Europe [...] has a lower per capita income, higher infant mortality, lower consumption of animal fat or as many illiterates', said the liberal *Spiegel*.[8] It was enough to leave Lisbon to discover the 'poorhouse of Europe' (*Armenhaus Europas*), a very common expression in the German media at the time when referring to Portugal. The advances of modernization were undeniable, but the majority of the population had benefited little, wrote from Nazaré NZZ's special envoy. In Portugal, he noted with astonishment, there was still a 'people', that lower class with few resources and little education that had almost ceased to exist in Western countries. 'The people are clearly different from the middle classes. [...] Fishermen, workers, peasants can be immediately distinguished by the way they dress.'[9] Their daily lives were sometimes shocking. A *Die Welt* reporter described a scene in Porto, as follows:

> 'girls and young women, eight, twelve, sixteen or thirty years old, tirelessly scrubbing clothes and sheets in the dirty, oily waters of the Douro. Because there is no water in the four-storey caves, which they then trudge up with their heavy troughs full of "clean" laundry on their heads. [...] When was the last time I saw this? In Baghdad?'.[10]

The dictatorship was doubtless, the main culprit for the state of poverty in which a significant part of the Portuguese population found themselves; but it was worth questioning if this heartrending poverty, which the *Die Welt* journalist had also witnessed in the Alentejo, didn't have deeper roots, and the Estado Novo had merely perpetuated a centuries-old way of governing the country that simply overlooked the working classes: 'How many generations of this other Portugal did the old elite let rot this way?'.[11]

It was therefore unsurprising that the collapse of Estado Novo had awakened hopes among the Portuguese people for a more dignified life, which translated into protests for better wages, housing and education. 'The chorus of demands for social improvements is understandable', said NZZ, summarizing the comments in the German press about the wave of strikes and demonstrations.[12] An understanding that, in any case,

did not mean sympathy or even palpable interest. Except for a few far-left fringe publications, the German media didn't follow the social movements during the revolution. Very few reports looked at collective action beyond the Lisnave strikes or land occupations in 1975. With occasional exceptions in progressive newspapers such as *Frankfurter Rundschau* (FR), the protagonists were not given a voice, perhaps because German journalists felt that their opinions were too naïve.[13] 'When workers demand an increase in social welfare benefits, for them that is a communist goal', said *Die Zeit* with a touch of smugness.[14] 'The people know very little about politics', said *Die Welt*.[15] The conclusion drawn by readers of the West German newspapers was that the ailing Portuguese people were right in their complaints, but that didn't make them autonomous actors in the transition process, which was dominated by the military and the parties. And yet, the protests had enormous relevance, as they put the 'social question' at the center of the political agenda. In the words of FAZ in July 1974, 'if the young Portuguese democracy fails, it will probably not for political reasons or the colonial question, but because of economic causes'.[16]

EXCEPT FOR A FEW FAR-LEFT FRINGE PUBLICATIONS, THE GERMAN MEDIA DIDN'T FOLLOW THE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS DURING THE REVOLUTION.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE TRANSITION: SOCIALIZATION THROUGH POWERLESSNESS

Building a less unequal society was not a distant utopia in 1974 Portugal. This implied the *Handelsblatt*, the main business newspaper in the FRG, in an article published a few days after the military coup that analyzed the health of the Portuguese economy. According to the newspaper, the industrialization effort during the last period of Estado Novo had been robust, and despite the oil crisis and the lack of skilled labor, the conditions were ripe for the trend to continue.[17] This also seemed to be the hypothesis put forward by the new authorities, who, according to SZ, were betting on 'risk-free economic development' that would keep Portugal an attractive country for foreign investment, which was essential to maintain the pace of growth.[18] The appointment of the 'liberal-technocrat' Vieira de Almeida as Economy Minister in the Palma Carlos government reinforced this impression. For FAZ, Vieira de Almeida, former president of the German-Portuguese Chamber of Commerce and director of several banks, would undoubtedly support a strong increase in wages and endeavor to reduce the weight of the 'eight demigods of the Portuguese economy',[19] but with him the country would most assuredly not embark on a socializing experiments, as already demanded by some sectors of the political-military power.[20]

With the reins of economic policy in good hands, the German press followed from a distance the rising wave of strikes after the coup, and acknowledged the contribution of the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) to containing them during June.[21] Despite this, the conservative newspapers began to show their first doubts about the viability

of the government's social democratic strategy. Firstly, because of the lack of support from social actors. The trade unions were feeble, without leaders possessed of 'sufficient insight into economic processes to be able to act as realistic partners' whereas no democratic organization of entrepreneurs had emerged yet.[22] Thus, the authorities had to deal with a raucous far-left which sought to 'destroy the monopolies', dragging along part of the workers, whose ignorance of the economic reality prevented them from understanding the consequences for companies of an exaggerated rise in wages;[23] and with powerful right-wing circles which 'still held the country's economic apparatus in their hands' and could paralyze it.[24] Secondly, because of an increasingly unfavorable external context, not only due to the oil crisis, which was deeper than expected, but also to the imminent decolonization that would have a huge impact on Portuguese economy.[25]

In September 1974, *Handelsblatt* dedicated a special dossier to Portugal which, in addition to economic data and articles written by politicians and senior officials, presented the results of a survey among directors of German companies in Portugal, who expressed themselves without the caution of the former about the impact of the Revolution on foreign investment. Hoechts, Grundig, Bayer and other companies admitted that they had settled in Portugal because labor was very cheap and taxes low. The high profits more than compensated for the problems, such as the poor training of workers, the bad infrastructures (roads and telephone) and the 'unimaginable customs bureaucracy'. It was true that the profits had diminished in the previous months due to the huge rise in wages (from 50% to 100%), but even 'now that strikes are allowed' it was worth staying in Portugal, and only Leitz was considering moving part of its production to another country. In short, the end of the Estado Novo had made Portugal less attractive in the short term, but the European orientation that the new government was striving to implement also opened up interesting opportunities for the FRG to continue consolidating its position as the main foreign investor in Portugal, including the Sines industrial hub.[26]

However, this moderately positive mood faded with the socializing turn in economic policy after Spínola's resignation. The most pessimistic was *Die Welt*, which as soon as in December 1974 saw capitalism in danger, and with it democracy tout court, in Portugal:

> 'Nobody wants to defend those few families who [...] deliberately left the [...] people in poverty. Nor can anyone absolve Salazar´s dictatorship of the guilt of having prevented industrialization for a long time. [...] But why throw the baby out with the bathwater?'[27]

FAZ was more subtle: investment, especially foreign investment, had in fact decreased partly as a reaction to the radical rhetoric of some politicians; but actually 'no harsh measures were taken against private companies' and the nationalization program proposed by the Armed Forces Movement (MFA) was 'much more restrained than Mitterrand's'.[28] The situation was very fluid and patience was needed. One could not expect Portugal

to immediately install a functioning democracy 'after almost five decades of harsh dictatorship' in which 'economic power is concentrated in a few – a good twenty – not exactly democratically minded families'. If the MFA's social program could be implemented, those officials who supported a socialist model would 'also give up their reserves in favor of the rapid establishment of a pluralistic democracy'.[29]

The decision of the government in January 1975 to allow just a single trade union confederation, the communist driven Intersindical, put an end to the patience advised by FAZ, especially in the conservative press. For *Handelsblatt*, Lisbon's economic policy had been erratic since Spínola's resignation, and now it was definitely losing its way. With growth in 1974 having been much lower than expected, together with a slowdown in foreign investment, a decline in tourism and rising inflation, the government found no better response than to impose a high minimum wage and strengthen communist trade unionism. Layoffs and company closures were the predictable consequences. The announced new economic development plan (Plano Melo Antunes) explicitly recognized the role of private initiative in Portuguese economy, but fine words were of no use if investors felt that their businesses were threatened by the lack of legal security.[30] For its part, FAZ saw trade union 'unicity' as a giant step forward in the 'coup by installments' that the communists would be carrying out, taking advantage of the economic crisis and the political inexperience of the MFA.[31] Regarding the progressive press, it agreed with the Socialist Party (PS) in its claim that the PCP had imposed unity irregularly, but denied that the trade union movement would now inevitably fall into the hands of the communists.[32]

With the nationalizations and the arrests of businessmen and bankers that followed the failed antirevolutionary putsch on 11 March, conservative newspapers saw their bad omens confirmed. Three days after the coup, FAZ wrote: 'The situation is completely under control, said [the head of the security] Otelo de Carvalho in Lisbon. And he's right. A year after the fall of Caetano's dictatorship, the country is firmly on the grip of new dictators'.[33] In the same vein, *Handelsblatt* stated: 'After the latest coup attempt all the brakes against Portugal's slide towards a people's democratic governmental and economic system have been broken. The communists' tactic of letting the military do their job has proved promising'.[34] Only a few progressive media outlets were sympathetic to the nationalization of banks and key industries, which they did not consider as part of a communist plan to seize power, but as a measure consistent with the authorities' desire to push forward the creation of a welfare state.[35] However, the prevailing opinion was that Portugal was heading for the economic and political abyss because its leaders had failed to provide pragmatic answers to the 'social question'. *Die Welt* special envoy, who had been shocked by Portugal's backwardness and the boundless selfishness of its elites, lamented in April 1975: 'Herein may lie Portugal's tragedy: that for the sins of its old upper class, it must now pay with a new dictatorship. Can this be avoided? And how?'.[36]

THE MFA, THE PCP AND THE MODERATE PARTIES

The 'derailment' of the revolution from March 1975 onwards was less unexpected for readers of the west German's newspapers, the further to the right their trusted paper was situated. Since the very end of Estado Novo, when there were still no elements to form a full opinion on what was happening in Portugal, the views on the transition process had already been roughly defined according to the ideological line of each periodical. Faced with the lukewarm endorsement of the progressive daily newspapers for a peaceful revolution which, in their opinion, marked Portugal's difficult but certain path towards a European democracy[37], a chorus of skeptical voices was raised among their conservative counterpart regarding this leftist political experiment. On 29 April 1974, FAZ read: 'Portugal would not be of this world' if, after the fraternal celebration in the streets, there hadn't been strong political tensions that dragged the country 'into the chaos of a new dictatorship'.[38] On the same day, *Die Welt* argued: 'The situation seems calm, but this is deceptive. Many elements suggest that a political drama is slowly unfolding in Portugal'.[39] That the communists would be its main agitators and beneficiaries was as obvious as the dangerous repercussions outside Portugal. If the country fell into the hands of a popular front led by the PCP, it could mean the beginning of a red wave in Southern Europe, which would endanger continental balances, prophesied the Catholic *Rheinischer Merkur*.[40]

ON 29 APRIL 1974, *FAZ* READ: 'PORTUGAL WOULD NOT BE OF THIS WORLD' IF, AFTER THE FRATERNAL CELEBRATION IN THE STREETS, THERE HADN'T BEEN STRONG POLITICAL TENSIONS'.

This scaremongering, which had no basis other than ideological prejudice, abated, however, from the beginning of May, with the emergence of Spínola as the country's new strongman and the formation of a center-left government.[41] The 'aristocratic-looking' general was presented by the German press as the guarantee of an orderly democratic transition and a smooth decolonization, which for *Spiegel* was not free of irony given his long record of service to the dictatorship and the empire.[42] Spínola's first warnings, on television and at rallies across the country, about the risk of anarchy, as well as his calls for order, were met with positive comments.[43] After half a century of obscurity, Portugal was dazzled by the light of freedom and needed a paternal leader like the general, someone who was able to appease the hot tempers and show a people making its political debut the way to democracy. 'The Portuguese, inclined to political monologue, must first learn to dialog', argued *Die Zeit*.[44] For the German conservative press, Spínola was now the *conditio sine qua non* for equilibrium in Portugal. 'An assassination attempt or his sudden resignation could plunge the country into unpredictable chaos', said *Die Welt*.[45]

Unaware of the depth of the rift between the MFA and Spínola, the German press was surprised by the government crisis of July 1974. The MFA's rise to the forefront of politics was not even understood as an outright challenging of the president, and the

disagreements over decolonization were barely mentioned.[46] Like Spínola, the officers now emerging from anonymity showed concern for about the labor conflicts and the turmoil in the extreme left, as evinced by the creation of the Copcon, a military unit aimed at keeping public order led by Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho. The new government of the Prime Minister Vasco Gonçalves was therefore not going to bring any major changes, just a faster pace of transition. In the opinion of *FAZ*:

> 'The MFA men want to speed up the normalization of Portugal and the creation of democratic institutions. [...] They understand that military personnel in charge of more controversial ministries (Labor, Information, Internal Administration) may carry out unpopular but necessary policies with fewer problems than party politicians, who always have to think about their future voters'.[47]

Also for *Die Zeit*, 'the political line will be more or less the same, center-left'.[48] *Die Welt* introduced the discordant note: General Spínola had suffered a severe blow at the hands of young officers who admired Nasser's Egypt and wanted to implement in Portugal a political system incompatible with liberal democracy.[49]

In reality, the possibility that the military would not fulfil their commitment to hand over power to civilians was not even considered by German newspapers during 1974. This did not mean, however, that the road to a European-style democracy was open. After almost half a century of a demobilizing dictatorship, Portugal had come to freedom 'politically exhausted', wrote NZZ days after the coup of 25 April; it was a 'country without parties', where the only articulate political organization was the PCP, while the moderate-conservative camp exhibited a 'dangerous vacuum'.[50] It wouldn't be easy to fill that void, *FAZ* argued at the end of June in a piece entitled 'Portugal without a center'. By overthrowing the Estado Novo with the intention of establishing a Western democracy, the military carried out a 'Centrist coup', and yet, the piece added, 'the center is missing'.[51] The middle class was weak, the Church was discredited and the entire right-wing was tainted with Salazarism.

Meanwhile, the Communists continued to amass prestige and influence, toning down the demonstrations, demanding unity in the face of the risk of a backlash and loyally collaborating with Spínola: it was they, 'and not the idealistic Social Democrat Soares', who could help the most with decolonization thanks to their contacts with Moscow, pointed out *Die Welt*.[52] The striking moderation of Álvaro Cunhal's party after 25 April was the subject of analysis with a high level of speculation. Three news items from June 1974 are examples of this. For *Deutsche Zeitung*, the PCP was simply following the line set by Moscow, which, prioritizing the maintenance of good relations with Washington, 'has not the slightest interest in [...] social-revolutionary experiments on the western edge of Europe'.[53] For *Die Welt*, the party had not truly renounced its ultimate goals and, in the meantime, was taking advantage of the situation created by the collapse of Estado

Novo to infiltrate the state and the media.[54] For FAZ, the Communists improvising profusely. Equipped with a solid and disciplined organization, they had managed to present themselves as a factor of order; however, because their reluctance to abandon Leninist orthodoxy, unlike their Spanish comrades, they lacked a strategy rooted in the Portuguese reality. They felt powerful in their positions in the administration, but when it came to the elections, their real strength would prove to be meager.[55] Because, despite the *flower power* demonstrations[56], the explosion of protests and the proliferation of red flags, Portugal, the FRG newspapers agreed a few weeks after the fall of the Estado Novo, was still a conservative country.

DESPITE THE *FLOWER POWER* DEMONSTRATIONS, THE EXPLOSION OF PROTESTS AND THE PROLIFERATION OF RED FLAGS, PORTUGAL, THE FRG NEWSPAPERS AGREED A FEW WEEKS AFTER THE FALL OF THE ESTADO NOVO, WAS STILL A CONSERVATIVE COUNTRY.

Given the moderate parties' difficulty in overcoming their weakness, the FRG newspapers celebrated the involvement of their European political families. In June, they gave extensive coverage to the visit to Lisbon of delegations from the SPD and CDU, one of the participants declaring that it was important to have support from Europe and Germany 'so that the delicate little plant of democracy can grow'.[57] Although the details of this solidarity were not public, journalists correctly identified its main lines. In the piece 'Discreet help for comrades', SZ pointed out that as well as funding to make up for the PS's huge infrastructure shortfalls, the German Social Democrats were helping through the Friedrich Ebert Foundation to train cadres and, above all, they were asserting their weight from within the government,[58] a channel that lacked the French Socialists, whose desire to export their concept of left-wing unity to Portugal worried the SPD.[59] As for the European and German Christian Democrats, news of their activities was highly scarce in 1974. Having no relationship with sectors outside the regime before the Revolution, the conservative European family spent months looking for a partner in Portugal. When, at the end of the summer, it finally managed to get close to the Popular Democratic Party (PPD), of Francisco Sá Carneiro, the party turned social-democratic and severed relations. The European Christian Democrats had to settle for supporting from November onwards the modest Centro Democrático Social (CDS) of Diogo Freitas do Amaral, almost unknown to the German press until then.[60]

The fall of Spínola had a strong impact on the media in the FRG. For the first time since the days following 25 April, the newspapers put Portugal on their front pages, and devoted numerous chronicles, opinion pieces and cartoons to the Portuguese political crisis. The two main conservative dailies reproduced the President's apocalyptic resignation speech in full and aligned themselves with his arguments. For *Die Welt*, Spínola was paying for being the Trojan horse that brought the communists into the government.[61] For months, the PCP and part of the MFA had conspired against the president and finally defeated him by making up a reactionary plot. For the daily,

the PCP's contempt for the general went back a long way: 'The communists couldn't forgive Spínola for having sided with Franco in the [Spanish] civil war. The communists never forget these "blunders"'. Leaning on the shoulders of the MFA, the PCP would try to inch its way to power, although it was now confronted with national and international forces that, after the 'communist coup of 28 September', had become aware of the risk for democracy in Portugal.[62] *FAZ* was less red-hot. Spínola's departure opened up space for the PCP and the radical sectors of the MFA, but Portugal was not in a 'pre-revolutionary situation'. If President Costa Gomes succeeded in easing tensions, the country would have a smooth run to elections, which in turn would cool down the revolutionary impulse: 'There is certainly a lack of social center, but that doesn't mean there is a lack of political center. The chances of the moderate parties [...] are not bad'.[63] In the center-left dailies, Spínola's resignation was also viewed with concern, but not enough to question their optimistic vision of the transition, with their articles stressing the moderate and conciliatory nature of the new president Francisco da Costa Gomes and pointing out that, for the most part, the MFA officers were pragmatists who wanted nothing more than the rapid establishment of a European democracy.[64] In the same vein, *Spiegel* wrote a few weeks later: 'Seen up close, there is nothing left of the much-vaunted vision of a red Portugal'.[65]

THE MODERATE POLITICAL FORCES, ON WHICH SO MANY HOPES WERE PINNED IN THE ELECTIONS, WERE THE TARGET OF INCREASING ATTENTION AFTER THE FALL OF SPÍNOLA.

The moderate political forces, on which so many hopes were pinned in the elections, were the target of increasing attention after the fall of Spínola. Particularly the PS, which, after months of falling under the radar, was catapulted into the media spotlight in mid-October, on the occasion of Willy Brandt's visit to Portugal. Ever accompanied by Mário Soares, the SPD president was welcomed by Costa Gomes and Vasco Gonçalves, which awarded the visit an almost official character. Brandt presented himself as the spokesman for a progressive Europe that sympathized with the revolution and wanted to contribute to its goals of freedom and social justice. In his statements and meetings in Lisbon and Porto, he expressed optimism about Portugal's future, assured that European solidarity would not be lacking, pointed out the PS' key role in building democracy and, while advising his comrades against an alliance with the PCP, stated that he identified no communist threat in the country.[66] This courtesy visit by the former chancellor, who thus was returning to the political forefront after a traumatic resignation in May, was widely applauded by the German press, which had been feeling for some time that democratic Europe lacked a greater commitment to Portugal. For *Die Welt*, Brandt had 'achieved something truly exemplary', which ought to inspire European Christian Democrats and Liberals.[67]

The PPD's refusal to align with any European political family other than the Socialist one, while at the same time being ignored by it, according to the wishes of the PS, left Sa Carneiro's party without external support, which also affected its visibility. Also,

among the German media, that showed scarce interest in PPD's congress at the end of November.[68] The exact opposite happened with the PS, which, with its congress a few days later, consolidated itself in the eyes of the German press as the great white hope of Portuguese democracy. The PS was still the 'party with the worst organization'; it defined itself as a working-class party but had no workers in its ranks; it proclaimed itself Marxist and hostile to the principles of European social democracy, from which, however, it expected all kinds of support. Leaving aside the weaknesses and contradictions, the key question was that at its congress the PS had reappointed Mário Soares and his team of moderates and had made a public show of strength, while at the same time marking a clear distance from the PCP. This reaffirmation by the Socialists a few months before the elections was also noticed by the conservative press, which since 25 April had been less than enthusiastic about Soares, a somewhat melancholy politician, and his veteran comrades. Now there was no doubt that the PS would achieve a great result in the elections, benefiting from the fact that 'the parties of the center and right are in agony, just like in France after the fall of Vichy', said the *Tagespiegel*.[69]
At the end of January 1975, in an atmosphere of enormous tension due to the controversy surrounding trade union unity, the CDS held its congress in Porto, accompanied by dozens of delegates from European conservative parties, pleased to finally be able to show their flag in Portugal after many months of disorientation.[70] The largest delegation came from Germany and was headed by former minister and leader of the European Christian Democrats Kai Uwe von Hassel, increasing interest in the congress among the FRG media, who became witnesses and sounding boards for dramatic days. The violent riots in Porto led by left-wing activists, the siege of the Palácio de Cristal and the kidnapping of delegates throughout the night, which was only ended due to the intervention of an elite army unit, had a significant impact on the German media, among which the idea spread that the Portuguese road to democracy was becoming very narrow and dangerous.[71]

THE CONFLICTED ROAD TO THE ELECTIONS

On the last day of January 1975, *Berliner Extra-Dienst*, a far-left newspaper edited in West Berlin, published the article 'How the coup in Portugal will take place, when, why and by whom'.[72] The text accused the FRG government of planning, together with the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) and Portuguese reactionary sectors, including the PS, an operation that would take place in March and whose aim was to return power to Spínola and put an end to the democratic revolution.[73] Accustomed to attacks from the alternative left in the previous months for its support for the *counter-revolutionary* Soares, the SPD would not have paid the slightest attention to this delusional spy story, invented by a marginal publication, had it not been for the fact that, a few days later, the 'news' of the possible coup was reproduced by some Lisbon newspapers in the PCP's orbit, damaging in this way West German's image in Portugal. Good aware that *Berliner Extra-*

Dienst was financed by the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and that its editorial line was influenced by the East Berlin government, this and other articles published in February increased the SPD's suspicion, fueled in turn by their PS comrades, that the PCP had embarked on a strategy to seize power and was counting on some support from the other side of the Iron Curtain.[74] That such a dramatic turnaround in the revolution seemed now plausible was due to the weight that the advocates of a Portuguese-style socialism had gained in the MFA, which they preached among peasants of the country's hinterland in politicization campaigns, earning the criticism and derision of the German conservative newspapers, while the progressives treated them with understanding and sympathy.[75]

The West German press reacted to 11 March with astonishment and incomprehension. An operation 'imaginable in a banana republic, but not in a country with extensive war experience', wrote FAZ.[76] How could 'a man as militarily experienced and not entirely politically unsophisticated as Spinola be involved in such a *Desperado-Aktion?*', wondered NZZ.[77] 'A gesture as heroic as dilettante', pointed out *Die Welt*.[78] Everything had been precipitated by fear of an imminent communist coup, confessed the four coup officers who sought refuge in the FRG Embassy in Lisbon, in front of which a protest meeting was held.[79] The coup attempt had a boomerang effect, serving as the perfect excuse for the radicals to give a huge boost to their plan to establish a socialist regime, weeks before an election in which the PCP had almost no chance.[80] 'Portugal has embarked on a middle path between the so-called "Western sphere" and the Eastern Bloc', wrote *Die Zeit*.[81] However, there was no consensus on the inevitability of Portugal heading towards these unknown horizons, not even in the same newspaper. Thus, while an editorial in FAZ stated that 'we are witnessing the emergence of a popular democracy. It is very reminiscent of Czechoslovakia in 1948',[82] the Iberian correspondent was less assured. On 11 March, he found himself in northern Portugal, gauging the pre-campaign atmosphere. The radio news about the coup had been received in this conservative and populated region with little interest as had all the information coming from distant and overwrought Lisbon. When that profound Portugal would speak at the elections, the reporter gave to understand, the Revolution would be calm down.[83]

THE WEST GERMAN PRESS REACTED TO 11 MARCH WITH ASTONISHMENT AND INCOMPREHENSION. AN OPERATION 'IMAGINABLE IN A BANANA REPUBLIC, BUT NOT IN A COUNTRY WITH EXTENSIVE WAR EXPERIENCE', WROTE *FAZ*.

The creation of the Revolutionary Council, the nationalizations, the war of nerves surrounding the formation of the new government, the proclamation of socialism as the goal of the transition, the MFA-Party Pact, the delay in the elections, the banning of some parties, were narrated in the German newspapers, with varying degrees of intensity and drama, as battles in the open war between radicals and moderates, in which the latter lost one position after another, but preserved the fundamental thing,

the elections. An election in which the PS of Mário Soares, 'the man who speaks against the fists', the natural leader of the moderates, 'by far the most popular politician in Portugal', someone who drew crowds to his rallies, might achieve a fantastic result by taking advantage of the anti-communist wave that was rising in Portugal.[84]

The election result was unanimously interpreted as a plebiscite against the PCP and in favour of Western democracy. 'For those who don't want a popular democratic regime to take root in Portugal, the elections couldn't have gone better', pointed out FAZ.[85] 'This is a clear rejection of the PCP, which for a year has tried, not with tenacity, flattery and intrigue alone, to come to power on the shoulders of officials', wrote NZZ.[86] *Die Welt*, which in previous weeks seemed to be narrating the establishment of a Soviet Union colony on the Iberian Peninsula, enthusiastically proclaimed: 'With admirable citizen discipline, millions of Europeans have decided for the European way and for party democracy in Portugal.[87] For its part, FR mocked the catastrophists: 'To those who saw already Lisbon as an outpost of the Warsaw Pact, a Stalin reincarnated as the ruler of internal politics on the banks of the Tagus, we must now say that it was probably the fault of the [anti-communist] glasses' with which they interpret the Portuguese transition.[88]

All the newspapers finally agreed that the election result was a milestone in the revolution in favor of the moderates. However, the determination of the radicals and the advantage they had gained recently were so great that victory for the moderates could not be taken for granted. Whether this was at least probable depended largely on the support they would receive from the European democracies, support which until then had been scarce and dubious.[89]

THE FIGHT FOR PORTUGAL'S SOUL AND EUROPEAN 'PEACEFUL INTERVENTION'

The idea that Western Europe might positively influence the political transition in Portugal was not new. After the collapse of the Estado Novo, the European Economic Community (EEC) and the member countries, were aware that the new authorities in Lisbon faced gigantic challenges with reduced forces, and already in the days that followed they expressed to Mário Soares, the Foreign Minister *in pectore*, during the European tour he undertook at Spínola's request, their willingness to help Portugal.[90] What caught the attention of the German press in the following months was precisely the failure to deliver on the announced solidarity. In September, *Die Zeit* dedicated the article 'Not a single coin from Europe' to the subject. While the transition in Portugal was getting more complicated by the day, the EEC countries were looking the other way. 'Our European friends have left us down', said one PS leader. In Lisbon, disappointment was very widespread: 'We expected immediate help from abroad. But neither the US nor Europe recognized the efforts to end the war and establish democracy'. The United States at least had President Nixon's resignation as an excuse

> 'and the anti-American statements made by some government groups. But Europe's reticence is not understood in Lisbon. Why is the European Council of Ministers hesitat-

ing to announce its willingness to negotiate an association agreement that would pave the way for Portugal to become a full member of the European Community?'.[91]

Concerns about European inaction grew in intensity after Spínola's resignation. This explains the German newspapers' applause for Willy Brandt's visit to Portugal, at a time when the United States seemed resigned to the communist advance. But little had changed since then. Too busy with their own internal problems triggered by the oil crisis, the EEC countries continued to fail to mobilize for Portugal. At the same time, in Portugal, the economic crisis and political radicalization were feeding each other in a spiral that threatened to overflow, as *Handelsblatt* stated in January. European governments and the EEC itself, the daily argued, should wake up once and for all to the fact that their help was essential to stabilize Portugal. If the country were left to its own devices, Europe would lose 'much more than a market'.[92]

As the PCP's influence grew, so did speculation about Moscow's intentions in the context of the Portuguese crisis. The further to the right the newspaper´s line, the greater the concern. For *Die Welt*, the 'communist coup' of 28 September had dispelled any doubts that the PCP had been working since the end of the dictatorship to establish a new regime of the opposite variety, with the support of the Eastern Bloc.[93] *Tagesspiegel* was concerned about the presence of Soviet spies in Lisbon and the broadcasting of Soviet programs on Portuguese Television.[94] More substantively, NZZ understood that Moscow ruled out Portugal leaving the Western Bloc, but could envision a 'radical-socialist experiment' like Allende's in Chile.[95] In the same vein, FAZ's Iberian correspondent wrote from Havana, where he sounded out the Castro regime regarding to the Portuguese revolution, that Moscow looked very favorably on the advance of the PCP and any problems that might create for Western Europe.[96]

Among the EEC countries, the FRG was one of the most concerned about the drift of the Portuguese transition, which confirmed its most pessimistic prognosis. Since the beginning of the revolution, the social-liberal coalition in Bonn had aligned with the skeptical view of the conservative newspapers and especially FAZ, but it was only in the fall of 1974 that its optimistic official discourse began to show slight cracks, which the press did not fail to take good note. Lisbon complained about the lack of European solidarity, but the FRG was also bothered that Portugal hadn't responded to its offers of aid since May.[97] While the Portuguese embassy in Bonn had been unoccupied for months and there were fears that Portuguese emigrants in the FRG would not be allowed to vote in the elections, Portugal opened an embassy in the GDR and an East German delegation visited Lisbon.[98] After the conflict over trade union unicity, the Bonn government already saw it as likely that the PCP was preparing an operation to foil the elections and take control of the country. The strategy of tension, which also fed on fake news such as the supposed reactionary conspiracy supported by 'imperialist' countries, was for the FRG all too reminiscent of the tactics

used by the Communists after the Second World War to stifle democracy in the countries of Eastern Europe.

The certainty that the communists in Lisbon were about to storm the Winter Palace in the face of Europe's passivity and the absolute resignation of the United States explains Bonn's nervous reaction to 11 March. In response to an SOS sent by Mário Soares in the following days, Helmut Schmidt's government made public its concern about the situation in Portugal, which meant a turnaround in the official position that caught the attention of the German media. In the piece 'Memories of Prague', *Spiegel* wrote: 'And so it came about that a leading representative of the Social Democrats, who had so far silently accepted the Communist Party advance in Lisbon, suddenly spoke on German television about the threat of a "communist dictatorship" and the burden on the entire détente process'.[99] The FRG then tried to promote a joint European response combining some pressure on the Portuguese authorities and generous economic aid, but the initiative failed because the other governments 'didn't see the situation as serious'.[100] FAZ criticized European disunity and blamed the left, from which it excluded the SPD, for irresponsibly romanticizing the revolution.[101] The criticism was directed above all at the French left, which had made their country suffer from 'portugalite', as the *Tagesspiegel* ironically put it: 'any polemic in Lisbon provokes hysterical disputes in Paris'.[102]

THE CERTAINTY THAT THE COMMUNISTS IN LISBON WERE ABOUT TO STORM THE WINTER PALACE IN THE FACE OF EUROPE'S PASSIVITY AND THE ABSOLUTE RESIGNATION OF THE UNITED STATES EXPLAINS BONN'S NERVOUS REACTION TO 11 MARCH.

Faced with the inaction of his European partners, and convinced that Lisbon might become the graveyard of the détente between the West and the Eastern Bloc, which was vital to the FRG's interests, Chancellor Schmidt then decided to organize a German aid program in the hope that it could have some impact, given the deep economic crisis in Portugal and the concern its authorities were showing about an external boycott following the wave of nationalizations.[103] In a matter of days, a detailed plan for investments in all sectors of the Portuguese productive system was conceived, worth 70 million marks, as well as a series of proposals to strengthen Portugal's ties with the EEC. The plan was presented with great fanfare on the eve of the election campaign.[104] Before it was set in motion, the initiative had already achieved one goal: to show Portuguese voters that, unlike the United States, Europe was supportive and would not abandon them to their fate.

The Bonn government interpreted the election result in the same way as the press in the FRG: Portugal had voted for a European democracy and democratic Europe should now show itself to be up to the task. 'It is politically unforgivable that Europe left the new Portugal alone with its problems in the first year after the revolution. This mistake must not be repeated', wrote an SPD MP in *Vorwärts*, the party's official newspaper.[105] Following the path opened up by Bonn, in June, the EEC approved its own aid program for Portugal, the implementation of which would be subject to Lisbon's respect

for democratic standards, which in practice meant that it would not use the money to finance nationalized companies and hand over shares of power to the parties that won the elections. In addition to the conditional economic aid, there was direct pressure on Portuguese leaders, especially the president and prime minister, as well as intervention in Moscow and Washington so that they wouldn't interfere in European strategy, in one case abandoning the support for the PCP and in the other Kissinger's intention to expulse Portugal from NATO and isolate the country. The FRG was the protagonist of the already well-studied involvement of the EEC countries in Portugal during the so called 'Hot Summer' of 1975, mobilizing its enormous economic and political weight.[106]

A fundamental aspect of Europe's 'peaceful intervention' in Portugal was its public and transparent nature. Except for some more problematic actions, such as a plan for military intervention in Portugal in the event of a PCP takeover, all the initiatives took place in broad daylight and were widely publicized. A prime example were the meetings of the Committee for Support and Solidarity with Democracy and Socialism in Portugal, set up in August 1975 on the initiative of Willy Brandt, in which all the European socialist leaders took part.[107] The aim was, on the one hand, to increase external pressure on the Portuguese authorities and, on the other, to empower the moderates in Lisbon, especially PS leader Mário Soares and MFA general and now Foreign Minister Ernesto Melo Antunes.

THE GERMAN PRESS SAW IN THE EUROPEAN ACTION THE MATERIALIZATION OF THE SUPPORT FOR THE PORTUGUESE DEMOCRATS THAT IT HAD BEEN DEMANDING FOR A LONG TIME, AND AGREED UNRESERVEDLY THAT ECONOMIC AID SHOULD BE USED AS A WAY OF PUTTING PRESSURE ON LISBON.

The German press saw in the European action the materialization of the support for the Portuguese democrats that it had been demanding for a long time, and agreed unreservedly that economic aid should be used as a way of putting pressure on Lisbon. Regarding the debate in Brussels on conditional aid, *FAZ* stated: 'The EC is not an association of wealthy nations that wants to offer so called humanitarian aid to Portugal, but an association that throws its political weight into the balance through its economic strength'.[108]

In the context of extreme political polarization during the Hot Summer, the editorial line of the German newspapers on the revolution lost the plurality it had maintained until then and became homogenized, aligning itself completely with the sectors antagonistic to the revolutionary process. For the progressive newspapers, which for months had sustained a position of openness towards the socialist experiment in Portugal, the attitude of the MFA and the PCP after the April elections was indefensible for any democrat. Regarding the *República* affair, *FR* argued:

> '[The MFA is] about to cross a line where it will lose the solidarity of precisely those European socialists [...] who have not forgotten that the Western democracies treated

> the Salazar regime as a friend for decades. [The] understanding for the bitter experiences of the Portuguese anti-fascists cannot go as far as having democratic Europe applauds or even helps when Portuguese politicians [...] dictate to their compatriots what they should write, read and therefore also think'.[109]

Weeks later, SZ wrote: 'It seems that for the time being [Otelo] does not yet have the power to lock up opponents in bullrings or sports stadiums, following the Chilean model. But could he soon become an autocrat?'[110] Whether it was the 1st of May, Oriana Fallaci's interview with Álvaro Cunhal when the Communist leader gave no relevance at all to the recent elections, the anti-communist violence that exploted in the North, the huge rallies organized by the PS against the PCP and the lefties in the MFA, or the fall of the Prime Minister Vasco Gonçalves, the interpretation of the German press as a whole did not differ in essence from the propaganda that the socialists, above all, were producing in the midst of the battle for hegemony.[111]

The massive mobilization of European socialism, with the SPD at its head, in favor of the moderate forces in Lisbon, would receive harsh criticism from the other side of the Iron Curtain and especially from the GDR, the country most committed to the PCP and with the greatest interest in the policy of détente suffering a setback in Portugal.[112] For the East Berlin regime, the Bonn government was interfering in the internal affairs of the Iberian nation, trying to misrepresent the will of the people, and thereby violating the spirit of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, signed by all the heads of state or government at the end of July 1975 in Helsinki. In order to denounce German 'imperialism' in Portugal, the East Berlin medias no longer needed to invent news as they had months before. All they had to do was reproduce the SPD's own declarations, the resolutions of the Committee for Support and Solidarity with Democracy and Socialism in Portugal, or the articles in the FRG's newspapers, which applauded the international pressure on Lisbon in defense of the cause of *true democracy*.[113]

But in the FRG there wasn't total support for the external offensive against the revolution either. Loud criticism came from the extreme left, the same left that had for years pointed the finger at Chancellor Brandt for his lack of commitment to Portuguese democrats. The fall of the regime on 25 April 1974 was greeted with enthusiasm by this 'extra-parliamentary opposition' and in many cities solidarity committees with the revolution sprang up. Hundreds of young Germans traveled to Portugal to help 'build socialism' in the districts of Lisbon or on the Alentejo latifundia.[114] One of them was the journalist Günter Wallraff, who during the Hot Summer traveled from a cooperative in Alcácer do Sal to Braga, where, posing as a neo-Nazi, infiltrated far-right circles and reached Spínola, for whom he laid a trap that ruined his political career.[115] The far-left campaign against the SPD's policy in Portugal reached its zenith in September 1975, when hundreds of activists, including Daniel Cohn-Bendit, boycotted an event in Frankfurt attended by Willy Brandt and Mário Soares, the aim of which was to celebrate the

triumph of solidarity among European socialists.[116] Sympathetic to this extreme left was perhaps the German television journalist who asked Brandt in December 1975, when the revolution was already defeated, 'whether a party really has the right to interfere in another country as the SPD has done in Portugal in recent months'.[117]

CONCLUSIONS

The Carnation Revolution sparked public interest in Portugal among West Germans for the first time. Still, compared to other countries, this interest was rather discreet. No FRG periodic sent a correspondent to Lisbon to report on the day-to-day of the revolution, unlike some European newspapers and even *Neues Deutschland*, the official organ of the GDR's ruling party. The coverage of the Portuguese transition by the West German press did not stand out for the volume or variety of information presented, nor for the refined and in-depth analysis of the economic, social and political dynamics at play, nor the critical and political impartiality regarding the events narrated. By reading the publications, the citizens of the FRG received a biased and superficial view of the revolution. The cause of all this must be sought – it cannot be otherwise – in the eye of the observer and not in the supposed complexity of the observed. The coverage of the *Nelkenrevolution* in the FRG press says as much about Portugal as it does about the peculiar political culture of the Bonn Republic, which is deeply conservative and marked by the Cold War.

The image of the Estado Novo in the FRG goes a long way towards explaining the reaction to its unexpected collapse. At the beginning of the 1970s, the German media presented the Iberian regimes as 'soft dictatorships' in the process of liberalization. Due to its economic backwardness and its African vocation, Portugal seemed to be the country least prepared for democracy. In contrast, Spain, who was going through a period of spectacular development, had a solid middle class and a strong Europeanist vocation. Some German publications sent correspondents to Madrid to cover the tectonic changes in Spain that would lead to the emergence of a European democracy after Franco's death. The scarce news about the much less attractive Portugal reached the FRG mainly through these correspondents. In his chronicles, Caetano was presented as a hope for the small Iberian nation. After four decades of stagnation, this cultured, liberal professor was determined to develop, decolonize and democratize Portugal, following Spain's example.

The military coup on 25 April 1974 put an end to this development, which was seen not only as desirable, but also without any realistic alternative. Consistent with this position, the Iberian correspondents who arrived from Madrid and the special envoys from conservative newspapers who rushed to Lisbon were not at all infected by the atmosphere of euphoria in Portugal. For them, the coup meant above all the destruction of a system that guaranteed the country's stability. With no objectives other than ending the war, and with no experience other than that of the military world, the young

officers who took power in Lisbon had opened not so much the doors to democracy, but a gigantic and dangerous Pandora's box. For their part, the progressive dailies unreservedly welcomed the end of the dictatorship and sympathized with the new ruling class in Lisbon, which was as politically innocent as it was well-intentioned. After almost half a century under a dictatorship, the long-suffering Portuguese people had every right to build their own democratic future, and the West had a moral and political obligation to help in this process, not least as compensation for having supported the Estado Novo until the very last day.

One skeptical, the other sympathetic, the German press agreed that the end point of the transition should be the establishment of a liberal democracy in Portugal. What the newspapers endeavored to do was narrate the difficult path to that goal or, eventually, its failure. But none of them sought to simply understand and convey the internal logic of this transition. Despite recognizing very early on that the 'social question' would have a fundamental weight in the political process, the newspapers did not follow the social movements. Their focus was on high politics, the power struggles in which the military and parties participated, and whose relationship with social dynamics was almost ignored. When the transition 'went off the rails' and became a potential danger to the West, the press in the FRG positioned itself as a bloc against the military-political power in Lisbon and applauded the internal and external actors who sought to defeat it. Once the socialist revolution failed and Portugal achieved 'normalization', interest in the country in West German political and media circles almost completely disappeared. What remained in the memory of German newspaper readers was not so much the revolution but a hectic transition that was fortunately channeled for the good of Portugal and free Europe. RI

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