

UNITA National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, the other rightist movement (see FNLA)

European and International Organisations referred to in the text

CFDT French trade union federation (of radical Catholic origins)
CIA United States Central Intelligence Agency
CMT World Federation of Catholic Trade Unions
CSC Belgian Federation of Catholic Trade Unions
FRAP Spanish radical Maoist Party
HACIUTEX French Health and Bank Workers' Union, affiliated to the CFDT
ICFTU International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
IWC Institute for Workers' Control (Britain)
NUM National Union of Mineworkers (Britain)
TUC Trades Union Congress (Britain)

Brief Calendar of the Portuguese Revolution

23 April 1974 In Edward VII Park in the centre of Lisbon, Otelo de Carvalho gave final instructions, in sealed envelopes, to the MFA men secretly responsible for the whole of the Portuguese territory.

24 April At 10.00 pm, Otelo de Carvalho, responsible for the operational section of the central coordination commission in the MFA is back at his secret command post at the Pontinha barracks.

25 April At 12.25 am, José Afonso's song, *Grândola vila Morena*, gives the signal for the insurrection during the Radio Renascença broadcast: The MFA units were on the march throughout the entire country.

At 3.00 am, the centre of Lisbon, its airport and strategic points and the transmitters of Portuguese Radio and Television at Lumiar are occupied by the MFA units.

At 4.20 am the MFA's first communique is broadcast by Radio Clube Portugues: "*This is the command post of the Armed Forces' Movement...*"

At 9.00 am, MFA armoured cars occupy the Place du Commerce and the district where the Ministries are.

At 11.00 am, the President of the Council of State, Marcelo Caetano, takes refuge in the GNR barracks (Republican National Guard) in Largo do Carmo Square, which the MFA immediately beleaguers.

At 4.30 pm, an emissary from Caetano visits Spínola to ask him to take over his position. Spínola's reply: "I have *had nothing to do with today's events*. I must be given a mandate by these men who are besieging the Government. I will only accept a mandate from a senior officer with at least the rank of colonel..."

At 7.45 pm, a communique announces the surrender of Caetano. A National Security Junta presided over by Spínola is invested with powers of government.

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Government, Melo Antunes organises the rescue of Otelo de Carvalho. The MFA takes control of the situation.

"In the studios at Lumiar, at about 3.00 am, Major Eanes appears. According to the statements made by those people who opened the doors for him, he said that he was *not there in his capacity as Director of Programmes* (which he was indeed in charge of), but as a *representative of the President of the Republic*, (General Spínola), with a view to placing television under military supervision. Any business to be undertaken must take into account his authorisation or his orders alone.

"In his turn, the commandant of the GNR forces occupying the RTP wavelengths describes the hierarchical route to be followed: Major Eanes must contact the Minister Sanchez Osorio, who will give his order to the General Command of the GNR; he will then pass them on to Captain Andrade e Sousa, who will allow their execution only after contacting Major Eanes again." (Report of the Commission of Inquiry into 28 September, *O Relatório para o 28 de Setembro*, paragraph 69).¹

The people put up barricades against the forces of the coup d'état. Final resignation of Spínola.

General Costa Gomes holds the functions both of President of the Republic and of Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces.

Formation of the Third Provisional Government, presided over by Vasco Gonçalves.

14-20 January 1975 The quarrel over having one single trade union body: PCP, MDP, MBS demonstrate in favour of a united trade union. PS and PPD take up opposing positions. The MFA pronounces itself to be in favour of one union, the Intersyndical.

The Provisional Government ratifies this position, by introducing a bill.

11 March 1975 *Military show of strength by Spínola*: The Air Force, leaving the Parachute Troops' College Base at Tancos, bomb and attack the Lisbon Artillery Regiment, the RALIS. The people are mobilised around its barracks. Failure of the Spínolista putsch. Lieutenant-Colonel Firmino Miguel and Major Sanchez Osorio, chief organisers of the plot, take to flight. General Spínola is driven to the airport by Otelo de Carvalho, and asks fascist Brazil for asylum, passing through Spain on the way.

The MFA's coordinating commission becomes the Council of the Revolution.

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Captain Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho is elected by the central coordinating commission commanding the Lisbon Military Region, with the rank of general. The MFA units will regroup around the Cova de Moura barracks.

General Costa Gomes is elected General Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces.

1 May 1974 Gigantic popular demonstration throughout Lisbon, on the MFA's and Otelo de Carvalho's initiative.

15 May General Spínola is appointed President of the Republic.

16 May *First Provisional Government*, presided over by Palma Carlos (PPD). Minister of Defence: Lieutenant-Colonel Firmino Miguel, Spínola's right hand man.

8 June Arrest of Saldanha Sanches, number two in the MRPP and editor of its newspaper *Luta Popular*, future author of *The MRPP, Instrument of the Counter-Revolution*.

The Three Spínolista coups

10-17 July 1974 Show of strength by Spínola with the Ministers: resignation of Palma Carlos and the PPD Ministers with a view to forming a strengthened "Spínolista" government, Firmino Miguel at its head.

12 July The MFA forms the COPCON: "The Operational Command of the Continent": *the MFA's military defence force*, under the direction of Otelo de Carvalho.

18 July *2nd Provisional government*, presided over by Vasco Gonçalves, appointed by the MFA Assembly. The latter, refusing Firmino Miguel, offers Spínola the choice between Major Melo Antunes and Colonel Vasco Gonçalves. Spínola chooses the second, judging Antunes to be too "Marxist".

26 August At Algiers, Mario Soares signs the agreement, recognising the independence of Guinea-Bissau.

10 September Speech by Spínola appealing to the "silent majority".

28 September Presidential show of strength by Spínola, who arrogates full powers to himself with the support of the GNR and the Tancos paratroopers, summons Otelo de Carvalho and Vasco Gonçalves to the Belem Palace and has them put under arrest by Lieutenant-Colonel Firmino Miguel.

At the Sao Bento Palace, seat of the MFA Assembly and of the

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The rise of popular power

- 25 April 1975 The first free elections held in Portugal since the 1926 coup d'état. PS 38% of the votes, PPD 26%, PCP 13%, MDP 4%. (The extreme left-wing parties between them took about 4% of the votes: the UDP, MES, FSP and LCI.) Formation of the Fourth interim government, presided over by Vasco Gonçalves.
- March Ordinances on the nationalisation of the banks.
- April The Oliveira Batista ordinances on Agrarian Reform.
- 19 May Beginning of the conflict between the editorial staff and the Workers' Commission of the newspaper *República*.
- June Radio Renascença is occupied by a Workers' commission incited by the UDP.
- 8 July The MFA's handbook on popular power and the Workers' Commissions.
- 9 July *República* is published once again, directed by the Workers' Commission (with UDP tendencies) and an editor appointed by the MFA.
- 11 July Resignation of the Socialist Ministers: Fourth provisional Government's crisis.
- 12 July Formation of a National Secretariat of Workers' Commissions.
- 18 July Speech by Mario Soares at Oporto.
- 19 July First fire in a PCP committee-room at Rio Maior.
- 21 July A triumvirate – or *Directorio* – with full powers, is set up by the MFA: Costa Gomes, Vasco Gonçalves, Otelo de Carvalho.
- 1 August Demonstration by Workers' Commissions and by districts.
- 6 August Colonel Jaime Neves, dismissed by his own troops of the Amadora Commando Regiment, is reinstated through Otelo de Carvalho's personal intervention, because of his role in the Revolution on the 25 April.
- The battle of the programmes*
- 7 August Document of the Nine, or Melo Antunes' document, published in *Jornal Novo*.

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- 8 August 1975 Fifth Provisional Government, presided over by Vasco Gonçalves.
- 11 August The Nine are suspended from the Council of the Revolution.
- 13 August The COPCON document, written by Major Tome and made public by Otelo de Carvalho.
- 15 August Elaboration of the Synthesis-Document, by Melo Antunes and Otelo de Carvalho (written by Luis Felipe de Castro Mendes).
- 18 August Speech by Vasco Gonçalves, at Almada.
- 23 August Programmatical Lines of Action, drawn up by the Fifth Government.
- 25 August Formation of the FUR: *United Revolutionary Front*. The PCP, who join it on 25 August, leave it on 26th, but the MDP ("second PCP") remain represented on it, together with the MES, the PRP, the FSP, the LCI and the LUAR.
- 28 August Letter from Otelo de Carvalho to Vasco Gonçalves. Disagreement in the triumvirate.
- 4-6 September The MFA's general assembly is cut short at Tancos. Vasco Gonçalves resigns. The Group of Nine has the majority in the Council of the Revolution. Exclusion of the Goncalvists. (Vasco Gonçalves, Costa Martins.)
- 19 September Sixth Provisional Government, presided over by Admiral Pinheiro de Azevedo, with a PS and PPD majority and the participation of the PCP.
- 27-28 September Congress of Workers' Commissions.
- 30 September On the orders of the Sixth government, the armed forces occupy the radio and television stations in Lisbon.
- September Appearance of the SUV ("Soldiers United will win) in Porto, primarily to oppose the replacing of General Corvacho (Goncalvist) with General Pires Veloso at the head of the Northern Military Region.
- 22 October The Workers' Commission with UDP leanings recaptures the Rádio Renascença station held by the Army. The SUV demonstrate in Lisbon in favour of Popular Power.
- 8 November On Government orders, the Tancos paratroopers blow

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up the Radio Renascença transmitters, held by the Workers' Commission. 9 November 1975 The Tancos paratroopers and their sergeants rebel against the military hierarchy which imposed on them the order to blow up the transmitters.

10 November *The 123 para officers from the Training Base leave Tancos to regroup at Sintra, in the suburbs to the west of Lisbon. They begin to make contact with Fies Véloso (Northern Military Region) Morais e Silva (Chief of Staff of the Air Force) and Jaime Neves (Amadora Commando Regiment). Preparation of the Red Eight: the programmed and coded operation which is to begin on 25 November.* 12-13 November Demonstration by construction workers at the Palace of Sao Bento: confinement of the representatives and of the Prime Minister Azevedo.

The Azevedo Government "strikes" as a protest, for an unlimited period, demanding "the powers of government" from President Costa Gomes.

16 November Demonstration called for by Workers' Commissions from Lisbon's industrial belt, supported by the FUR, the SUV, and the PCP.

The November Events

Friday, 21 November 1975 A surprise vote by the Council of the Revolution, triggered by the military right wing and the Group of Nine, dismisses Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho from the command of the Lisbon Military Region. He is replaced by Vasco Lourenço, promoted to Brigadier-General, spokesman for the Group of Nine since August 1975. Otelo remains, nevertheless, at the head of the "Operational Command of the Continent" (COPCON):² "the MFA's military defence" since 25 April 1974).

The COPCON officers will refuse to accept this nomination.

Saturday, 22 November The Amadora Commandos, with Jaime Neves at their head, announce their *refusal to obey* the commandant of the COPCON in future.

In Oporto, Mario Soares accuses the PCP of being the "chief saboteur of the Revolution". He adds: "We demand of the President of the Republic, General Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces... that he does not defer action". That same day Alvaro Cunhal visits Warsaw.

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Sunday, 23 November, 10.00 am. At Cortegaca air base in the Northern Military Region, the 123 officers from the Tancos Paratroopers' Training Base arrive, having abandoned their troops on 10 November. These officers will themselves state that "the scheme has been devised to catch in a rat-trap" the troops from the Training Base: "telephone calls from Cortegaca for the sergeants" of Tancos (*Expresso*, 3 April 1976).

24 November "The team of professionals" (*Le Monde*) built up around Lieutenant-Colonel Ramalho Eanes settle in the Amadora Commandos' barracks, in charge of which is the Colonel Jaime Neves. This "operational command in the shadows" (*Le Monde*, 17 December 1975) having thus become a central Command Post (*Expresso*, 3 April 1976), comprises Colonel Garcia dos Santos (transmissions), Lieutenant-Colonel Ferreira da Cunha (information or "social communications"), Major Loureiro dos Santos (liaison with the Palace of Belem and the Command of the Lisbon Military Region); and even more secretly: Firmino Miguel (Spinola's right-hand man during the coup d'état of 28 September 1974) and Aventino Teixeira (the MRPP's central committee, known as the "Lenin Committee").

At this moment, the fighters are taking off from the Lisbon air bases and the Central Military Region, to concentrate at the Cortegaca Base near Oporto, at the disposition of the commandant of the Northern Military Region, General Fies Véloso.

24-25 November In the night, at Rio Maior, to the North of Lisbon, the association of agricultural land-owners blocks roads, railways, the great motorway to the North, and threaten to cut off the capital's water and electricity supply. Their slogans: "cut off Portugal from Moscow" ... "Sack Otelo" ...

25 November In the night, units of the Paratroopers' Training Base at Tancos (BETP), to the North-East of Lisbon, receive by "radio messages"³ (of unknown origin⁴), the order to occupy the air bases of the Lisbon and Central Military Regions. The watch-word given to certain of these units: defend the Bases which have just been occupied by an extreme left-wing organisation, the LUAR. The air bases occupied in this manner are Monte Real, Montijo, even Tancos, (later on, Ota), and Monsanto, in the woods dominating the north of Lisbon.

4 am on 25th A majority is finally showing itself, spurred on by the military right wing (General Morais e Silva, Air Force Chief of Staff)

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and the Group of Nine, to confirm the dismissal of Otelo de Carvalho, having spent 13 hours in discussions.

Otelo leaves the Council for the Revolution and goes to the COPCON headquarters at Fort Duque do Alto. He shuts himself up alone in his office, then goes home shortly afterwards.

11 am on 25th Otelo de Carvalho is called to the telephone by the COPCON chief of staff, who announces to him the occupation of Monsanto by the Air Force First Region and the confinement of General Pinho Freire, Commandant of that Region.

During the morning, certain of the COPCON units have adopted "imminent defence" measures around their own billets.

Thus: the RALIS, on the northern motorway, *along its barracks*; defensive dispositions facing the Rio Maior rebels; the EPAM (College for the Practice of Military Administration), in the area around the Portuguese Radio and Television premises, *on the other side of the street*.

2 pm Having arrived at the COPCON headquarters, Otelo de Carvalho receives a telephone call from President Costa Gomes, asking him to come and confer with him at the Palace of Belem.

4.30 pm Otelo de Carvalho arrives at the Palace of Belem, and confers with Costa Gomes.

At the same time, the Amadora Commandos are leaving their barracks and taking the offensive.

They will take four directions successively:

- Monsanto (against the paras of the BETP)
- the RPM, the COPCON's key regiment, around Belem
- the RAC, on the other side of Belem
- accessorially, towards the RALIS and the EPAM.

Each one of these operations is preceded by radio messages announcing them "in the name of the President of the Republic".

At about the same time, the Tancos paratroopers broadcast a "manifesto" setting out their claims: the dismissal of the Generals Morais e Silva and Pinho Freire.

Costa Gomes proclaims a state of emergency.

5.30 pm Colonel Varela Gomes, formerly responsible for the old Fifth Division of the General Staff (in charge of "cultural dynam-

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ation"), comes to the COPCON headquarters from where he tries to stir up a resistance to the Amadora offensive.

6.00 pm on 25th After the announcement that the Commandos are approaching, not far from the RTP premises, Captain Duran Clemente televises an appeal to the masses to resist the offensive by the Military right wing.

The metalworkers' union calls for a strike, and the mobilisation of the masses in front of the barracks.

7.05-8.15 pm The Amadora Commandos capture the Monsanto base.
8.45-10.00 pm Radio and television broadcasts are electro-magnetically turned away from the centre of Lisbon, towards the centre of Oporto.

Captain Duran Clemente is rudely interrupted, during one of his appeals: these are replaced by Danny Kaye's songs, re-transmitted from Porto.

9.15 pm President Costa Gomes announces that "a state of partial siege" has been proclaimed in the Lisbon Military Region. Otelo de Carvalho is on the screen, next to him.

10.00 pm Occupation of the Monte Real air base by the Military right wing forces.

26 November Major Dinis de Almeida, as a result of a telephone call from the Presidential Palace, goes to Belem. He is immediately put under arrest.

7.00-8.00 am The Amadora Commandos' armoured cars surround the RPM barracks, opposite the Palace of Belem.

The three RPM majors are called to the Palace by telephone.

About 8 am The Commandos suddenly open fire on the doors and windows of the RPM. Immediate and automatic answering fire from the RPM's soldiers leaves seven dead (five of whom were "irregulars") among the Commandos, and one dead in the RPM.

The Majors Campos Andrada, Mario Tome and Cuco Rosa thereupon order a cease-fire and go to the Palace of Belem, across the street. They are immediately arrested. (They were among the last to be conditionally freed, on 23 and 24 April 1976.)

27 November The unions call for a general strike. Troops from the Northern Military Region, under General Pires Veloso's command,

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come to "reinforce" those in the Lisbon Military Region (which for the most part were COPCON troops).

The Amadora Commandos surround the besieged COPCON. Arrest of its staff. (Colonel Varela Gomes has already fled.)

28 November 1975 Lieutenant Arnao Metelo, deputy Prime Minister in the Fifth Government, is arrested.

26-28 November At Sebutal, a large working-class urban district to the South of Lisbon, a *comitee of struggle* stirs up popular resistance and controls the town for three days.

26 November All the newspapers cease to be published, because of the state of siege. The only newspaper "tolerated" by those in power: *Luta Popular*, the MRPP's mouthpiece.

27 November Generals Carlos Fabiao and Otelo de Carvalho, Army Chief of Staff and Commandant of the COPCON respectively, hand in their resignation to the Council for the Revolution. The COPCON is disbanded.

6 December Lieutenant-Colonel Ramalho Eanes, an officer unassigned since the Spinoist coup d'état on 11 March, is appointed acting Army Chief of Staff, with the rank of General.

27 June 1976 General Ramalho Eanes is elected President of the Republic with 61% of the votes, having the functions of General Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces.

His very first declaration will be that he "will not hesitate to bring the tanks into the streets to oppose attempts at a putsch".⁵

FOOTNOTE

1. During the day Major Eanes reversed his position in time (perhaps because of the clumsiness of the new procedure to which he had just been won over). The revolutionary tolerance of the MFA is shown in his nomination to the Presidency of the Programmes Commission: a tolerance which he himself hardly used after 25 November 1975.
2. Officially given this name on 12 July, 1974.
3. In the very terms used by the *Relatorio*.
4. The *Relatorio* does not give any details regarding the source of these broadcasts.
5. *Le Monde*, 29 June 1976.

Opening the Chronicle of Investigation

The course we are taking here may seem strange.

The object is not simply to "reel off the facts", but to question them from every angle; like a crystal in which one sees, not reflections, but innumerable stories.

What is more, we discover along the way an event manufactured in such a way that *differing versions of it are circulating before it happens, and even as it happens*.

This discovery, once made, became a standard for judging the suppositions as they appeared one after the other: in the field.

As I set out for Lisbon to join the first delegation of the Russell Committee in the enquiry it was conducting into the events of November, I brought with me a mental picture of them that corresponded to the 'robot version' put about by the European information services. The days of 25-26 November might roughly be summarized as follows: a *faux pas* by the revolutionary left or of the PCP (there were many variations on the same theme between these two extremes) had led "its" own units first out of their barracks, on their own initiative: this attempted coup d'état, by an assorted collection of soldiers and NCOs, parachutists from Tancos, the gunners of the RALIS and the young officers from the Training School of Military Administration, in the main, had provoked a response by "loyalist" units, on the orders of the President of the Republic, the Sixth Provisional Government and the Constituent Assembly. The arrest of the insurgent officers and soldiers had blocked this "abortive coup d'état from the left".

To begin with, the objective of the first delegation was not so much to question the "truth" of this unofficial-official version as to examine the conditions of imprisonment of the rebels. From the start, the truth was hidden behind official messages of reassurance.