

‘DOESN’T PARIS LIKE THE PORTUGUESE SPRING?’ FRANCE AND THE CARNATION REVOLUTION¹

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On 3 April 1975, *Quotidien de Paris* published an article entitled: ‘Paris doesn’t like the Portuguese spring’.² The French newspaper reported the arrest of Captain Cabo Verde, a member of the Armed Forces Movement (MFA), at Roissy airport on 22 March. The Portuguese ambassador in France had to intervene to obtain the release of the Portuguese officer, who had traveled to Paris to take part in the launch of a Caixa Geral de Depósitos branch. Eight hundred thousand Portuguese were living in France at the time and this population was an important issue for the Lisbon authorities. It was vital that emigrants continued to transfer a substantial part of their savings to Portugal, thereby helping to balance the payments at a time when the country’s economic and financial situation was deteriorating. Starting in the fall of 1974, several members of the Armed Forces Movement (MFA) toured France, explaining to their compatriots what had happened in Portugal since 25 April 1974 and urging them to support their country by staying in France and continuing to send remittances. However, these public meetings worried the French authorities, who considered that the speeches made by the Portuguese military amounted to ‘Marxist or Maoist propaganda’³ and that the organization of these events violated ‘the rules of neutrality that must be applied to all foreigners in France’.⁴ On 13 March 1975, two days after António de Spínola’s failed coup attempt, the French Minister of the Interior ordered that all Portuguese officers and soldiers ‘who went to France

ABSTRACT

France was one of the countries that followed with the greatest attention and concern the events that took place in Portugal between 25 April 1974 and the end of 1976. In 1974, there were 800,000 Portuguese living in France and French investment in Portugal had increased significantly in the early 1970s. While the French government initially looked favorably on 25 April and the decolonization process, the French attitude changed significantly after 11 March 1975 and especially during the Hot Summer. Valéry Giscard d’Estaing then advocated for suspending the financial aid that European institutions intended to grant to Portugal.

Keywords: Carnation Revolution, democratic transition, decolonization, totalitarianism.

RESUMO

«PARIS NÃO GOSTA DA PRIMAVERA PORTUGUESA»? A FRANÇA E A REVOLUÇÃO DOS CRÁVOS

A França foi um dos países que seguiu com mais atenção e preocupação os eventos que ocorreram em



Portugal entre o 25 de Abril de 1974 e o fim de 1976. Em 1974, 800 mil portugueses residiam em França e os investimentos franceses em Portugal tinham aumentado substancialmente no início dos anos de 1970. Se o Governo francês vê inicialmente com bons olhos o 25 de Abril e o processo de descolonização, depois do 11 de Março de 1975 e, sobretudo, durante o Verão Quente, a postura francesa muda substancialmente. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing defende então uma suspensão da ajuda financeira que as instituições europeias pretendam dar a Portugal.

Palavras-chave: Revolução dos Cravos, transição democrática, descolonização, totalitarismo.

to take part in political meetings' should be 'sent back to their country of origin'.⁵ Captain Cabo Verde was arrested a few days later. This incident unveils some of the French authorities' misgivings about the Portuguese revolutionary process. On the one hand, the French government feared that the events in Portugal might have repercussions on its territory, given that hundreds of thousands of Portuguese lived in France and that the French left and far-left were passionate about a revolution that appeared to be a replication of May–June 1968.⁶ On the other hand, the French authorities were suspicious of the MFA, fearing that it intended to impose a military dictatorship in Lisbon, relying in particular on the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP). In a European Economic Community (EEC) that at the time included several left-wing govern-

ments (including the Federal Republic of Germany and the United Kingdom), the France of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, elected President of the Republic on 19 May 1974, after the death of Georges Pompidou, was seemingly the most distrustful country regarding the Portuguese revolution. Giscard d'Estaing's intellectual and political background did not predispose him to look benignly on a revolution that challenged capitalism and was led by military men who professed admiration for the political experiences of Third World countries. In his memoirs, the few lines he dedicates to the Carnation Revolution show his reluctance: Portugal at the time was an 'unhappy country under pressure from the Communist Party and the extreme left'.⁷

This distrust of the French authorities led to a lot of criticism in France, which were aimed at Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, who was deemed close to the elites of the Estado Novo. In fact, before 25 April 1974, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, either as Minister of Economy and Finance between 1969 and 1974, or in a private capacity, went to Portugal several times, where, among other activities, he hunted with the President of the Portuguese Republic, Américo Tomás, and took part in a safari in Mozambique. Giscard d'Estaing knew some of the leaders of the large Portuguese economic groups who were accused by the Portuguese authorities of trying to sabotage the revolution. The French President was also seen as close to General Spínola, who had been in exile since 11 March 1975. In September 1975, communist militants demonstrated against General Spínola's presence in Paris, shouting 'Spínola, fascist, Giscard, accomplice'. This focus on the figure of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing is partly the result of the presidentialization of foreign policy under the French Fifth Republic. Under this regime, foreign policy is part of the reserved domain (*domaine réservé*) of the President of the Republic, who has a great deal of autonomy vis-à-vis the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while there is little scrutiny from the legislature.⁸

However, research carried out in various archives allows us to go beyond the anathemas, often motivated by domestic political reasons, and, by following the various actors in French diplomacy, to understand how France reacted to the Portuguese revolutionary process, which caused quite a stir in the French political and intellectual world. The available documentation lets us know that the daily reading of events made by the French ambassador in Lisbon, Bernard Durand, played a fundamental role in the evolution of Portuguese policy in Paris. After warmly welcoming the fall of the dictatorship and the start of the decolonization process, the French authorities grew concerned with the radicalization of part of the army and the rising influence of the PCP. For much of 1975, France feared that Portugal might become a 'Cuba in Europe', a military dictatorship, or that a civil war would break out. These fears led Paris to adopt a cautious stance and distance itself from its European counterparts, who were clearly more committed to helping Portugal's moderate civilian and military forces. When pluralist democracy seemed to be taking hold, the French government abandoned its cautious attitude, fearful of being outmaneuvered in a country where its economic and cultural influence was not negligible at the time.

DE GAULLE, 'TO WHOM PORTUGAL OWES SO MUCH'

The support of the governments of Charles de Gaulle and Georges Pompidou, right-wing politicians, for the Salazar dictatorship and its war effort in Africa fueled the idea that France was reluctant to support the revolutionary process that began on 25 April. Before the revolution, Paris and Lisbon had excellent relations and the dictatorial nature of the regime didn't bother the French authorities, who saw Salazar as a reliable ally in the context of the Cold War. In April 1962, the French ambassador in Lisbon, Bernard de Menthon, concluded that

'[t]aking into account Portuguese psychology and realities, I believe it is in the interests of France and the West [for Salazar to remain in power]. It is in our interest, I believe, not only on a general level, given the danger to Europe of a return to the disorder that existed in Portugal and which might now pave the way for the establishment of a Castro-style regime, but also because the man who runs the country believes in the West and in the lasting value of its civilization'.⁹

At the beginning of 1961, when war broke out in Angola, General de Gaulle guaranteed his support for Portugal. Applying its policy of grandeur and independence from the United States,¹⁰ France supplied and sold war material to Portugal and did not support the resolutions against Portugal in the United Nations.¹¹ In 1965, as a note from the Quai d'Orsay summarizes, 'the Portuguese government has every reason to be satisfied with the attitude adopted by France towards its problems'.¹² However, this Franco-Portuguese understanding was partly based on a misunderstanding. De Gaulle, while

supporting Portugal in its armed resistance against anti-colonial revolts, advised Lisbon to consider the autonomy of African territories, as France had done, on terms that were favorable to it. In an interview with Marcelo Mathias, on 12 July 1961, General de Gaulle admits to understanding

‘the situation in which Portugal finds itself. However, he believes that a change is needed, which doesn’t mean that it has to be as rapid as France did in its Empire, or Belgium in the Congo. On the contrary, he thought that, for a long time, the Portuguese territories should be part of the same whole as the metropolis, but he was convinced that the shape of this whole would soon have to change’.¹³

De Gaulle also reportedly told the Portuguese ambassador: ‘But tell President Salazar that in this changing world, we cannot stand still’.¹⁴ During a meeting with John Fitzgerald Kennedy at the end of May and beginning of June 1961, the French President said that ‘Portuguese policy should be oriented towards an evolutionary policy of decolonization’.¹⁵ However, ‘it was important not to rush the Portuguese’.¹⁶ From then on, the basic postulate of French diplomacy towards Portugal was that ‘external intervention could only delay the search for a solution’, ‘that the problem of the Portuguese presence in Africa should be sorted out by Portugal’ and that it was wiser to exert a ‘moderating influence and encourage the solving of certain incidents’.¹⁷ For Paris, this position would also enable preventing both American and Soviet penetration into Portuguese Africa and defending the interests of French companies (as during the construction of the Cabora Bassa dam in Mozambique). However, the Portuguese government disregarded these nuances of French diplomacy, considering instead that there was a convergence of views and unwavering political, diplomatic and military support. In June 1968, after the strong protest movement against General de Gaulle, Mathias, frightened, wrote in a telegram:

‘May Providence save France and the West from the chaos into which this country is slowly but gradually sinking. And may de Gaulle be saved along with France [...] to whom Portugal owes so much, since the great betrayal and abandonment to which we have been consigned by the Anglo-Saxon and American world’.¹⁸

AN EMBARRASSING ALLY

This policy of supporting the Portuguese military effort began to lose momentum in the early 1970s, when Marcelo Caetano, who had replaced Salazar in September 1968, disappointed the French authorities. Closely watched by the Salazarists, who advocated a united Portugal from Minho to Timor, and after having made a commitment to the President of the Republic to continue Salazar’s policy in Africa, Caetano carried out merely cosmetic reforms in the colonies. This change in French attitudes was also due

to the change in its Head of State: de Gaulle resigned in 1969 and Pompidou became President. In 1971, Georges Pompidou's diplomatic advisor, Jean-Louis Lucet, remarked, on the occasion of the visit to France by the Portuguese Foreign Minister, Rui Patrício, that

'the Portuguese believe, or pretend to believe, that we approve of the essence of their overseas policy. Our restrictive attitude towards arms is purely tactical and aims to appease certain African countries. They allude, in a veiled way, to the assurances given to them by General de Gaulle and the understanding shown by Mr. Foccart.'¹⁹

It is therefore a question of dissuading Mr. Patrício, in confidential talks, so that he can accurately convey our point of view to President Caetano. Mr. Schumann has already begun to do this. The President of the Republic could be even clearer. Ambassador Tiné insists that we must understand that it is President Caetano and he alone who decides African policy. He is not lacking in lucidity but doesn't have the stature or courage of General de Gaulle. He let the Guinea affair pass without reacting, when he could have taken the opportunity to call the most activist elements in the armed forces and the administration to account. By dispelling illusions and misunderstandings, we could usefully influence Caetano's decisions'.²⁰

In an attempt to facilitate the decolonization process, the French authorities acted as intermediaries between Portugal and the Senegal of Léopold Sédar Senghor, a close friend of Georges Pompidou, who unsuccessfully proposed a project to make Guinea-Bissau progressively independent.

For Paris, Portugal's refusal to consider a decolonization process cast a shadow over France's African policy. France did not want to jeopardize its important economic, financial, strategic and diplomatic interests in Africa by supporting Lisbon's policy, which it deemed archaic. In 1970, Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda and the leaders of the Organization of African Unity complained to Georges Pompidou about France's arms sales to Portugal and South Africa. The French President could certainly argue that, since 1962, France had not sold Portugal weapons that might be used against liberation movements in Africa. However, there were many exceptions to this rule in the following years, 'the industrial point of view [continued], in fact, to prevail over the political point of view'.²¹ In 1970, in response to pressure from African countries, the French authorities tightened the rules on arms sales to Portugal, although they didn't stop them completely. Nevertheless, Paris and Lisbon continued to maintain good relations, particularly in the economic sphere. Under the leadership of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Minister of Economy and Finance between 1969 and 1974, several French companies invested in Portugal, contributing to the construction of infrastructure and the country's industrial development.

A REVOLUTION WITHOUT SURPRISES

The emergence of a military movement in Portugal didn't come as a total surprise to the French embassy in Lisbon, which had been following the protests within the Armed Forces for several months. Ambassador in Lisbon since September 1973, after four years in Athens, Bernard Durand, born in 1911, immediately became aware of the rising protest among the young officers.

THE EMERGENCE OF A MILITARY MOVEMENT
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Durand, who had already been to Portugal in the 1950s, was closely following the upheavals within the army and, in particular, the effects of the publication of António de Spínola's book *Portugal e o Futuro* (Portugal and the Future). Seeking to meet the man who had caused 'an absolutely exceptional crisis environment in this country',²² the ambassador met the general on 9 March 1974, shortly before his resignation from the General Staff of the Armed Forces. Spínola didn't mention the MFA and confessed to being surprised by Marcelo Caetano's reaction, whom he 'considered to be quite close to his ideas'.²³ On 22 March, the embassy obtained a copy of the MFA manifesto. On 20 April, a note from the sub-directorate for Southern Europe at the Quai d'Orsay, where Jane Debenest followed Portuguese affairs, recognized that 'whatever the appearances, the immobility of Portuguese political life has probably been broken'.²⁴ The French authorities seem not to have been warned about the coup d'état and there is no mention of a meeting between members of the French embassy and MFA officials. However, the coup did not come as a complete surprise to French diplomacy. On the morning of 25 April, in the first telegram he sent to Paris, Durand noted that 'there is total uncertainty, both about the extent of the movement and about the personalities and tendencies of its leaders'.²⁵ In the afternoon, although Caetano had not yet surrendered, Durand could already state that 'this movement seems to represent the liberal tendency of the younger elements of the army',²⁶ whose activities he had been following.

A REVOLUTION WARMLY WELCOMED

The French authorities welcomed the coup and were greatly reassured by the figure of António de Spínola, who emerged as the strong personality. Was he finally the Portuguese de Gaulle? Caetano's departure and the arrival of the man who had proposed negotiating with the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), through Senegal, and who advocated a political solution to put an end to the colonial wars and to maintain strong relations between the metropolis and the African territories, seemed to solve the problem of Portuguese colonial policy. From now on, France could continue to develop its relations with Portugal without jeopardizing its African policy. The figure of Mário Soares, who took over as head of Portuguese diplomacy in May 1974, also reassured the French authorities. Soares lived in France for four years and appeared to Bernard Durand, who met him on 22 May 1974, as a 'reasonable

and moderate man, sincere in his desire to benefit from our understanding and support'.²⁷ Eager to establish contacts with countries with which Portugal had no diplomatic relations (countries in the communist camp and in Africa), Soares asked for France's support in this regard. On 25 May, Geoffroy Chodron de Courcel, secretary-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, sent a telegram to the French embassies abroad. Summarizing Soares' remarks to Bernard Durand, Courcel asked the embassies to support Lisbon:

'Bearing in mind the objectives that the Portuguese government has set itself, the action it has taken and the difficulties it will have to overcome, we are in solidarity with its efforts, both in terms of democratization and decolonization. Whenever you have the opportunity, you can convey in your conversations our conviction that the success of this policy will be reinforced by the understanding that it will benefit in the international community, particularly in Africa, as well in international organizations'.²⁸

WHO GOVERNS IN LISBON?

Most of the new Portuguese leaders were unknown to the French embassy in Lisbon, the Quai d'Orsay and the Elysée. Many of them belonged to the anti-Salazar opposition, which French diplomacy didn't believe in. However, the French ambassador was pleased to see former exiles in France – or personalities known for their Francophilia – belonging to the First Provisional Government. This is the case of the prime minister appointed in May 1974, Adelino da Palma Carlos, 'of French culture', who 'belongs to a family with a republican and secular tradition' and 'knows France well, where he has been many times'.²⁹ The ambassador met the new personalities who were emerging and organized dinners at the embassy to get to know the elites of the new Portugal.³⁰

As the title of a note from the French General Secretariat for National Defense dated 9 May 1974 summarizes, the French authorities' concern was to understand 'who held power in Lisbon'? As early as 3 May 1974, the ambassador underlined the challenges facing General Spínola:

'Will the forces it has unleashed, with so many legitimate ambitions but also so many demagogic demands, agree to cooperate with the [National Salvation] Junta for as long as necessary? The forces of the left, and in particular the Communist Party, which were not expected to be so organized after a long period of clandestinity, may be tempted to impose themselves in today's political life, since the right, totally linked to the defunct regime, has vanished'.³¹

Durand insists on the need for cohesion in the Armed Forces:

'For the moment, the Junta, which is undoubtedly on the lookout, has things under control; it will only be able to continue its task if the cohesion of the military cadres is

maintained, tested by a brutal purge, accompanied by spectacular promotions and, above all, if the troops remain disciplined and don't heed the song of the revolutionary sirens'.³²

However, in the weeks that followed, tensions between Spínola and the MFA Coordinating Committee (which the general tried in vain to tame) increased, particularly over the issue of the colonies. In addition, from May 1974 onwards, a broad strike movement spread across the country. Workers demanded better wages, shorter working hours, paid vacations and the purging of employers and managers who had collaborated with the political police. The country was experiencing a profound social revolution, aided by the crisis of the state (the police had stopped repressing transgressive social movements, the army had lost its cohesion and discipline as a result of the sanctions and became politicized). The French embassy in Lisbon and the Quai d'Orsay were concerned about these social movements and the tensions between the new leaders. The inclusion of communist ministers in the First Provisional Government – the first time in Western Europe since 1947 that communist ministers had taken part in a government – did nothing to lessen these fears, despite Mário Soares having explained to his European interlocutors that 'the participation of the communists in the government was necessary; on the one hand, it is the only party currently organized and disciplined; on the other hand, it was important to involve them in the decisions'.³³

APPRENTICE DICTATORS?

The events that followed in Portugal from the summer of 1974 – the resignation of Prime Minister Palma Carlos, replaced by Vasco Gonçalves, an officer imposed on Spínola by the MFA; the establishment of a second provisional government with a growing number of military personnel – fueled Bernard Durand's fears. On 22 October 1974, less than a month after Spínola's resignation, replaced by MFA-supported General Francisco da Costa Gomes, the diplomat painted a gloomy picture of the situation in Portugal:

'Portugal is now governed, in fact, by a left-wing military dictatorship, emanating from the MFA's Coordinating Committee, symbolized by Prime Minister Vasco Gonçalves, whose spearhead is COPCON (Operational Command in the region of Lisbon). This team is supported by Álvaro Cunhal's Communist Party, which is highly structured and possesses great maneuvering power'.³⁴

In an attempt to allay the fears that Spínola's resignation had caused among various European partners, Vítor Alves, one of the leading figures in the MFA, traveled to Paris in November 1974. Alves assured Prime Minister Jacques Chirac that the Portuguese authorities were determined to build 'a true democracy and to take the risk of allowing all ideological currents to express themselves and to play the card of pluralism and

democratic freedoms'.³⁵ He also guaranteed that elections to the Constituent Assembly would be held on 27 March 1975, and that the first legislative elections would take place in the fall of 1975. Alves gave proof of his Francophilia, suggesting that the MFA program had a French influence and confessing to Bernard Durand that he had been inspired to prepare the program 'by French works that he had consulted in the library of our Institute'.³⁶

However, despite the many signs of Francophilia expressed by Vasco Gonçalves or Francisco da Costa Gomes, the French authorities didn't trust the MFA leaders, who appeared to wish to stay in power longer than they had promised on 25 April 1974 and marginalized political parties seen as a source of division. Some of the MFA's military officers refused to reproduce the political regimes in force in Western Europe and wanted to replicate the experiences of the Third World: Algeria, Cuba, Peru, etc. The 'African' background of the MFA officers is highlighted several times in the notes describing Portuguese political developments, a background that alienated them from the principles of European democracies. The French ambassador assiduously read the articles in the magazine published by the 5th Division of the Armed Forces General Staff and detected, with some trepidation, a communist rhetoric that was also expressed during the cultural and civic action campaigns carried out mainly in the center and north of the country. The ambassador believed that Vasco Gonçalves was close to the PCP, which, in turn, was 'sticking' to the MFA.³⁷

THE FRENCH AUTHORITIES WERE CONCERNED ABOUT THE WISH TO INSTITUTIONALIZE THE MFA, CONSIDERING THAT THIS MEANT AN ATTEMPT TO RETAIN POWER.

The French authorities were concerned about the wish to institutionalize the MFA, considering that this meant an attempt to retain power and not let the political parties govern after the constituent elections promised for the spring of 1975. In the margin

of a telegram from Durand, dated 7 February 1975, concerning the project to institutionalize the MFA, Giscard d'Estaing wrote: 'regrettable'.³⁸ The creation of the Council of the Revolution (CR) and the nationalization of banks and insurance companies, following the failed coup d'état of 11 March 1975, only aggravated these reservations.

As early as 11 March, Durand thought that 'the perpetrators of the coup [led by António de Spínola] [had] been dragged into their action by a cleverly organized plot'³⁹ by their opponents, the left-wing of the MFA and the PCP, who had several goals in mind: to put the former President of the Republic out of play, to prevent elections from being held in the near future, to get the creation of the CR accepted and to proceed with the nationalization of part of the economy. According to the French ambassador, 'the forces of the extreme left, both civilian and military, began to take advantage of a situation that was favorable to them in every respect'.⁴⁰ Personalities considered to be against the course of the revolution (military personnel linked to Spínola, former leaders of the dictatorship, businessmen, employers) were arrested and the headquarters of the

Democratic and Social Center and the Christian Democracy Party were looted. According to Durand, 'although no blood has been shed so far, an atmosphere of fear, if not terror, is beginning to take hold throughout the country'.⁴¹ The forthcoming elections might amount to no more than a 'sham'.⁴²

The 11 March had several direct consequences for France. On the one hand, Spínola, who had fled to Spain with several accomplices, wished to settle in France, a claim supported by Madrid, who wanted to 'maintain strict non-interference in [Portuguese] internal affairs'⁴³ (although Spain was hosting former dictatorship leaders and former political police officers who were plotting against the power in Lisbon). France refused to receive Spínola, arguing that 'the Portuguese colony established in our territory is important [and that France wants] to safeguard our good relations with Lisbon'.⁴⁴ Spínola, totally discredited by Western countries, had to settle for exile in Brazil, ruled by a military dictatorship. The former President did, however, spend short periods in Paris, particularly in September 1975, promoting the idea of French support for the former governor of Guinea-Bissau. However, faced with protests from the Portuguese authorities, who thought that the former general was meeting mercenaries, Giscard d'Estaing ordered that Spínola's activities in Paris be monitored and that, 'if necessary, firm and discreet pressure be exerted on him to refrain from plotting from our territory'.⁴⁵ On the other hand, the events of 11 March 1975 strengthened social movements, factory occupations and worker control practices. Some workers, fearing that Portugal might become the 'Chile of Europe' because of the employers' sabotage of the revolution, kept a tight grip on company management. These included several French companies, including the Portuguese subsidiary of Air Liquide. From 11 March 1975, the director of Air Liquide's Portuguese subsidiary was barred from his office because the workers' committee was demanding that he leave. The French embassy in Lisbon, French MPs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior and the Elysée Palace received numerous complaints about the actions of the unions and workers' committees, the challenge to the employer's power and the occupation of French-owned properties. Some of these complaints reached the highest level of the French state, since Giscard d'Estaing had long had close links with French and Portuguese employers. The arrests of employers and political figures linked to the dictatorship were brought to his attention, and the French President intervened in some cases, such as that of Kaúlza de Arriaga, one of the military figures linked to the extreme right. According to Jean Paillet, deputy military attaché at the French embassy in Lisbon from the fall of 1975, Giscard's Portuguese policy was 'marked by total blindness' because the French President was 'the friend of some of the men the revolution was stripping'.⁴⁶

A POLICY OF PRESENCE AND AID WAITING FOR THE ELECTIONS

After 11 March 1975, the French authorities kept hoping that Portugal would move towards a pluralist democracy and that the more left-wing military, led by Vasco Gonçalves,

would not impose a dictatorship supported by the PCP. In March 1975, France refused to align itself with the United States, who suggested that Western allies ‘express to General Costa Gomes their concerns about the political situation in Portugal and the future of Portugal’s relations with the West’.⁴⁷ France’s Foreign Minister, Jean Sauvagnargues, considered that such steps would not change ‘the course of events’ and risked ‘appearing to some as purely verbal support, to others as interference’.⁴⁸ On 3 April 1975, Sauvagnargues asked Durand to meet with the members of the new government and to make them

‘understand our wishes for Portuguese democracy and our desire to continue our policy of presence and aid in that country. As for the second point, you may impart that we propose to see what we can do at the bilateral level – or recommend to our partners – to try to address Portugal’s needs’.⁴⁹

At the time, French diplomacy considered it essential to avoid a deterioration in the economic situation and intended to support the moderates in government. On 8 January 1975, Mário Soares asked to be received at the Elysée Palace, hoping that Giscard d’Estaing would support the ‘efforts being made in Portugal to establish a pluralist democracy’.⁵⁰ This request seemed to have an effect because, at the end of January, Sauvagnargues granted an audience to the Portuguese ambassador in Paris, António Coimbra Martins, a socialist very close to Soares, and gave the ‘clear impression that the French government [is] willing to concretely help rebuild [our] country’.⁵¹ At the beginning of 1975, the French position was closer to the line taken by the American ambassador in Lisbon, Frank Carlucci, who also advocated support for moderate civilian and military forces and often opposed US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who devised the vaccine theory: the establishment of a left-wing military dictatorship in Portugal, a takeover by the communists or a civil war would ‘vaccinate’ other Southern European countries where the communists aspired to rule – in France, within the framework of the union of the left, in Italy, within the framework of the historic compromise.⁵² The French authorities’ hope lay in the elections, which finally took place on 25 April 1975. Despite the fact that the pact signed between the political parties and the MFA on 11 April 1975 severely limited the Assembly’s powers to elect and guaranteed the political influence of the CR for several years,⁵³ the elections were seen by Paris as a means of ascertaining the will of the people and granting legitimacy and influence to the moderate political parties vis-à-vis the MFA and the PCP. The results of the elections were therefore welcomed by the French authorities. On the one hand, almost 92% of the Portuguese population living in mainland Portugal, the Azores and Madeira took part in the elections. This massive turnout disproved part of the MFA, which doubted the civic-mindedness of the rural populations and advocated voting blank (which was reduced).

The Portuguese showed that they wanted to play an active role and did not want to hand over power to the military. On the other hand, the Socialist Party (PS) and the People's Democratic Party (PPD) took the first two places, while the PCP won only 12% of the votes. This was a victory for those who defended a pluralist democracy based on the action of political parties. However, the French authorities' satisfaction was short-lived. Prominent members of the MFA quickly declared that the elections would not interfere with the course of the revolution and that the deputies would limit themselves to drafting a constitution abiding by the MFA's program. Moreover, from June 1975 onwards, various currents within the MFA proposed plans outlining forms of government and political participation that were alien to European democratic traditions, suggesting that the MFA distrusted the work of the Constituent Assembly. On 20 May 1975, in another meeting with Durand, Álvaro Cunhal confided that he 'didn't foresee a new electoral consultation for a long time'.⁵⁴ This kind of statement only fueled the qualms of French diplomacy, which feared that Cunhal might try to seize power, even without the support of the Soviet Union, which was focused at the time on the Helsinki Conference and did not want to destabilize the borders between the Western and Communist camps on the European continent.

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AN INCONCLUSIVE PRESIDENTIAL VISIT

The depreciation of the Constituent Assembly in favor of the role of the CR and the MFA, which in June 1975 presented itself as the 'liberation movement of the Portuguese people', thus pushing the parties away from the political scene, led the French authorities to believe that Portugal was not moving towards a pluralist democracy. The cases of the newspaper *República* and *Rádio Renascença*, which had a major impact in France, fostered the idea, developed in particular by Mário Soares, that the PCP was seeking to control all the media in order to seize power with the help of part of the MFA.

It was in this atmosphere of suspicion that Francisco da Costa Gomes visited Paris at the beginning of June 1975 (Giscard d'Estaing had taken the initiative to invite the President of the Republic in January 1975). For Durand, 'although, like most of the military, he was probably suspicious of party politics, General Costa Gomes nevertheless seemed to be a last resort against the threat of totalitarianism'.⁵⁵ Costa Gomes was seen as a moderate, as the man who ensured free elections in April 1975 and the key element in a political game that remained largely confusing. His visit to Paris – his first official visit abroad and the first visit by a Portuguese head of State to France since 1917 – was intended to demonstrate Portugal's bond with France and, more generally, with Europe, at a time when some members of the MFA, including Vasco Gonçalves, were criticizing the Europe of monopolies and wanted Portugal to move closer to the Third World. For France, it was a matter of securing guarantees regarding the establishment

of a democratic regime in Portugal without, however, putting itself on the line. On the eve of Costa Gomes' visit to France, Durand advised that

'in the current situation of instability, we cannot make any commitments in terms of bilateral financial aid and limit ourselves to make our contribution according to the formulas that the European Economic Community seems to have recently envisaged'.⁵⁶

Giscard d'Estaing shared this opinion and even seemed to go further. On 29 May 1975, Giscard d'Estaing declared to the President of the United States, Gerald Ford, and to the Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, that they ought not 'ostracize them [the Portuguese], but we should not give them support'⁵⁷ as long as Vasco Gonçalves remained at the head of the government.

In fact, at the time of Costa Gomes' visit, Sauvagnargues told Ernesto Melo Antunes, Minister of Foreign Affairs since March and considered the leader of the moderate fringe of the MFA, that French policy from then on was one of 'standing by and caution; we need to know more about Portuguese demands, but also to see how Portugal is evolving. Personally, the minister believes that there is a middle ground between reckless generosity and refusal'.⁵⁸ In Paris, Costa Gomes tried to reassure Giscard d'Estaing, stressing the originality of the Portuguese revolution, which 'aims to build a pluralist democracy, a free socialism'.⁵⁹

However, the various bilateral talks did not convince the French authorities, who doubted the ability of Costa Gomes and Melo Antunes to impose themselves on Vasco Gonçalves and the PCP. Durand notes that when Costa Gomes returned to Lisbon, 'the comments and almost all the press, more or less controlled by the Communist Party, were characterized by a mixture of criticism, skepticism and even outright spite'.⁶⁰

THE FRENCH VETO

On 16 and 17 July, a European Council meeting was held in Brussels during which, among other things, the nine countries discussed the possibility of granting European aid to Portugal, which was facing a dire economic and financial situation. France opposed this aid, arguing that Portugal did not seem to be moving towards a pluralist democracy and that this aid might instead be supporting the establishment of a non-democratic regime. As long as

AS LONG AS PORTUGAL WAS NOT EVOLVING INTO A PLURALIST DEMOCRACY, PARIS WOULD REMAIN OPPOSED TO ANY EUROPEAN AID.

Portugal was not evolving into a pluralist democracy, Paris would remain opposed to any European aid. This refusal had precedents. As early as May 1975, at a meeting of EEC ministers, the Secretary of State for Foreign

Affairs, Bernard Destremau, 'argued that the Council should avoid giving in to the temptation of wanting to move too quickly. It is certainly in its interest to show its sympathy for Portugal [...]. However, nothing would be more damaging than raising hopes lightly'.⁶¹

Meanwhile, the developments in Portugal were even more displeasing to France. The French authorities believed that there was a risk of part of the MFA, supported by the PCP, seizing power and that the breakout of a civil war could not be ruled out. Giscard d'Estaing's refusal, supported by Italy, was not without internal considerations. The Portuguese revolution aroused great curiosity in France and was a hot topic in the internal political debates.⁶² The *República* affair gave rise to numerous articles by renowned intellectuals and was linked to the controversies surrounding totalitarianism. In particular, it questioned the commitment of the French Communist Party (PCF) to defending freedom of expression. Georges Marchais' unequivocal support for the PCP (in contrast to the more critical positions of the Spanish Communist Party and the Italian Communist Party⁶³) raised questions: does the PCF support a party that doesn't seem to respect freedom of expression and seeks to muzzle the media it doesn't control? These questions also spread to François Mitterrand's Socialist Party: how could it give unconditional support to its Portuguese counterpart, who was denouncing an attempt at communist domination, while maintaining the union of the left with the PCF?⁶⁴ The events in Portugal were thus used as a weapon in French domestic politics, particularly by the government, which sought to weaken the left-wing opposition. In June 1975, Jacques Chirac criticized the PCF for 'having approved the murder of the newspaper *República*'.⁶⁵ The Prime Minister declared: 'We may welcome Mr. Soares in France tomorrow, but I have never heard of a Frenchman fleeing and taking refuge in a socialist country to protect his freedom'.⁶⁶ On Europe 1 radio station in August 1975, the French Minister of Justice, Jean Lecanuet, assured that he did not want to 'establish any absolute parallel between Portugal and France'.⁶⁷ However, he said that 'France cannot be dominated by a socialist-communist coalition while respecting freedoms. Wherever the communists have come to power, they have destroyed freedoms'.⁶⁸ In part, these arguments are aligned with Kissinger's vaccine theory: the threat of a left-wing dictatorship and/or civil war in Portugal should dissuade part of the French electorate from voting for the PCF. For Giscard d'Estaing, the deterioration of the Portuguese situation was not devoid of internal political advantages. His opposition to the granting of European aid underlined the risks posed by the Communists. Moreover, the French veto was strongly criticized by the opposition. The French Socialist Party – which strongly supported its Portuguese counterpart – accused the French government of wanting to 'the situation to rot'⁶⁹ by favoring the return of a right-wing dictatorship. During 1975, left-wing and far-left movements, who feared that Portugal would become the 'Chile of Europe', claimed that the French government was supporting conservative forces. In June 1975, the French Socialists demanded, for example, 'an end to the facilities granted to Portuguese fascists to develop their activities on French territory'.⁷⁰ Despite France's cautiousness, during the summer of 1975, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing personally took an initiative to help Portuguese settlers in Angola who were trying to escape the fighting between the liberation movements. On 7 August 1975, Valéry Giscard

d'Estaing proposed that Portugal 'consider the possibility of a weekly rotation, for three or four weeks, of a DC 10 plane from the Union des Transports Aériens, which could fly between Luanda and Lisbon'.⁷¹ This proposal was presented with no strings attached and was not contingent on Vasco Gonçalves leaving. Subsequently, other countries offered to take part in this air bridge, allowing tens of thousands of Portuguese to leave Angola.

FACED WITH THREATS OF CIVIL WAR

During the summer of 1975, the possibility of a civil war breaking out was raised by Portuguese and foreign leaders. On 24 July, the French ambassador set forth an evacuation plan for the French population: 'Our countrymen are worried about their future. In addition to various labor conflicts accompanied by sequestrations, private homes have been occupied by irresponsible elements'.⁷² However, France still refused to go along with the American positions. On 26 August 1975, the American embassy in Paris, noting that Costa Gomes had not yet dismissed Vasco Gonçalves as prime minister and fearing that it would become more difficult to 'dislodge the totalitarian minority from its control of power in Lisbon', asked the 'the government of France to instruct its ambassador in Lisbon to make an immediate démarche to President Costa Gomes'.⁷³ Giscard d'Estaing opposed this request, preferring Sauvagnargues to summon Coimbra Martins and remind him of the 'position adopted by the EEC'.⁷⁴ Portugal would not benefit from European aid until it was clearly on the road to building a pluralist democracy. This meeting took place on 1 September 1975 and, although Coimbra Martins stressed that withholding European aid was 'counterproductive regarding its own objectives',⁷⁵ because the worsening economic and financial situation risked favoring the seizing of power by the fringe of the MFA supported by the PCP, Sauvagnargues replied that the French position would persist in the absence of signs of change in Lisbon.

The replacement of Vasco Gonçalves by Pinheiro de Azevedo was viewed optimistically by Durand, who stressed that the 'embassy had excellent relations'⁷⁶ with the admiral. The government once again included ministers from the Socialist Party and the Popular Democratic Party and avowed to re-establish order and discipline. To support this move towards a pluralist democracy, France was no longer opposed to the EEC granting financial aid to Portugal, whose economic and financial situation continued to deteriorate. At the Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in Luxembourg on 6 and 7 October 1975, with France's approval, the nine decided to

'to grant Portugal emergency aid in the form of loans from the European Investment Bank to finance economic investment projects, up to a maximum of ECU 150 million, subsidized at 3% by the Community budget and guaranteed by the Community'.⁷⁷

However, Pinheiro de Azevedo government's desire to re-establish order was met with numerous protests from the extreme left and some members of the military. In September 1975, a clandestine movement developed within the Armed Forces, the Soldados Unidos Vencerão. Large strike movements challenged the government. Left-wing and far-left movements took up arms, seemingly preparing for a confrontation. Bernard Durand sent a telegram on 14 November stating that the Prime Minister's Secretary of State had informed him,

'during the night, that Admiral Azevedo was practically a prisoner of the demonstrators, who, after invading the São Bento palace, had reached the office in which he had taken refuge. My interlocutor expected General Otelo de Carvalho to take power with the support of the left-wing elements and the units under his command'.⁷⁸

Although these fears did not materialize, the French authorities still doubted that pluralist democracy could prevail in Lisbon.

RELAUNCHING PORTUGUESE-FRENCH RELATIONS

The French ambassador to Portugal, who had witnessed the frenzied succession of events over the previous eighteen months, didn't immediately realize that 25 November 1975 – during which the most radical fringes of the Armed Forces, including Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho, were tamed by the moderate officers – marked a profound break in the course of the revolution. In December 1975, however, the stabilization of the situation in Lisbon led Paris to show some signs of encouragement to break with the aloofness expressed since May 1975. A note from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Sub-Directorate for Southern Europe, dated 9 December 1975, gave a gloomy assessment of Franco-Portuguese relations:

'Since 25 April 1974, relations have made little progress, despite visits to Paris by Portuguese ministers and General Costa Gomes, President of the Portuguese Republic. On the other hand, no French minister has yet visited Lisbon. [...] All in all, we maintain a very reserved attitude towards the Lisbon authorities'.⁷⁹

Economic relations 'tend to deteriorate due to the instability of the Portuguese political situation' and 'we continue to have major problems (delays, costs, labor) in the execution of equipment contracts'.⁸⁰ Finally, in terms of bilateral financial aid, 'nothing is planned'.⁸¹ To improve these mediocre relations, the Secretary of State for Immigrant Workers, Paul Dijoud, close to Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, accepted his invitation to visit Lisbon. For Paris, this visit is a 'first gesture',⁸² a 'relaunch of Franco-Portuguese relations'.⁸³ Of course, the presence of 800,000 Portuguese in France made this visit important for both countries, at a time when French borders were closed to labor immigration.

In Lisbon on 22 and 23 December 1975, Dijoud did not limit his discussions to migration issues, but tried to reassure his interlocutors that France would not expel Portuguese workers despite the rise in unemployment. He met not only with Rui Machete, Secretary of State for Emigration, but also with the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who explained the Portuguese situation to him. According to a diplomat who accompanied Dijoud,

‘the Portuguese gave the impression that they were aware of our reservations and the “wait and see” attitude that seems to be ours until the next elections. They haven’t shown themselves to be demanding, either in terms of aid – for which they know they can count on the Germans or the Americans – or in terms of immigration’.⁸⁴

The Portuguese government’s ability to win support in Washington and Bonn⁸⁵ and obtain financial aid from these countries (and others) led the Quai d’Orsay to fear that France would lose positions and opportunities (in 1975, France was Portugal’s fifth client and its fourth supplier).⁸⁶

In an attempt to put an end to the French aloofness, Sauvagnargues accepted an invitation to visit Lisbon in February 1976. The secretary-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs considered that

‘it would be extremely desirable if Mr. Sauvagnargues could come to Lisbon, even for a short working visit, given the more reserved attitude we have had so far towards the Lisbon government vis-à-vis that of our EU partners, an attitude of which the Lisbon government is perfectly aware’.⁸⁷

Sauvagnargues brought with him a letter from Giscard d’Estaing to Costa Gomes. The French President paid ‘tribute to your action and to the wisdom and maturity of the people of Portugal’ and expressed ‘France’s attention, understanding and friendly interest in the new Portugal, as well as my confidence in its democratic future’.⁸⁸ A new page in Portuguese-French relations was opening up, a relationship in which Portugal’s application for EEC membership would play a growing role.

CONCLUSION

There is a certain paradox in French politics regarding the Portuguese revolution. On the one hand, it would not be an exaggeration to say that it was in France that the Carnation Revolution had the greatest impact. There were 800,000 Portuguese living in France and Portugal featured almost daily in the French press for several weeks (especially during the Hot Summer). Several Portuguese politicians were interviewed on French television (which even hosted the first debate between Mário Soares and Álvaro Cunhal, in prime time and live, on 2 July 1975), several intellectuals and politicians

(mainly from the left) spoke about Portuguese events, and some went to spend a few days in Portugal (such as Pierre Mendès France, Georges Marchais, François Mitterrand, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir). There were important debates about Portugal, in which individuals such as Raymond Aron, Jean-François Revel or Edgar Morin took part, and several books were published about the Portuguese events. Throughout France there were dozens of information meetings and rallies about Portugal and hundreds of petitions were signed condemning the anti-communist violence and encouraging the formation of an alliance between the Socialist Party and the PCP to prevent Portugal from becoming the ‘Chile of Europe’.⁸⁹ However, on the other side, especially between May 1975 and September 1975, the French government’s actions were cautious, very unlike those of the United States, Germany, England or even Sweden. Although the files of Michel Poniatowski, Minister of the Interior and president from 1974 of the *Républicains Indépendants* – the party founded by Valéry Giscard d’Estaing –, indicate that some Portuguese politicians from the Social Democratic Center or the PPD had contact with him or his collaborators, the support given by the French right seems to have been limited. As Michel Pinton – a specialist in electoral campaigns and close to Giscard d’Estaing – acknowledged in April 1976, when he was sent to Lisbon to give advice to Francisco Sá Carneiro’s party with a view to the legislative elections, Mário Soares had managed to obtain European legitimacy while the ‘PPD, despite all its efforts[,] has not been able to convince anyone that he has found an equal reputation’.⁹⁰ The prudence of the French government, the main right-wing government in Europe, also explains the failure. This detachment from Portuguese affairs, acknowledged by the Quai d’Orsay itself, weakened French positions in Portugal. As Jean Pailler testified: ‘Tired of waiting for a sign of intelligence from France, many of our partners ended up dealing with our allies who spoke less loudly about democracy, but acted more quickly’.⁹¹ **Ri**

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