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Chapter 3

THE WAR AGAINST THE WAR: VIOLENCE AND ANTICOLONIALISM IN THE FINAL YEARS OF THE ESTADO NOVO

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If the slogan 'make love, not war' became a constantly evoked symbol of the kind of protest generated in the 'long sixties' (Jameson 1984; Marwick 1998, 16–20), the fact is that the attitudes and discourses that originated in this period have not always corresponded to this pacifist image, at times understood retrospectively as parodic, individualistic and carefree. In different times and places, at a gradually more intense pace, the new youth culture introduced profound changes in the fields of customs, taste and morality, and set in motion modes of daring and resistance which often evolved towards open confrontation with bourgeois social codes. The sixties experience, namely in its radical and politicized strand, promoted a new kind of fracturing and transgressive conflictuality, which, rather than rejecting violence, questioned its meaning and sought to redefine its application.

In Portugal, despite socio-cultural and political obstacles, some sectors, primarily originating in student settings, showed their openness to the influence of a certain 'space 68' (Frank 2000). This phenomenon intersected with the emergence of a new type of protest against the colonial war, in which philo-Maoist activism had a relevant role. Condemning the bellicose and nationalistic rhetoric of the Estado Novo [New State], these groups nevertheless saw violence as an indispensable means to achieve a desired classless society. This text seeks to analyse the question of violence in the new left radicalism, to contextualize the specificity of the Maoist experience throughout the sixties, and to characterize the practice and discourse of this multifaceted political field during the decline of the Portuguese dictatorship.

Violence in the Sixties Narratives

The question of violence has often been raised in what concerns the interpretation of the content and legacy of the sixties. Some of the more conservative readings even tend to associate the period with a whirlwind of destruction of the established order. In his influential *The Conflict of Generations*, Lewis Feuer talks about the 'irrationalities and self-destructive components of all student movements' (1969, 102). Using also the idea of a Nihilism stemming from this period, Allan Bloom (1987) criticizes the devaluation of the 'Great Books' that had its origin in sixties radical thought. Referring more specifically to the events of 'May of 68' in Paris, Raymond Aron mentions a carnival-like delirium brought about by 'barbarians unaware of their barbarity' (1968, 13). This deprecating discourse was actually revived during the 2007 French presidential campaign by Nicolas Sarkozy, who accused 'May of 68' of having created a society in which hierarchy, authority and social peace are frequently challenged. According to Alain Badiou (2008), this is a result of the fact that the events of that period were one of the last real expressions of the 'communist specter'.

In a different manner, the American Todd Gitlin (1993), associating the decade to a multifarious field of hope and rage, suggests the existence of the 'good' sixties – constituted by the opposition to the Vietnam War and the civil rights struggle – clearly distinct from the 'bad' sixties, which were filled with struggles that had destructive effects and frequently no long-term goals. On the contrary, for Max Elbaum (2002), the days of rage of the late sixties signaled a step up in protests and do not correspond merely to a period of hangover or loss of faith. According to this former activist, the periods of 1960–4 and 1968–73 not only demanded different kinds of commitment – meaning that one cannot analyze the period outside of the larger political context from which it stemmed – but also the so-called 'bad sixties' were, as a matter of fact, a time of systemic critique of the political structures that enthusiastically involved significant social segments of the population.

Others, such as Arthur Marwick, highlight the coexistence of contrasting though complementary streams, integrated into a set of changes directed at calling into question the existing establishment. In his monumental book on the period, this British historian dedicates a whole chapter to the issue of violence, noting that 'it is pointless to divide the sixties into a peaceful, optimistic first half and a violent, pessimistic second half', given that, more often than not, the violence of the second phase stemmed precisely from movements that emerged in the first phase (Marwick 1998, 533–83).

In a comparative study of the urban guerilla carried out by the American Weather Underground and the German RAF (Rote Armee Fraktion), Jeremy Varon (2004, 3) points to the existence of relatively widespread debates within

the New Left on the issue of violence, both in defensive terms, against police repression, and in offensive terms, as a tool for needed social change. In his turn, Paul Berman (2005, 40–1) considers that the debates within the New Left focused essentially on the question of crypto-Nazism in modern life and on the means to offset it. Frequently mixed up with the concrete context of activism, the question of violence/non-violence was supposedly a tactical matter, and it emerged more vigorously from 1969 because the Vietnam War was escalating, the anticolonial movement seemed to be taking a more radical path, and the actual experience of confrontations with the police was leading to fits of rage.

New Left Radicalism

The radicalism of the decade was characterized by the adoption of an imaginary of rebelliousness based on new ethical, aesthetic and political references with internationalist and combative traits. This trend was not based on a unified body of theses, but rather on multiple, and often conflicting, contributions. Be that as it may, it is still possible to identify some common features. First, the fight against alienation, not only in economic terms of renewal, but also in psychological, sexual, cultural and ideological terms. Second, the critique of traditional forms of authority which, in some cases, extended to the very notion of authority itself. Third, the critique of everyday life, and the insistence on a model of socialism that was intimately connected to a necessary and radical change in customs and mentalities, and not just based on social and political revolution. Finally, the enhancement of the role of youth as an agent of change, replacing or going side by side with the proletariat in the historical mission of social transformation that Marxism had attributed to it (Katsiaficas 1987, 23–7).

Especially in English-speaking countries, this strange mixture was widely dubbed the 'New Left', although many segments remained faithful to the 'old' Marxist left and to its principle of the organization of industrial workers as the basis of societal transformation. This movement had three currents: the first consisted in a return to 'old fashioned sectarian Marxism', through the organization of 'disciplined, Leninist structures based on obedience, dedication, and self-sacrifice'. The second was made up of the 'Marxism of Ho, Mao, Che, and Fidel, mixed with a few doctrines of the Frankfurt School philosophers', and its organizational framework was often undefined. The third was based on the libertarian drive of Kropotkin, Bakunin, the Dutch council communists and the French situationists, as well as 'on a breeze blowing through the university neighborhoods and on rumors from the California counterculture' (Berman 2005, 42–4).

Despite relevant differences among these groups, it is possible to find a point of intersection among the pieces of this emerging kaleidoscope, which

consisted in their equally distant positioning regarding both modern western consumer societies, from which the movement by and large emerged, and Soviet bureaucratism. The new insurgent groups were united in their defense of participatory democracy and of internationalism, in their use of daring forms of protest, and in the proclamation of their common dream of bringing about a revolution that would put an end both to western imperialism, symbolized by the USA, and to eastern European bureaucratic communism.

Thus, Moscow-type socialism was rejected by a variety of groups which, despite significant differences, concurred on the same condemnation of formal bourgeois democracy and the political apparatus and reformism of the pro-Soviet Left. In other words, all of them frequently expressed an interest in Marx, showed a revolutionary posture, and considered themselves to be on the left of traditional communist parties, which they attacked with different degrees of virulence. In fact, after the mid-fifties, a series of events helped call into question the exemplary image of the Soviet regime. Among these, we should mention the questioning of Stalinism at the 20th Congress of the KPSS (Communist Party of the Soviet Union), the uprisings in Poland and Hungary in 1956, the Sino-Soviet conflict, and the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August of 1968. At the same time, the struggles of Third World independence movements, the informal image of the Cuban revolution, and the elated – and often truncated and flawed – reading of the Chinese phenomenon, seemed to show that the revolutionary transformation of society was possible following apparently new models, which, precisely because of their newness, had an obvious appeal.

International Maoism

The Maoist experience underway in several places throughout the world in the sixties and seventies was based on an inflexible and bipolar theory of class struggle and on the defense of revolutionary war as a means of achieving power. Thus, it promoted the idea that the flaws of the world can only be eliminated by the force of arms, something which was illustrated with a few quotations by 'Chairman Mao', such as the one that expressed the conviction that 'political power grows out of the barrel of a gun'. This belligerent image generated a lot of support from militants. For instance, when questioned about the reason why he had a poster of Mao Zedong on the wall, Eldridge Cleaver, a key member of the American Black Panthers, answered: '[B]ecause he is the baddest motherfucker on the planet earth' (Avakian 2005, 167). Sinophilia was also fed by the laudatory readings of intellectuals that visited China, such as Maria Antonietta Macchiocchi, Charles Bettheim, K.S. Carol, Julia Kristeva and Alberto Moravia, who helped to transplant to the West the myth of the 'Great Helmsman' and of an ever-evolving revolution.

After the anarchist split at the 1st International, and the Trotskyite dissent from the 1930s, Maoism represented the third great schism in the international communist movement. Stalin's death in 1953, and Krushchev's denunciation of 'the cult of personality' during the 20th Congress of the KPSS in 1956, initiated a new stage in the history of this movement. From then onwards, the divergences between China and the Soviet Union became increasingly more pronounced until their final rupture in the early seventies. For the Chinese, the Soviet thesis of 'peaceful coexistence' meant the effective abandonment of the fight between communism and imperialism, and this led Mao Zedong to support the establishment of 'Maoist' organizations throughout the world.

The sole communist party in power that supported Chinese dissent was the Albanian communist party in 1961. At an early stage, among the emerging groups in Europe, we can highlight the one led by Jacques Grippa, which arose from an important split in the Belgian Communist Party. It became an international center of 'Marxist-Leninist' (M-L) regrouping until the late sixties, when China stopped endorsing it. If in Europe Maoist groups rapidly appeared in eighteen countries, it was in areas of the so-called 'Third World' – namely in Latin America and Asia – that Maoism achieved the greatest success (Alexander 1999; 2001).

While the rupture between the Soviet Union and China, in the early sixties, nourished splits within the communist parties of different countries, a second Maoist wave gained ground in the late sixties, induced in particular by the impact of the Chinese cultural revolution, and the resulting conviction that the transformation of the world was a process that was nurtured by the permanent challenge to established hierarchical structures, even if they had a socialist format. This second wave was especially felt in radical youth milieus, and among sectors which, as a rule, had never been affiliated to traditional communist parties and which, despite their staunchly Leninist discourse, had deep ties to the voluntarist activism of a certain type of historical anarchism.

This double affiliation led Marxist-Leninist militants to waver between disciplinary and antidisiplinary protest which characterized sixties radicalism (Stephens 1998). Within various groups, and sometimes within militants themselves, the imaginary of rebellion as a 'party' struggled with the refusal of the hedonistic dimension of protest; personal experimentation and openness confronted puritanism and 'proletarian morality'; the reception of theoretical heterodoxies faced up to dogmatism and the ideological vulgate; the seduction of arms conflicted with the need to develop painstaking work with 'the masses'.

In truth, we need to be aware of the danger of treating this political field as a homogeneous reality. In a comparative study on Maoism and Trotskyism in France and the United States, Belden Fields talks about the existence of a 'hierarchical Maoism' and an 'anti-hierarchical Maoism' in the French context

(1998, 87 and 226). Along the same lines, Marnix Dressen divides organizations into 'Maoist-Leninist' – which includes the old Union des Jeunes Communistes marxiste-leniniste (UJCml) and the Parti Communiste Marxiste-Leniniste de France (PCMLF), officially recognized by China – and 'Maoist-Anarchist' – the case of Gauche Prolétarienne and its short-lived offshoot Vive la Revolution!. In broad strokes, the first strand was influenced by the Sino-Soviet conflict and the Bolshevik concept of the proletarian vanguard, whereas the second was characterized by a greater spontaneity in attitudes and practices, and seduced by the imaginary of the Cultural Revolution (Dressen 1999, 21).

Portuguese Oppositions: Between Colonialism and Anticolonialism

The geopolitical context that emerged from World War II had a strong impact on the anticolonial movement of the ensuing years. Seen as a struggle against Germanic expansionism, the Allied victory served to affirm the principles that would be established in the United Nations Charter, namely in chapter XI, compelling countries with colonies to encourage the progressive development of free political institutions. Later on, the UN would even advocate that colonial powers had the duty to prepare the territories under their administration for independence. In April of 1955, at the Bandung Conference (Indonesia), twenty-nine African and Asian countries met, including the USSR, China and India, and condemned colonialism, calling for the unity of all peoples against it.

In Portugal, the 1951 constitutional revision transformed the colonies into 'overseas territories', a cosmetic change that in fact aimed at neutralizing the above-mentioned chapter XI of the UN Charter. This ploy was intended to assert that the country indeed had no colonies, but only national provinces that had the remarkable characteristic of being located on different continents, although the so-called 'Indigenous Statute' in force excluded the vast majority of the native inhabitants of those territories from the rights of Portuguese citizenship.

Colonialism and the cult of the Empire were, as a matter of fact, the mainstays of the ideological discourse of the Estado Novo (1933–1974). At the same time that the regime extolled rural life – the dictator Salazar defined himself as a Catholic 'peasant, son of peasants, poor, son of poor people' (Salazar 1951, 351) – it based itself on a strong imperial mystique that identified the country with an inescapable civilizing mission overseas. The sacralization of the Empire is intimately connected, in Portugal, both to the idea of maintaining its independence from Spain within the Iberian Peninsula, and to the need of preserving the image of a nation associated to the 'sacred legacy' of the golden period of the 'Discoveries'.

Also because of that, the post-war decolonizing winds reached the opposition in a very indirect manner. Like the supporters of the regime, a significant part of the old republicans believed that the Empire provided an opportunity to recover the nation's 'lost glory'. Prominent opposition figures were open supporters of Portuguese colonialism, and so the issue was marginalized in the forums of political debate that the dictatorship allowed to take place from time to time. The subject is not raised in either the Programme for the Democratization of the Republic in 1961, or in Humberto Delgado's electoral manifesto in 1958 – whose candidacy galvanized the opposition and alarmed the regime to such an extent that it trumped the results and prohibited the holding of presidential elections from then on.

The Socialists themselves, gathered in 1964 around the ASP (Portuguese Socialist Action), maintained an ambiguous position during the sixties: they condemned the colonial policy, but only declared the right of colonized peoples to independence at a later stage. By the time the war started in Angola, in early February 1961, only the PCP (Portuguese Communist Party) had recognized the right of the colonies to self-determination and independence. During its 5th Congress, in 1957, it had shifted from its previous position, based on the establishment of local party sections in the colonies, to one which consisted in encouraging parties formed of essentially indigenous bases and leaders to fight for independence (Pereira 2005, 502–72).

An 'Evolving Dualistic Society'

In the late sixties, Portugal saw the intensification of the tendency towards the concentration and modernization of industry that had been noticeable since the beginning of the decade. Portuguese society, primarily rural and dominated by the peasantry, could now begin to be defined as an 'evolving dualist society', influenced by the conflicting coexistence of both traditional and modern values, attitudes and behaviors (Nunes 2000, 25–84). For the first time ever, there seemed to be 'an industrial alternative to agricultural employment, and this implied a new organization of work, higher wages, and longer periods of employment throughout the year'. Thus, the years between 1960 and 1973 registered 'the greatest rate of economic growth in the history of the country' (Barreto 2000, 70). This spurt of industrialization was attended by a set of changes that contributed to a shift in mentalities.

In the first place, one should note the growing influx of foreigners to Portugal, especially to the coastal areas. Whereas, in 1959, foreign visitors barely reached 300,000 [three hundred thousand], in 1973 this number jumped to over four million (Telo 1989, 86). The Portuguese population, traditionally isolated from outside influences, now had direct contact with the British, French or Germans

that visited the country, especially in the summer. Additionally, this period also saw a growing number of Portuguese departing from their homeland. Emigration fluxes, usually to Africa or the Americas, shifted rapidly to Europe, particularly to France. If until the late fifties the numbers remained stable at around thirty thousand, between 1958 and 1974 one and a half million people emigrated, an impressive figure if we bear in mind that the country had just over eight million inhabitants at the time. We should also note that this figure is somewhat underestimated, since, besides legal emigration, it only takes into account illegal emigration to France. Between 1969 and 1971, about 350,000 Portuguese left the country for France, and 90 per cent of them did it illegally (Freitas 1989, 191–200).

We should also mention the new lease on life given to the media. Television had a fundamental role in this process. Whereas in 1960, three years after RTP (Portuguese Radio-Television) began its regular broadcasts, there were 31,256 TV sets in Portugal, by 1974 this number had increased twenty-four times, reaching 722,315. All of a sudden, images of 'Vietnam, of Hollywood, of May of 68 or of the mass in Saint Peter's Basilica, entered Portuguese homes, changing forever their view of the world, which until then had been confined to barely more than their town or village' (Telo 1989, 87). However much the regime sought to resist this tendency, prohibiting public demonstrations, censoring the media and carefully inspecting their boundaries, it was practically impossible to control the influx of new means of mass consumption which were undoubtedly helping to shape young people.

Thus, music, cinema, literature, comics, the theater and clothing styles served as means of questioning the *status quo*, and explicitly showed that things were beginning to change: the urban schooled youth – and people in close contact with them – no longer saw themselves as an amalgam of subjects in an unfinished process of social integration, but started to act, think and feel according to their own models, more often than not out of sync with the isolationist rhetoric of the regime and the dominant features of moral conservatism.

Even so, in Portugal it was primarily the combative version of the sixties culture that prevailed. For some, unlike what happened in other countries, 'the mystic hippy movement' was never an object of symbolic construction (Resende and Vieira 1992, 134). Rui Bebião (2003), however, points to localized spaces where this symbolic construction began to take shape, although it had no practical expression and was clearly subordinated to the urgency of politicized discourse. The reason for this is surely related to the persistence of the specter of the colonial war, political repression, the reach of a conservative Catholic morality over several domains, and the country's weak urban development. In the multifaceted field of the opposition itself, hedonistic and anti-hierarchical behaviors were seen as irreconcilable with

the abnegation required by the 'antifascist' cause and with the conspirational cautions that the political situation demanded from all those who wanted to join the organized fight against the regime.

Marcelism, the Last Station

In August of 1968, the 79 year-old António de Oliveira Salazar fell from a chair in his vacation residence, at the Fort of São João do Estoril, and become unable to lead the government. Marcello Caetano, seventeen years younger than Salazar, and with connections to the Estado Novo since its foundation, was appointed to his place. Despite these connections, Caetano had acquired the reputation of being a liberal in the fifties and sixties, particularly after his resignation from the position of rector at the University of Lisbon in 1962, in the aftermath of the invasion of the student union premises by the police. Withdrawn from active politics since then, Caetano had led from the wings a sort of 'informal party', seeking to 'make a difference; to gather strength and influence within the regime; to wait for the right moment for succession' (Rosas 1994, 507).

Marcello Caetano's political project consisted in a 'program of opening up and decompression of the regime, with technocratic and developmentalist undertones' (Rosas and Oliveira 2004, 11–2). Bent on uniting the ultraconservative and liberalizing sectors of society, Marcello Caetano summed up his program in the expression 'renewal in continuity'. If 'continuity' meant abiding by the legal-institutional line of the Estado Novo, as well as maintaining the overseas territories as a national, and even civilizational, issue of the utmost importance, the 'renewal' was reflected in a series of measures of political decompression that would take shape in the so-called 'Marcellist Spring'. Among these were the return from exile of the Socialist Mário Soares in October of 1968, and of the Bishop of Oporto, António Ferreira Gomes, in July of 1969; the limitation of certain powers of the political police and its transformation from the International Police for the Defense of the State (PIDE) to General Security Directorate (DGS) in November of 1969; the passing of new labor union laws in April of 1969, which no longer required elected union directorates to be officially approved; the change of the National Union party into the Popular National Action party in February of 1970, and its opening to new currents, of which the most significant example is the integration of the so-called 'liberal wing' into its lists for the 1969 general elections.

In the early seventies, keeping up the military effort in Africa led to the sacrifice of liberalization and ultimately of the regime itself. The political police returned to its repressive role, not only against the Communist Party and the extreme left, but also against more moderate ideological sectors. The intensification of

repression against Catholic oppositional fringes would culminate, in 1973, in the imprisonment and compulsive resignation of individuals from public service after a vigil for peace that took place at the Rato Chapel in Lisbon. Inside the government, a bill on the freedom of the press presented to Parliament by representatives of the liberal wing was rejected, a fact which signaled the tendency of the regime towards closure. This tendency was also visible in the constitutional revision of 1971, where all liberal proposals were rejected.

This process of hardening went hand in hand with the consolidation of the oppositional dynamic. From 1970, strikes, protests and social unrest increased. Intersindical was established, gathering together several unions that did not support the regime. Specific Catholic fringe groups that were particularly active in their denunciation of the war expressed their opposition to the regime. Armed opposition against the Estado Novo began, organized by civilian groups of a political-military character intent on wearing down the regime – namely, ARA (Armed Revolutionary Action), connected to the PCP, LUAR (Revolutionary Unity and Action League) and the BR (Revolutionary Brigades). A large variety of small leftist groups appeared and challenged the Communist Party's hegemony in the universities and, in some cases, in the unions and working-class milieus. As a rule, these new groups were the offspring of the fragmentation of Portuguese Marxist-Leninist founding organizations, namely FAP (Popular Action Front) and CMLP (Portuguese Marxist-Leninist Committee), which were established after Francisco Martins Rodrigues left the PCP, in August 1963. At about this time, at a meeting of the Central Committee that took place in Moscow, Martins Rodrigues presented his criticisms of the party, which would later be summarized in the document entitled *Luta Pacífica e Luta Armada no nosso Movimento (Peaceful Struggle and Armed Struggle in our Movement)*. In it, he proposed an armed proletarian revolution rather than the prevailing party line, based on 'cross-class alliance' and on the thesis of the 'national democratic revolution', which Martins Rodrigues considered a 'pacifist distortion of Leninism' (1970, 18). After leaving the PCP, he and a small group of people created the FAP, directed towards the armed struggle, and, in April of 1964, the CMLP, the embryo of a "true" future communist party. Both organizations, indistinguishable in practical terms, would be hit hard by the police in 1965 and 1966, and their principal leaders condemned to heavy prison sentences.

An increasing and intricate divisiveness would lead to the splitting of FAP/CMLP into a set of new groups. Accusing the PCP of being 'revisionist' and 'reformist', all of them claimed to represent the 'pure' Marxist-Leninist principles, which meanwhile had shifted from the Soviet Union to countries like China or Albania. Despite their small size, most of these structures had their 'mass' and 'theoretical' newspapers, and devoted themselves to intensive

work of agitation. One part of activist work was developed abroad, among emigrants – especially in France – by former members of the CMLP, whose constant infighting led to bitter splits. At home, two groups stood out: the MRPP (Reorganizing Movement of the Party of the Proletariat), founded in September of 1970 from a Lisbon student structure; and the OCMLP (Portuguese Marxist-Leninist Communist Organization), established at the end of 1972 from the merger of O Comunista [The Communist], active among emigrants, and O Grito do Povo [The People's Shout], based especially in the North.

These organizations had a number of features that came to revamp the oppositionist *modus operandi*. In the first place, they chose as their major banners the struggle against the colonial war and the defense of the proletarian revolution, using a radical and voluntarist discourse. Second, they elected new political icons, such as Ho Chi Minh, Mao Zedong and Che Guevara, characterized by a 'fundamentally antirealist voluntarism' which, in the case of Mao and Che, extended to the ideological, political and cultural questioning of the Soviet norm (Frank 2000, 36). Third, and as a consequence, they introduced a different style of confrontation of power, bolder and more direct, which included daring demonstrations, the distribution of pamphlets in broad daylight and the stoning of banks. Primarily located in student and young workers milieus, this new kind of activism spilled over into adjoining social spaces, a phenomenon confirmed by the fact that the police began to pay more attention to it.

The Colonial Wars

Beginning in February of 1961 in Arigola, and gradually extending to other territories – Guinea in January of 1963, and Mozambique in August of 1964 – the wars that the Portuguese state waged against the African independence movements directly affected the young college students. Most young men knew that they had to serve in the military for a period of at least three years, far away from their homes and communities, and facing severe physical and psychological risks. Even so, the issue of war was rarely raised in a critical and open manner. A veil of silence covered 'a misinformed and controlled public opinion, distant from the African problems, but educated within an intense imperial mystique' (Ribeiro 2004, 174). The reasons for this are also to be found in cultural norms – of honor, pride, masculinity –, as Fernando Dacosta writes in *Nascido no Estado Novo [Born in the Estado Novo]*:

Not to serve in the army, to be exempted, had become a sign of inferiority, a blemish. To be released from this was even shameful – there were young men who lost their girlfriends and reputations because of this. (Dacosta 2001, 265)

Little by little, the colonial war led to a clear distancing between the interests of the Estado Novo and the aspirations of young people. Between 1961 and 1974, about 200,000 young men missed conscription. Between 1970 and 1972, the percentage of draft evaders was already over 20 per cent, corresponding to more than 50,000 in these 3 years (*Resenha...* 1988, 258). We should take into account the fact that, in percentage terms, Portugal had more men in the army than any other western country, excepting Israel. Mobilization would have been equivalent to the United States sending two and a half million men to Vietnam rather than the 500,000 that actually served there (Fernandes 2002).

In contrast to the compliant attitude of the Catholic Church hierarchy in general, some Catholic groups developed a pacifist action, essentially consisting in attempts to defy censorship and report on the war. Opposition to the conflict was, however, restricted to a few critical circles. In February of 1968, a demonstration against the Vietnam War in front of the US Embassy organized by sectors of the emerging extreme left, had already indirectly brought the subject into the public arena. However, the colonial war was still absent from the explicit list of demands made during an important student incident that took place in Coimbra in 1969, although soon after it became the central issue of activism in the universities.

In contrast to the cautious way in which the PCP approached the issue, the M-L groups placed the colonial war at the top of their agenda of demands. Advising desertion (with arms, if possible), the Maoists distanced themselves from the PCP's proposal of sending its militants to the frontlines. The stance taken in relation to the colonial war – to desert or to keep serving in the army – was often crucial when choosing political sides. Helder Costa, one of the main leaders of O Comunista, talks about the way he confronted this question in an interview:

Those guys [PCP] were after me for over a year. Then I went on holidays, for months, bought the Communist Party Manifesto in Paris, the history of socialism, I learned a lot, read the thing during my holidays, and when I got back I met with the guy and said, 'Hey, I want in. I looked at it, read some stuff, and since this is a decision for life...' 'For life?' he said. And I said, 'Yes, it is, it is up to one to choose, it's for that'. The guy was very impressed, and I said immediately, 'the colonial war'. 'Hey man, we have to go and such', he answered. 'But why? Hell, my comrades are over there, and then how is it going to be? We all meet in the jungle and such, hey, Long live the Prá-Kys-Tão!?' [a college fraternity in Coimbra where he had lived and socialized with African students]. It's out of the question [laughter]! The guy starts looking at me: 'Well, it's got to be, to make the

war more human'. 'Hey, we're wrong, there is no problem, but I won't join'. It was like this, it was easy. For me it was a key issue.

(Costa 2007)

For the PCP (M-L) [the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of Portugal], born in France in the early seventies from the former CMLP, the watchword was 'to join the army' in order to 'learn how to deal with guns' and make 'agitation and anticolonialist propaganda amongst the soldiers who were about to leave for the war'. However, the question was whether 'to desert before boarding the ship or to sail to the colonies'. Bearing in mind the unorganized situation of the proletariat, which precluded 'true revolutionary work among the expeditionary units', their proposal was to desert. On the other hand, and unlike the cases in which the communists were told they should take part in imperialist wars in order to take advantage of the arming of the working classes, in this case 'the bourgeoisie established in S. Bento [the seat of Parliament] never loses control of the armed masses, because they are unarmed when they return to Portugal'. Thus, 'in the end, to desert is the lesser evil' (*Estrela Vermelha* 1972, n.13).

Desertion did not always imply having to emigrate illegally. A less obvious alternative was to go underground 'inside', with the goal of assuming leadership assignments or becoming proletarian under a false identity. Many processes of 'embedding' in factories took place within the OCMLP, involving mostly students who chose of their own free will to follow a path of downward social mobility. Pedro Bacelar de Vasconcelos was someone who did this. As he reports,

In September of 1973 I deserted with all the war equipment I could stuff into my bag ... Of my own will I went undercover and went to work at a factory in the area of Covilhã. I formally joined the OCMLP only then, when I decided to 'go to the factory'.

(Vasconcelos 2008)

Nevertheless, these groups did not uniformly encourage desertion. We should highlight the dissonant position of the URML (Marxist-Leninist Revolutionary Unit), for which desertion represented an 'individualistic and opportunistic attitude' that led 'necessarily to the loss of elements on whom the Proletarian Revolution might count' (*Folha Comunista* 1971, n.2). It should also be noted that some groups inhibited the leading militants from deserting, opting instead for their staying in the country underground. Vidaúl Ferreira, one of the MRPP founders, states:

A person like me would not go to France. Certain people of ours who deserted from the war did indeed. But if I went, we would all go. One of our

criticisms of the PCP was precisely that: 'Well, Cunhal is the leader of the PCP and he is in Paris, in Russia, etc.' For us it was important to stay here.

(Ferreira 2007)

The MRPP was, indeed, the group that achieved the greatest visibility in the field of anticolonial activism. Resorting to a triumphalist language copied from posters of the Cultural Revolution, the first issue of the party newspaper *Luta Popular* [*Popular Struggle*], dated February 1971, has this headline on its front page: 'Long Live the Great, Glorious and Just Revolutionary Fight for the National Liberation of the Oppressed Peoples of the Colonies' (*Luta Popular* 1971, n.1). Furthermore, MRPP militants were clearly hostile towards the PCP, and were, at one point, the only Maoist group that did not propose to 'reconstruct' this party, but rather 'to found it', since they held that no communist party had ever existed in Portugal. The murder of their militant Ribeiro dos Santos by the DGS would contribute to an even greater escalation of this sectarian rift, with accusations of communist involvement in this homicide. Neither was the remainder of the extreme-left groups spared, being dubbed as a 'neo-revisionist brotherhood' (*Que Viva Estaline!* 1972).

Most groups created structures that dealt specifically with the anticolonial struggle. The CRML (Marxist-Leninist Revolutionary Committee) was practically indistinct from the Popular War Committees that were active in some Lisbon schools, and which were their sole visible face, since this group viewed the colonial war as 'the main contradiction in the Portuguese social formation' (*Guerra Popular* 1972, n.4). In the early seventies, several Anticolonial Struggle Committees emerged, driven by militants of different M-L groups, although with a strong informal and decentralized component. In addition to these structures based in student milieus, which showed a more aggressive and strident activism, the different Maoist organizations also established units in barracks and in some working-class clusters.

Among political emigrants, namely in France, the M-L extreme left kept putting out papers such as *A Voz do Povo* [The People's Voice] (1968-75), *O Salto* [The Leap] (1970-4), *O Alarme!* [The Alarm!] (1972-5), *Ergue-te e Luta* [Rise and Fight] (1972-3), *Alavanca* [The Lever] (1972-4) and *A Voz do Desertor* [The Deserter's Voice] (1973), which focused on denouncing colonialism and supporting African liberation movements. Many of these publications, although short-lived, were sponsored by important French intellectuals: Marguerite Duras was director of *Camarada*, François Chatelet was in charge of *Les luttes de classe au Portugal*, and Jean-Paul Sartre supported *O Alarme!*, due to the connections between the OCMLP, which published the paper, and the Gauche Proletarienne. At the same time, the cultural work carried out in emigrant associations, namely through theatre groups, literacy courses and

social events with politically engaged music, deepened the connections between deserters and economic emigrants, which constituted the great majority of the Portuguese community in France (Climaco 1992).

Rhetorics of Violence

The practices and discourses originating in the M-L area were based on exercises of legitimation of violence, which was viewed simultaneously as a way of resisting tyranny and of achieving power. As one of the URML newspapers stated, 'the essence of the capitalist State lies in the counter-revolutionary violence of the exploiting classes, and can only be destroyed by the revolutionary violence of the oppressed and exploited' (*Revolução Proletária* 1973, n.2). Thus, for the Maoist-based groups, the point was not to condemn the violence of war, but to show that its iniquity lay in its imperialist character. The watchword 'War of the people against the colonial war', introduced in the anticolonialist demonstrations of February 1973, served precisely to encapsulate this idea (*Luta Popular* 1973, n.11-12).

The idea of revolution as a process carried out by armed popular masses, led by a disciplined party under the rule of democratic centralism, naturally appeared as an indisputable dogma in the theoretical production of these groups. The model of the 'people in arms' and the need for a type of disciplined and selfless militant, following Lenin's statements in *What Is To Be Done?*, was asserted in the following manner by the CCR (M-L) (Marxist-Leninist Revolutionary Committees):

The bourgeoisie will never give up power in a peaceful manner; therefore, we have no illusions about the possibility of a smooth and peaceful transformation of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie into the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the second place, we want the armed struggle to be a true popular struggle... In this we distance ourselves from the Castrists, who want to replace the armed struggle of the working masses with the violent action of a fistful of lone heroes.

(*Viva o Comunismo!* 1970, n.2-3).

However, the problematic relationship that developed with the Cuban phenomenon allows us to qualify this idea and also to point to the existence of other ways of understanding violence in this political field. Indeed, right at the beginning of the sixties, Cuba was regarded with fondness in some sectors, both inside and outside the PCP, which contested its policy of alliances. Francisco Martins Rodrigues, then in the process of breaking away from the PCP and on the verge of creating the FAP and the CMLP, recalls that the Cuban appeal was 'actually at the base of

the party', since it illustrated an unprecedented 'revolutionary transformation in favor of the workers, which opted for the armed struggle', and which showed that it was possible to take an insurrectionary route that was distant from the putschist anticommunism of the republicans (Rodrigues 2008).

Although defending the thesis of 'armed popular uprising' in the early years of Portuguese Maoism (1964–6), there are indications of a certain sympathy for the Cuban revolutionary eagerness. This would reappear within the CMLP in the years that followed, giving rise to internal protests, self-criticism and splits. O Comunista, a federation gathering different committees throughout Europe, was one of the collectives in which these ideas found extensive expression. Hélder Costa, one of its major figures, underlines the issue in the following way:

I also had great admiration for the Cuban revolution. Because they started a revolution there, on their own, on an island, the boycotts, the invasion, and those guys resisting... And the question of Cuba, of Che Guevara, began to create a certain kind of friction. I had a position that was not theoretical, it was more at the level of sensitivity, how one feels things... I never supported the focus theory, but I always admired the guys that wanted to get into a fight.

(Costa 2007)

As a matter of fact, only the PRP/BR (Revolutionary Party of the Proletariat/ Revolutionary Brigades), founded in 1973, proclaimed its support of Guevarism. A couple of years earlier, in 1971, another organization that emerged outside the strict Maoist circle, ARCO (Communist Revolutionary Action), had shown its support of Marighela's theories of armed struggle, but it was rapidly dismantled by the PIDE/DGS before it had been able to carry out any action. Nevertheless, even an openly Maoist structure like the OCMLP witnessed an attempt to impose guerilla tactics at the beginning of 1974. One of the leaders that did not go along with the new strategy, and as a consequence was arrested by militants of the emerging faction, was José Queirós. He describes how it happened in the following manner:

It was basically a conflict between what we called a 'mass line' (or, in the language of the period, the 'reconstruction of the party in the mass struggle') and a guerilla line, which wanted to arm the Workers Committees and set off violence... But none of this was yet very clearly assumed, and it came wrapped in an ideological discourse that mixed up radical swaggering and slogans inspired by the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

(Queirós 2008)

Whether or not they gave in to the temptation of armed struggle, Portuguese Maoist groups were marked by a yearning for rupture that led them to believe that arms were necessary for the overthrow of the dictatorship and the establishment of a classless society. In contrast to the PCP, which defined itself around a notion of 'national identity' (Neves 2008), these collectives put the accent on an insurrectionary internationalism and anti-imperialism that is quite visible in their magazine and newspaper articles, in the texts of their communiqués and in the watchwords used in their demonstrations.

Even the dates celebrated by the political prisoners illustrate this issue. According to the group *A Vanguarda* [*The Vanguard*], the 'revisionists' – as the PCP militants were called – commemorated, at the Peniche Prison, the 5th of October of 1910, the day of the establishment of the Republic, a day when 'the liberal bourgeoisie triumphed over the monarchy'. They also celebrated the 1st of December [of 1640], marking the restoration of independence, when 'the Portuguese monarchy overthrew the rule of the Spanish monarchy'. In contrast, the M-L militants celebrated, among other events, the anniversary of the Chinese Revolution, the October Revolution, the beginning of the armed struggle in Angola, the centenary of Lenin's birth, and paid homage to Ho Chi Minh on the day of his death (*As lutas...*, n.d.).

On April 25th 1974, when a military coup led by middle-ranking army officers, tired of an endless war fought on three fronts (Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau), put an end to the longest dictatorship in Europe, the immediate flooding of the streets by the population showed that there was a 'fourth front', non-aligned with the regime. Although not unique, the action and rhetoric of the constellation of M-L groups and organizations were the most boisterous, clearly exceeding the restricted militant circles and promoting an extreme politicization of some social sectors. This is a process that needs to be taken into account in order to understand the agitated process of decolonization in those African places and the turbulent revolutionary period that occurred in Portugal after the Carnation Revolution, between 1974 and 1975.

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