

THE ALMOST PERFECT CRIME



The Misrepresentation of
Portuguese Anarchism

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JURA BOOKS
PO Box 32 Petersham Nth.
NSW 2049 Ph: 02 9550 9931

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The Misrepresentation of Portuguese Anarchism
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BM Hurricane,
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Kate Sharpley Library
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01-04

Just think. Libertarian ideas started to penetrate Portugal around 1870 and during the first phase of the existence of the International Working Men's Association, the Spaniards Anselmo Lorenzo, Mora and Morato made a trip to Lisbon for the purpose of laying the groundwork for the Bakuninist Alliance. By 1879, figures such as the physician Eduardo Maia were calling themselves anarchists. However, Portuguese anarchism can be said to have really taken off around 1886 in the wake of the French geographer Elisée Reclus's visit to Portugal. In no time at all anarchism was making inroads among the populace, in the districts and in labour circles unhappy with formal republicanism and Jacobinism and with the electioneering socialism of Azedo Gneco – and the very mention of the Spanish internationalists named earlier is ample proof that Portuguese anarchism was always a cosmopolitan and urban movement rather than the by-product of a backward nation as some "leftwing" sociologists would have us believe. Not that it did not also make strong inroads into rural areas like the Alentejo where agricultural labourers predominated. As the basis for its organisation it adopted the affinity group, setting about organising the people, setting up libraries and throwing itself into literacy campaigns – this in a country where 80% of the population was illiterate. And it laid the foundations for a first attempt at a mass organisation – the Anarchist Carbonari – before embracing the trade union movement as a whole at the 1914 Tomar congress when the UON (National Union of Labour) was set up, opting for what has gone down in social history as revolutionary syndicalism and, later, as anarcho-syndicalism. This was a trade unionism that repudiated political parties and drew a distinction between genuine revolution and mere coup d'état, drawing its inspiration from direct action and aiming to seize the entire apparatus of production, organising output and distribution of goods whilst steering clear of State and private ownership. This was a trade unionism which looked to the Charter of Amiens (1906) and which, turn and turn about, went by the names of Casa Sindical, União Operária Nacional (National Workers' Union – UON) and Confederação Geral do Trabalho (General Confederation of Labour – CGT). To get some idea of the extent of the libertarian movement in all its incarnations – and we would have to include here the Anarchist Federation of the South (1911), the Anarchist Federation of the North (1912) and the Algarve Anarchist Union (1912) – we need only remember that in 1919 (the year when the CGT was set up) the syndicalist daily newspaper *A Batalha* was launched. It survived as a daily up until 1927 at which point the fascist dictatorship forced it to shut down. By that time it was ranked No. 2 or No. 3 position in terms of newspaper sales nationwide. No other political or reformist

"trade union" denomination ever managed such a feat in the entire history of Portugal.

Plainly, the Portuguese monarchy, which had been oppressing the rural labourers for centuries, did not look kindly upon what had come over them: the "good folk" of Portugal were starting to lose their reverence for blue-blooded aristocrats. As early as 1888, Pinheiro Chagas received a beating for insulting Louise Michel, the anarchist heroine of the Paris Commune. And such beatings were followed by outraged protests against an unbearable situation: the industrialist Cipriano de Oliveira e Silva was assassinated in 1888, the civil government buildings in Oporto were bombed in 1889, the life of Augusto Forjaz, Sétubal city councillor, was attempted in 1890, the Spanish Consulate was bombed in 1892, and a device went off at the home of the Count of Folgosa in 1892. As historian Carlos da Fonseca has written "the sensational raid on the St Anthony procession in 1895, the attempt on Dr Joyce's life and two attempts on the life of the king himself (in 1893 and 1896) triggered the anti-anarchist law of 1896." But the repression that it brought in its wake was a mistake by the monarchy. Hundreds of prisoners were deported to Mozambique or Timor, many of them to die of dysentery or malarial fever: but the assassination of the king in 1908 stepped up the ante. The killing was the work of anarchists outraged by the king's tendency to appoint dictators like Hintze Ribeiro or João Franco. As one of the gunmen, Alfredo Luis da Costa, declared: "My greatest hatred, my liveliest repugnance are reserved for the bourgeois masters who exploit us and whom we shame-facedly serve." This is not the language of some republican poseur. Nor was Manuel dos Reis Buiça, the other assassin. Not to mention the third gunman in the plot, the writer Aquilino Ribeiro, a member of the same group as Costa. Since the premature explosion of a bomb being assembled in his rented quarters, Ribeiro had been living in the hills.

And then came the events of 4 and 5 October 1910. There is no point in our going into a detailed examination of the role of the Republican Party. The Party was very weak following the failure of 31 January 1891. Nor was the monarchy toppled by Machado dos Santos, the solitary rebel officer, with his 12 artillery pieces, 9 sergeants and 200 men holed up in the Rotunda. Much less the republican leaders who had made themselves scarce, holed up until they could see what way things might turn out. The monarchy was overthrown on 5 October 1910 by anarchists. As Carlos da Fonseca has it: "The real leaders of the uprising were gas-worker João Borges, barber Adelino da Costa Leal, photographer Virgílio de Sá, type-setter Artur dos Santos Silva, electricians Carlos Freitas and Santos, the blacksmith Bento Cruz, tailor António dos Santos and the fisherman César ... and lots of other anonymous contributors to republican history. It was they who

sabotaged the railway lines, cut communications, paralysed the monarchist troops with simple home-made bombs, disarmed the squadrons and, in short, hoisted the Jacobins of 1910 into power".

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The period following the establishment of the Portuguese Republic marked one of the high points of social strife in Portugal and speaks volumes for the sort of "gratitude" that the Jacobin politicians and ruling classes felt towards the men whose handiwork the events of 5 October 1910 had been – the anarchists. That must be why even today the democrats and neo-liberals avoid mentioning the matter, why the parliamentary socialists bury their heads in the sand and why the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) is uneasy when the dense veil is lifted from this crucial period of history. As if they were so traumatised by the "long night of fascist rule" that the 16 years leading up to the 28 May 1926 coup and the accession to power of the seminarian from Santa Comba Dão [Salazar] were a bed of roses. But they were anything but a bed of roses and I would borrow Malatesta's words, when he declared that "if representative democracy were a good thing, the bourgeoisie would have kept it to itself".

Whereas it was not the republicans who brought down the monarchy, it was they who installed the Republic. Lest power fall "into the streets," this was what the republicans did. Once ensconced in power, they confirmed the old libertarian adage that nobody ever conquers power; it is power that always gets the better of its conquerors. By the beginning of 1911 it was plain that there had been a parting of the ways between the republicans and the anarchists. The Bourgeois Carbonari were given carte blanche to set up "Volunteer Battalions", a para-military militia specialising in fighting strikers. One of their first actions was to encourage the business-owners to cancel the one day a week rest recently won by their employees.

Another example of the pettiness of the employers and republicans: the eight-hour working day was beginning to come in during the latter days of the monarchy (around 1908), but only much later (in 1919 in the wake of the Great War) did it become commonplace, and afterwards it was enshrined in law (Decree of 8 May 1925). The law lagged behind practice. The national bourgeoisie was always ready to "readjust the balance", snatching away with one hand what it had "given" with the other, even though the proofreaders already had a 7-hour working day! It must have been for this reason and because it understood that Revolution is not decreed from on high and doled out through the so-called "Laws of the Republic" (on divorce, the family, civil registration, separation of

Church and State, on rents, etc.) that *A Batalha* announced that: "The only thing that counts is what the people has won and a gain won requires no law."

The 1910 Jacobins however sought lawful repression, as much as the regulations would allow. Since their "Volunteer Battalions" were merely an emergency measure dictated by "counter-revolutionary legitimacy", what was need was some heavyweight praetorian force to take over from the despised Municipal Guards of the monarchy. Thus was born the GNR – the Republican National Guard – a military force capable of overruling "lawfully constituted governments and indeed Parliament itself" (As the *Dictionary of Portuguese History* defines it). A decree of 12 October 1910 from the provisional government set up a commission to look into the practicalities of this: that commission was made up of Manuel Maria Coelho, Brito Camacho and General Ernesto da Encarnação Ribeiro. And a decree on 3 May 1911 established the GNR as the primary repressive force of the new regime. As we can see the abolition of one police force and institution of another is like removing salt and adding brine. Even so, the workers refused to be intimidated. Heedless of all these impediments they threw themselves into the tough strikes mounted by farmworkers in the Alentejo, miners in Aljustrel and S. Pedro de Cova and textile-workers in Covilhã among others, provoking a redoubtable tide of solidarity across Portugal, with families all over the country taking in strikers' children, as well as the children of railway workers who also embarked upon two big strikes ... most likely without giving due notice and indicating how long the strike would last! To get some idea of the republican response, we ought to remember that the "Alentejo war" of 1912 ensured that lots of strikers served years behind bars, sometimes until after the end of the Great War and this without formal charges or their being produced in any sort of court. Meaning that the fascists' *Estado Novo* (New State), with its "pre-emptive arrests" and heavy sentences attached to "security measures" invented nothing new. And Portugal's entry into the mass slaughter of 1914-1918 was prompted by two main considerations, one openly admitted and the other a guarded secret on the one hand, the need to protect African colonies from German ambition: on the other, the need to decapitate the international, revolutionary syndicalist workers movement by sending millions to the slaughter. Obviously, the UON and the Juventudes Sindicalistas (Syndicalist Youth) held out against the war which they regarded as a capitalist device for mass destruction and looting and well known libertarians like Neno Vasco, Aurélio Quintanilha and Manuel Joaquim de Sousa urged workers to desert. There followed rioting, shootings and hurried escapes to Spain, a country that held aloof from the world war. But the majority were caught in a trap, forced to don uniforms and serve on the battle front where they were used as cannon-fodder.

However, the organised libertarian and labour movement had not quite given up the ghost. Every bit as emphatically as they had rejected the imposition of the trade record-book and any form of control or "social compromise", as we should say these days, they unleashed the 1918 general strike against the cost of living and, looking beyond the 8-hour day, embarked upon campaigns for the 6-hour day. And their Jacobin enemies had not set aside their arms either and this contributed to the widespread contempt in which all political parties were held.

Without going into a detailed catalogue of all the republican atrocities, let me say that emergency legislation opened the doors to all manner of arbitrary actions and that reintroduction of the death penalty even came under consideration. Afonso Costa, a demagogue that promised folk "all the salt cod you can eat" earned himself a reputation as a "syndicalist-breaker" and attacks on the *A Batalha* editorial offices and CGT premises became quite commonplace, as did the murder and beating of workers. The sinister António Maria da Silva, by setting up a special court in 1922 and taking charge of the repression in 1923 to 1926, allowed the deportation to Africa of many revolutionaries without any sort of a trial, in part because judges refused to "consider" outstanding cases for fear of the retaliation from anarchists who had escaped the crackdown! The conditions by then were ripe for the military coup of 28 May 1926 and the rise to power of the smooth-talking António de Oliveira Salazar, a sorry executioner with all the right qualifications – being a monarchist, a Catholic, anally retentive, the owner of a "delicate" libido dating from his days as a seminarian, and a fascist sympathiser.

3.

The repression launched under the monarchy and continued under the Republic was carried over "naturally" into the fascist era, like some swollen river breaking its banks, proving that one regime is not necessarily the antithesis of the regimes that have gone before it. I am not trying here to "spruce up" fascism or render it "banal" by lumping it with other regimes, nor am I awarding it a particularly horrific status as certain ill-intentioned phony democrats might imply. No! I am trying to point up the criminality of all regimes without exception, to show that whereas they may have differences of degree they are not different in nature. Power is an absolute evil; Power – not this form of power nor that form of power (no matter how despicable). [...]

Now to the situation in which the Portuguese libertarian and confederal movement found itself when, following the army coup of 18 April 1925 which was frustrated by the alert sounded by *A Batalha* and by the people's vigorous backlash, it decided to intervene in a different manner on 28 May 1926. On the one hand, the anarchists had nothing in common with the bourgeois parties

which had always persecuted them and, given the implosion of the PRP (Portuguese Republican Party) with its rivalries and competition over the sharing out of posts and responsibilities, this prompted the most brutal and hierarchical part of the State to step in: on the other hand, the anarchists were well aware of what lay ahead for them should their old enemy, the army, come out of its barracks. Even so, no matter how skeptical or rather disillusioned it may have been, the CGT was still the only organisation to call a general strike on 1 June. Its call went largely unheeded. In the wake of the "backlash" of 3-7 February 1927, the CGT was outlawed and the editors of *A Batalha* locked up. Do not think, however, that Portuguese fascism overcame Portuguese society in one fell swoop. It was a gradual process, on account of the time it took to get certain structures in place. After 7 years of roundabout military dictatorship – in which General Gomes da Costa took it in turns with Admiral Cabeadas to see which of them would gain the upper hand, whilst the crafty Oscar Carmona "the general with the good conduct medals" or "Caguincha (Yellow-belly)" as Gomes da Costa described him, rose through the hierarchy and the crunch only came when Carmona drafted in the ex-seminarian Salazar to solve some "book-keeping" problems and basic equations: when the 1933 constitution was endorsed by a plebiscite; and when the National Labour Statute which outlined out and out fascist-ization of the unions and their conversion into misanthropic medieval corporations under State supervision and subject to the employers' organisations came into force. Parallel with and during these "splendid" 1930s, a whole apparatus of repression was set up: there was the Portuguese Legion ("the green lice") to fight the enemy within: there was the paramilitary Portuguese Youth organisation to school young people ideologically in "wholesome" fascist principles: and there was the PVDE, the trial version of the PIDE, operating as a secret police with special powers, its sinister efficiency reliant equally upon brutal agents specialising in "timely blows", to borrow Salazar's own euphemistic expression, and upon a "flexible" and extensive network of amateur spies, generally paid by results. This was one way of ousting the military from day-to-day control and dispatching it back to its barracks and holding it in reserve for military parades only, other than dalliances with kitchen-maids or the occasional, rare exercise of armed coercion. The Roman Senate and emperors had done the same things themselves. They had not wanted to see the legions crossing the Rubicon and proceeding, under arms, down the Italian peninsula, because of the potential for trouble. They had preferred a Praetorian Guard to look after their day-to-day protection.

Reacting against its death, as foretold by the National Labour Statute, the CGT, which was having a hard time of it living underground, determined to launch an insurrectionary general strike on 18 January 1934. Except for whatever few stun

grenades or bombs it was able to put together, it was unarmed, as it had been back in 1926, in the face of the army's subversion, in spite of some empty promises from a few republican bigwigs who were, at bottom, more wary of some energetic response from the anarcho-sindicalists than upset by the fascist coup! And even though the CGT included most of the underground trade unions, it extended invitations to the few unions thrown up by the split engineered by the PCP in 1925 and which then made up the Inters-Sindical Commission (CIS) launched in March 1930, to the non-aligned unions and to the tiny associations and *casas do povo* (people's houses) which had been within the orbit of the self-disbanded (in 1933) Socialist Party and which went under the pompous title of the Federation of Workers' Associations. And the CGT claimed no special rights or privileged position for itself. The revolt, the high points of which were the sabotage and violent attacks mounted in Coimbra, Leiria, Monsanto (Lisbon), Almada, Barreiro, Silves, Vila Boim, Funcheira-Tunes-Algoz, Marinha Grande, Alto do Ulmeiro, Xabregas-Chelas, Povoia de Santa Iria and Benfica and in the peaceable strikes that took place in Barreiro, Sines, Almada and Silves was, however, defeated. Across the country many hundreds were arrested and nearly 260 were quickly convicted by the Special Court Martial and in 1936 the Tarrafal concentration camp was opened. So much for the short-term results of the attempted revolution. But there were even more drastic repercussions to follow: the CGT organisation was all but dismantled, in spite of later attempts to refloat it and the libertarian movement was reduced now to the specifically anarchist organisations – to wit, the groups of the Portuguese Regional Anarchist Federation (FARP), set up in 1932 and affiliated to the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI) founded in 1927, to tiny remnants of the Syndicalist Youth and Libertarian Youth. Even in these adverse conditions, it could still muster enough resources during the civil war in Spain to salvage the honour of Portuguese workers and help their Spanish colleagues fighting on all fronts against the concerted efforts of international fascism, British democracy and the French Popular Front as they observed a criminal policy of "neutrality" which merely operated in favour of General Franco and, last but not least, fighting also against Stalinism which, in return for war materials, was impounding all Spain's gold reserves and dispatching its goons and torturers to Spain, attempting to blind the world at large to the fact that the "civil war" in Spain was, ultimately, a redoubtable libertarian social revolution, the most far-reaching, radical experiment in self-management in the whole of history. Because of its authenticity and real chances of success, this revolution could scarcely help but counter the sinister reality of the so-called Soviet Union (without question the biggest lie of the 20th century). Thus, Portuguese anarchists bombed the Radio Club because of its pro-Nationalist

propaganda, there was the "bombs in the ministries" affair, and they saw to it that German ships unloading all sorts of armaments in Cais de Alcântara for the Spanish fascists were targeted for sabotage. It all culminated in July 1937 with the attempted assassination meant to strike at the system's "weakest link" (as would-be assassin Emidio Santana described him) – Salazar. But Salazar escaped unharmed, except for a blackened fingernail and the Spanish anarchists and syndicalists lost their war and revolution. The only possible retreat or logistical support base to which Portuguese libertarians could have looked were lost with them. A single example will suffice to point up the contrast between actors enjoying protection and those operating without back-up: when the Bulgarian communist Dimitrov was arrested by the Nazis in 1933 and charged with having set fire to the Reichstag, he was later released in 1934 and exchanged for agents of the Third Reich captured by the Russians; when Emidio Santana, one of the would-be assassins of Salazar, fled to England, he was extradited by the hypocrites of democratic Great Britain and served 16 years in prison in Lisbon and Coimbra, and was not released until 1953!

And having just mentioned an agent of Moscow, let us look at the disappointing path followed by the "enigmatic" PCP. Its predecessor was the short-lived Maximalist Federation which bedazzled a few folk who, from reading its newspaper *Bandeira Vermelha* (Red Flag), formed the impression that the famous dictatorship of the proletariat would be a very brief interlude and might even be exercised on a temporary basis by honest men with a mandate from the CGT – as the renowned Carlos Rates was later to write. Formally established in 1921, it initially enjoyed the cachet and mystery that surrounded Bolshevik Russia, walled up behind its hermetic borders. It misled a few rash and enthusiastic souls such as José de Sousa (originally with the Syndicalist Youth) and later attracted opportunists, careerists and turncoats like Carlos Rates himself who was to wind up in the National Union and editor-in-chief of the *Diário de Manhã* during the fascist era. The PCP was involved in various political intrigues as an ally of the Radical Party or the Democratic Left and always advocated electoral tactics (without being "electoralist" of course) to the detriment of the social struggle. Forever going on about unity, as soon as it was in a position of hegemony it had no hesitation in engineering a small split in the CGT ranks in 1925 simply because it needed a transmission belt to raise its profile. Gradually it came to specialise in attacking the Confederation through news-sheets like *A Internacional* or, later on, *O Proletário*. Its express aim was to detach the CGT from the IWA – the revolutionary syndicalist/anarcho-syndicalist International based in Berlin in the 1920s and including organisations like the Spanish CNT, the Italian USI, the French CGT-SR and, among others, the Swedish SAC – in order to subject it to

the dictates of the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU), based in Moscow and advocate for a certain geopolitics that could not but amount to a negation of the true spirit of internationalism. But it did not meet with much success in its efforts. Since the PCP and its tiny trade union offshoot were not even big enough to call their own meetings to mark 1 May, they asked the CGT for permission to join its marches and demonstrations and the CGT agreed, provided that the die-hard supporters of the RILU would not undermine practical unity by singing the praises of any party. Three examples of what happened when this gentlemen's agreement was breached: when the "red" or colour-blind trade unionist José Tavares dos Santos referred in 1924 to a trip by the Spanish communist Maurin (later one of the founders of the POUM) to the headquarters of the Cheka, he was promptly reminded that audiences with police chiefs were not unduly appreciated and the meeting degenerated into fisticuffs; when the PCP speakers Júlio de Matos and Carlos Marques sang the praises of the Moscow-based International in Barreiro in 1925, "the audience promptly walked out of the Railwaymen's Hall"; and finally, when on the last (lawful!) May demonstration in 1926, a Party speaker from Oporto reverted to his factious, divisive intrigues, he was "bombarded" by the audience with the organic material that his refined arguments deserved – cow dung! [...]

As 18 January 1934 approached the PCP was "worried" again. Its general secretary, Bento Gonçalves was opposed to any strike or insurrectionist venture and argued instead for general meetings to whip up the workers to reject the National Labour Statute. Imagine, stopping fascism in its tracks with study groups! But the CIS opted to disobey him and to urge the CGT into action. Otherwise, it stated in a rush of blood to the heads, it would go it alone. In short, if the uprising succeeded the PCP would have a foot in its camp: but if it failed it would be written off as an "anarcho-fiasco". That in fact was the term employed by Bento Gonçalves in criticising the uprising since as Emídio Santana stated "honesty and consistency are not PCP features". [...]

"Red" trade unionism was wound up when, following the 7th congress of the Comintern in 1935, PCP militants were required by their leaders to enter the Salazarist syndicates. And since crime and treachery sometimes bring rewards, we find them in the ascendancy in the unions, come the revolution of 25 April 1974. Whereupon, speaking from the heights to which they had so diligently climbed, they attempted to use the law to impose an authoritarian "single trade union" or enforced unity of the "verticalist" variety typical of fascism, Peronism or indeed Lenino-Stalinism. [...]

Two further instances of tightrope-walking by the Marxist-Leninists that require explanation. Why was it that the PCP, after 25 April 1974 represented the only labour movement of any consequence in the fight against Salazar on 18 January 1934 into a "communist" fief and went further by citing the setting up of a short-lived soviet in Marinha Grande, complete with the unfurling of the red flag? This according to Francisco Martins Rodrigues, erstwhile heir apparent to Cunhal and "father" to Portuguese Maoism in the 1960s. These days it is common knowledge – common to all but these "witnesses at some remove" that whilst there might have been a communist preponderance in Marinha Grande, unlike the trend in the rest of the country, the added lyrical touch of the "soviet" is merely a stratagem to draw attention away from the fact that the local glassworkers' union contained communists and non-communists. Less well known is the fact that the attack upon local GNR (Republican National Guard) and its 12 man contingent was made feasible thanks to bombs supplied to the trade unionists of Marinha Grande ... by anarchists! But Marinha Grande was scarcely one of the focal points of the revolutionary general strike in 1934. And proof that the entire movement was libertarian in its make-up and dynamism – with the anarchists sweeping the other participants into action rather than the other way round – is the fact that all the local "mass" strikes were promoted by the CGT in Barreiro, Sines, Almada and Silves, as were most of the acts of sabotage carried out. And the reason for this is plain to see: neither the PCP nor the CIS had the capability. Just look at the affiliations of the six men given severe sentences by the Special Court Martial and all becomes clear. Mário Castellano who was sentenced to be transported for 16 years was an anarcho-syndicalist railwayman and one of the leading lights of the CGT. Even though captured prior to 18 January 1934, he took charge of the uprising in Lisbon and nationally. José Ventura Paixão and José Alexandre who were involved in sabotage in Coimbra and got 18 year sentences for their trouble were also anarchists. Anarchists too were Bernardo Casaleiro Pratas and Arnaldo Simões Januário who got 20 year sentences, the former for an act of sabotage and the latter for being the top CGT official in Coimbra. The only PCP member – who also received a barbaric 20 year sentence – was António Guerra from Marinha Grande. But there is something really odd about Marinha Grande: the first batch of beneficiaries of an amnesty secured in December 1935 through the intercession of the Bishop of Leiria was made up mostly of glassworkers from Marinha Grande. Yet another milestone in the fruitful "dialogue between Catholics and Marxists" perhaps? The fact of the matter is that the conduct of the PCP left so much to be desired – as José Gregório was to admit in his 1955 report – that the PCP had great difficulty in re-establishing its foothold in Marinha Grande. Because of the inconsistency of

Bento Gonçalves rejecting the uprising as an "anarcho-fiasco" at the time and the PCP today shamelessly claiming ownership of the same uprising? [...]

The PCP could not be outdone by its sister parties when it came to "resistance". Stunned by the Nazi-Soviet Pact, its quickly recomposed itself. In 1939 it drafted its "new Policy" and communicated it to the director of the Tarrafal concentration camp. What it proposed was enticing: an alliance between fascist and communist in the event of an attack upon their Portuguese homeland. Luckily the head torturer had a greater sense of shame than Bento Gonçalves, the chief torture victim and author of this proposal. By rejecting any alliance in any circumstances the chief-gaoler salvaged the party's "honour" [...]

The 1974 downfall of the oldest fascist dictatorship in western Europe resulted in euphoria. In Paris, French comrades from the Anarchist Federation and Spanish refugees provided me with contacts and only months after 25 April 1975 and after I had returned from my "gilded" exile in France and Brazil did I get to know them. "Them" being of course the men and women I met in the Rua Angelina Vidal in Lisbon, helping out with the re-launch of *A Batalha*: or the ones I met in Almada at the Libertarian Cultural Centre, publishing *Voz Anarquista* or the others I met in Oporto and Coimbra, Evora or on the Algarve, caught up in the revolution and busy with other projects. I mean people such as Adriano Botelho, Emidio Santana, José Correia Pires, Reis Sequeira, José de Brito, Barreto Atalaio, Sebastião de Almeida, Artur Modesto, Jorge Quaresma, Francisco Quintal, Luisa Adão, José Bernardo, Abílio Gonçalves, Acácio Tomás de Aquino, José Francisco, Joaquim Pedro, Custódio da Costa, Elias Matias, José Paulo Lola, António Machado and others. Most of them by then in their 60s or 70s; a few, like Adriano Botelho well past 80. They made up what might be termed the CGT's libertarian "old guard", were it not for our aversion to military-sounding terminology. Mostly they were skilled workers, but not very well off; a few were brilliantly self-educated, the ripened fruits of "the school of hard knocks" and wide reading – without doubt more intelligent and cultivated than the bosses who made them sweat, which was another constant feature of anarcho-syndicalism's frictions with the penny-pinching ignoramuses of the "employer class". In addition they were all blessed with an outstanding sense of independence, organisational ability and instinct for freedom. They gave the lie to the innuendo peddled by "scientific socialism" and by the bourgeoisie, to the effect that anarchism never passed "primitivism". Born neither to serve nor to be served, they looked upon the social revolution as a lengthy process of liberation from taboos, preconceptions and superstitions rather than as some reductive, cynical "transitional" dictatorship and, relying upon their own capabilities, they know that it is not beyond the workers to

achieve a world that is run directly by workers organised at local, regional and international levels. They had aged as good wines age and even though they were graduates of Salazar's prisons, racking up jail time that in some instances amounted to 10, 15 or 20 years, they avoided rehearsing their past when it was mentioned. [...]

I call to mind a few cases, neither isolated nor exceptional, related to me by some old folk with that unfussy calm that signals human bravery: António Caldeira's stunning escape back in monarchist times from deportation in Angola, his secret return to Lisbon, his recapture and further banishment to Guinea; the very turbulent life of Bartolomeu Constantino, a fiery orator, sometime journalist and shoe-maker who was in the Transmontana Workers' Union and died in poverty on 11 January 1916 at the age of 52, after he had been arrested on 36 occasions; José Caandreira's battles with the most reactionary and parasitical classes in the country (the landowners) in Alentejo under the First Republic and the communalist experiments of António Gonçalves, founder of the "Commune of Light": the fraught life of Manuel Joaquim de Sousa, from the CGT secretariat, whose life was so often threatened by the republican police and the PCP-linked Red Legion alike; the exemplary life of Mário Castelhanos – a universally respected anarchist and syndicalist – a practical man of plain ideas, author of *The Means of Transport and Social Change*, the driving force behind massive strikes and architect of 18 January 1934, deported in 1926 to Angola, in 1930 to Pico Island, from where he escaped in 1931 thanks to the Madeira revolt, after which he returned to Lisbon, only to be arrested again and sent with another 70 comrades as the first batch of prisoners to the Tarrafal concentration camp in 1936, to perish there on 12 October 1940 because "Doctor Death" (Esmeraldo Pais Pratas) refused him medicine; the courage of the Setúbal fisherman Jaime Rebelo who died in 1975, after serving in the Spanish civil war and as an exile in France and who, under torture by the PIDE, bit off his own tongue in an act that moved the historian Jaime Cortesão to pen the poem "*Romance of the Man with the Closed Mouth*". [...]

Exercising its right to criticise the libertarian "old guard" also explained the main reason for the strength of Portuguese anarchism and one of its patent weaknesses: that it was made up 100% of proletarians. True, writers like Aquilino Ribeiro, Ferreira de Castro, Mário Domingues, Assis Esperança or Jaime Brasil never made any bones about their sympathy with anarchism: even so, men like the lawyer Campos Lima, the teachers Aurélio Quintanilha, Emilio Costa or Adolfo Lima, the physician and polygrapher Abel Salazar, writer Tomás da Fonseca, journalists Julião Quintanha or Cristiano Lima and the regulars at the Café Venezia were exceptions in the overall picture nationwide. [...]

However it was not just the most elderly of the anarchists that I met in the aftermath of the 25 April 1974 revolution. Since Portuguese anarchism never dropped out of social conflict, no matter what its would-be pall-bearers might say, I also met those who served as a bridge between the most elderly and the younger generation. I am thinking here of people in their 40s or 50s in 1974, people like Moisés da Silva Ramos, Irene Nobrega Quintal or Ligia Oliveira. Then came people like Gabriel Morato Pereira, António Mota, Rui Vaz de Carvalho, Jorge Mota Prego, Paulo Ferreira, Carlos Pimpão, António Alvão Carvalho or Artur Pinto, who were in their 20s or 30s. Followed by a few young workers and high school students like Vitor Sobral, Fabião or José Tavares. My apologies to those not listed here for want of space. These were the people on the basis of whom an attempt was made to refloat the libertarian movement, quite a difficult undertaking, because the fascist repression had created a generation gap and because some of those coming over to us from the Marxist family carried a whole series of "political" vices, with all the negativity that this implies, and others, victims of the loss of certain qualities, had fallen under the "spell" of a questionable reformism. Even so, it proved possible to launch new papers like *Ação Directa*, *O Meridional* or *Antítese*, as well as a publishing imprint, *Edições Sotavento*. During the so-called PREC period – from 25 April 1974 to 25 November 1975 – the AGAA (Association of Autonomous Anarchist Groups) emerged and, the groups at work (some of them affiliated to the FAI, some not) and others set up an association to help re-launch the anarcho-sindicalist movement. Among the joint ventures embarked upon we should like to mention – the 3 March 1975 demonstration against the Iberian Agreement and in solidarity with Spanish workers, the only unmistakably anti-militarist demonstration held in post-fascist Portugal, at which the cry went up "Soldiers are sons of the people, Generals are sons of bitches" – the 1975 attack on the Spanish Embassy following Franco's execution of several Basque nationalists – a meeting that completely filled the hall of *Voz do Operário* and which forced *Expresso* to carry the headline "Portuguese Anarchism in Search of a Second Wind". But the problems with making oneself heard in a highly mediated, manipulative society became plain and covered a wide spectrum: at the time of the 3 March 1975 demonstration, newspapers like the *Diário de Lisboa* saw fit not even to report the slogan mentioned earlier and merely stated that the anarchists had stated that "soldiers are sons of the people." And, come the meeting just referred to, no hack dared to report that the most common statements were "the man ends where the soldier begins" or "fear of living free generates a pride in one's slavery".

Júlio Carrapato From *Ação Directa*, No 23, February-March 2003

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