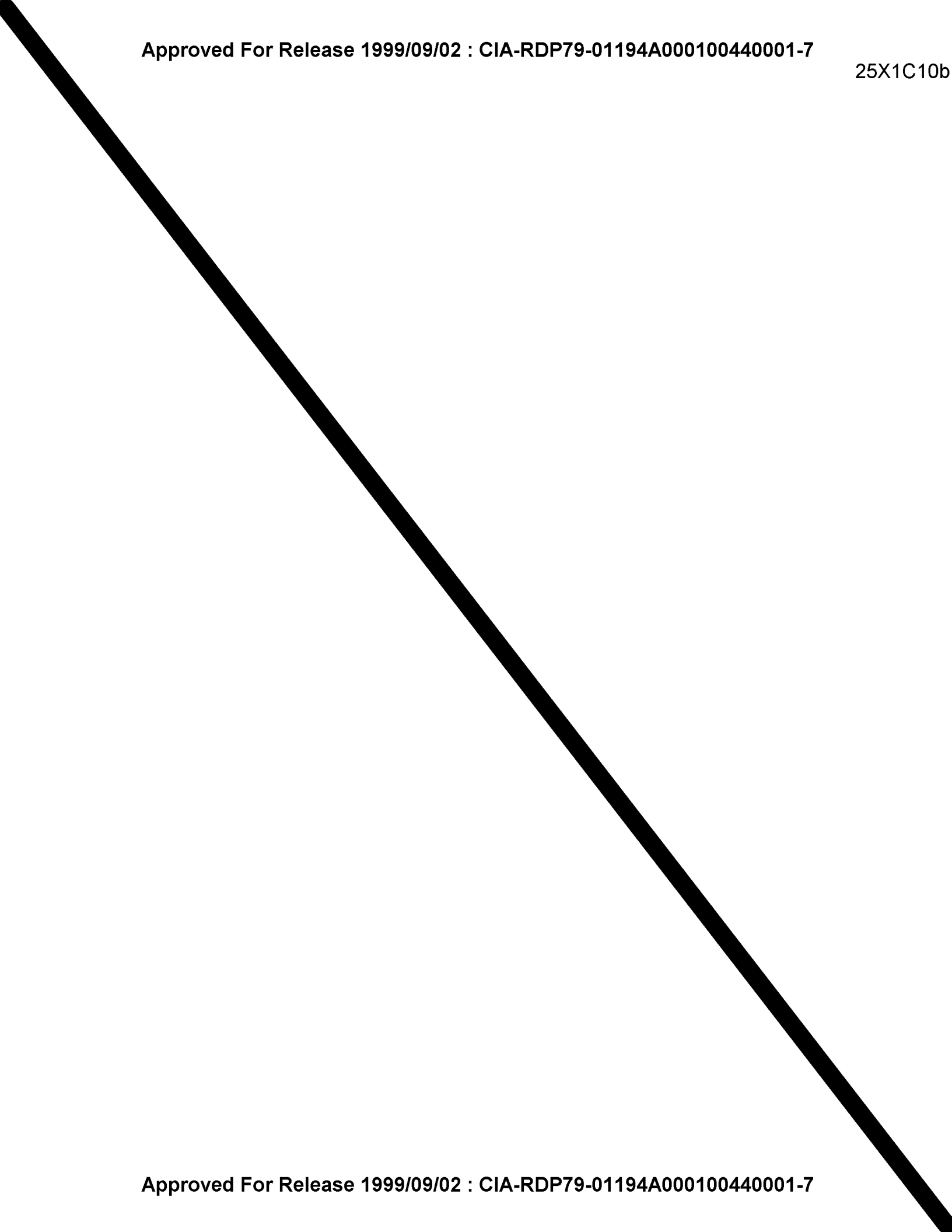

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Portugal

It's not lost yet

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

General Fabião, who is the chief of staff of Portugal's army, puts the genuine puzzlement of many Portuguese succinctly:

> For almost half a century the Portuguese people suffered under a fierce despotism that deprived them of all their liberties, without the governments of friendly countries feeling very disturbed. . . . Now that by our own efforts we free ourselves and break the chains that once bound us, there appears a whole movement, on almost a world scale, anxious about our future, frightened that we might fall into a dictatorship of the proletariat that will rob us of the freedom we have only now attained.

General Fabião did not mention the other main cause for concern among Nato countries, Portugal's strategic position in western Europe, but he has a point. It seems unfair to carp about the occasional departure from democratic norms when Portugal is, after all, gearing itself up for its first free election in 40 years. The United States has apparently decided to stop carping: last weekend the Americans announced an aid programme for Portugal which, though modest in scale, is a major departure from the attitude of anxious disapproval they have shown ever since the moderate President Spínola was made to resign in September. But the disturbing fact is that Portugal's future is much likelier to be decided by the outcome of two other power struggles now under way, in the army and the trade unions, than in the election for a constituent assembly due to take place in March.

It is premature to talk of an immediate communist takeover. The Communist party started off with a considerable tactical advantage after the April coup as the only organised underground opposition to the old Salazar-Caetano dictatorship. The Communist-dominated trade union federation, Intersindical, took firm control of the existing workers' organisations and set about unionising the rest of the labour movement. In addition, the Communists encouraged the Socialist and Popular Democratic parties, their present coalition partners, to join them in an amorphous organisation called the Portuguese Democratic Movement, which proceeded to take over four-fifths of all Portuguese local councils.

When, too late, the Socialists and Popular Democrats withdrew from the Movement, alleging that it was under Communist control, the Communists were left in full command of the councils. It also seems fairly clear that power over the press and broadcasting services has passed from editors and proprietors to unions of journalists, more often than not under Communist leadership. On December 5th all the Socialist journalists resigned from the nominally independent television service, on the ground that programmes were censored to favour Communists.

Despite their early successes, however, the Communists seem to have made little headway in the country as a whole. Their support in opinion polls has hovered between 15 and 18 per cent, although the vast reserve of uncommitted votes makes any firm prediction impossible. Traditional anti-communism runs so deep in the countryside, particularly among smallholders in the north, that the Portuguese Democratic Movement has now been launched on a new career, as a political party in its own right, designed to attract voters who might otherwise shy away from the hammer and sickle.

The Communists' anxiety about the possible outcome of the March election has made them concentrate on strengthening their position outside the party system. Their trump card is undoubtedly their control of the unions, and the power this gives them to slow down inflation or let it rip. For that reason alone both the Socialists and the Popular Democrats insist they have no alternative to continuing their coalition with the Communists after the election. But meanwhile both of them are trying to set up rival trade union organisations of their own. The Socialists claim support from 18 unions, compared with the Communists' 22, but most of them are in small industries. Anyway, the Socialists' advance seems to have been largely made by their own left wing, which, together with maoist and other extreme-left parties, has been exploiting discontent about the wage-restraint policy followed by the Communists. The Popular Democrats have so far only an embryonic union organisation; they reckon it will take three or four years before an effective alternative [illegible]

The price of moderation

So unless the Socialists and Popular Democrats change their line, it looks as if the Communists will still be in the government after March. But at a price. If they continue to preach wage restraint, they stand to lose much of their hold over the unions to less responsible parties. And the Socialists and Popular Democrats are using the threat of their withdrawal from the government, which would inevitably bring about its fall, as a powerful moderating influence over the Communists. Indeed, the economic plan whose publication is expected any day now stops very far short, according to first reports, of laying the foundations of a socialist society.

True, the plan is said to include proposals for the nationalisation of key industries, including oil and steel. True, it attacks the 20 or 30 families that have dominated much of Portugal's underdeveloped industrial base. But alongside the state sector it apparently proposes to set up a competitive private sector based on principles that would warm any capitalist's heart: no intervention to rescue lame ducks; the reorganisation and amalgamation of small scale firms into effective competitive units; and an open door to foreign investment. These ideas are one good test of the government's intentions. If they have been watered down when the plan finally appears, or left out altogether, that will show which way the wind is blowing.

The Communists can hardly be happy with the plan as it was described to your correspondent. Yet their leader, Senhor Cunhal, is all reasonableness. "We can continue to co-operate with the bourgeois parties for as long as is necessary to consolidate the freedom we won on April 25th. And we must co-operate afterwards." Marxism, it seems, should live side by side with capitalism after all. But that hardly squares with what Senhor Cunhal has to say about the dictatorship of the proletariat:

> Dictatorship is the role of a class. In Britain bourgeois democracy is the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Dictatorship of the proletariat is democracy of the people.

Investing in the army

We know the difference between bourgeois and people's democracies. The sheep's clothing seems threadbare. So why wear it? Because plainly the Communists' strength in the unions is not enough to give them real power. The lesson the disaster in Chile seems to have taught every Communist party in western Europe is that power lies neither in the ballot box, nor even with organised labour, but in the army; and it is to the army that the Portuguese Communist party has turned as a long-term investment. Even in the short run, Mr Brezhnev probably prefers a moderately radical

but stable junta in Portugal, with its nuisance value to the western alliance, to a precarious Allende-type leap for socialism which might call the whole concept of detente into doubt. And Senhor Cunhal, who leads the most unreconstructed Communist party in western Europe, is not likely to be deaf to the interests of the Soviet Union.

The stories one hears in Lisbon say that the Communist party made its decision to infiltrate the army early in the 1950s. Whether that is true or not, the Communists were closely involved in the planning of the April coup, notably at a meeting with some radical army officers at Monte do Sobral in September last year. Those officers now dominate the Co-ordinating Committee, the guiding body of the Armed Forces Movement. The social and political ideas of men such as Brigadier Gonçalves, the prime minister, and Brigadier Carvalho, the military governor of Lisbon, can only be described as marxist. But although these men control some important units, such as Copcon, the internal security force of commandos and paratroops, they do not dominate the whole of the armed forces. The majority of Portuguese officers are, as in most armies, largely apolitical, imbued only with a vague commitment to democracy and an instinctive hostility to communism. It was to this group that President Spínola was chiefly aiming his appeal on September 28th for a "silent majority" to check the leftward drift of events, and it was these moderate officers' failure to respond that finally overthrew him. But most of them are still around the place, and next time they might not be so lethargic in their willingness to trust the Co-ordinating Committee.

The real Spínolists have been all but eliminated from the army in the purges that followed September 28th, and General Spínola himself has been retired after the retirement age was arbitrarily lowered to 62 (he is 64). But most moderates in uniform have been left almost untouched, presumably because the Co-ordinating Committee feels it would be too dangerous to take them on. The election is still scheduled for March, although it could be delayed a month at the behest of the Communists. So far the radicals on the Co-ordinating Committee have confined themselves to discouraging the one major party that stands outside the government, the moderately conservative Centre Democrats. A large vote for the Centre Democrats in March would be a grave embarrassment to the radicals both in and out of uniform.

The half-silenced opposition

One form this discouragement takes is the late arrival of the army on the scene, sometimes apparently deliberately, when the Centre Democrats' meetings are attacked by left-wing extremists. Two big rallies, and several smaller meetings, have been broken up in this way; on one occasion it took soldiers three hours to arrive. The Centre Democrats' leader, Professor Freitas do Amaral, has suspended some plans for future rallies. And no more than lip-service is paid to the principle of equal time on the air by the broadcasting services, which have largely managed to avoid mentioning the Centre Democrats. General Fabião and the army's moderates seem mildly disturbed about this. On December 6th they secured, for the first time, a plenary session of the Armed Forces Movement, which is thought to contain a moderate majority, to consider decisions taken on its behalf by the Co-ordinating Committee. Nothing dramatic seems to have happened, but the fact that the meeting took place at all reaffirms the principle of the supremacy of the plenary meeting.

The test is likely to come over the question of what role the Armed Forces Movement intends to play in the constitution-making process after the March election. Some disturbing noises have been coming from the Co-ordinating Committee. Its Information Bulletin had an editorial on November 26th with distinctly anti-democratic overtones:

> The state of repression to which the working class has been subjected, especially in the countryside, and its limited understanding of its own condition of repression and exploitation, mean that it could be manipulated in an electoral process for which the necessary political experience is lacking.

The article concluded that the AFM "will have to guarantee . . . that the new constitution is imbued with the same progressive spirit as [the AFM's] programme". The only democratic vote is a vote for our ideas?

Major Vitor Alves, the minister responsible for defence and information, put it even more bluntly at a press conference in London on November 15th; he admitted it might be necessary to act against the constituent assembly "if the people press for it". In this he evidently differs from General Fabião, for whom another military intervention would be "to fall into the sterile game of low politicking, revolution following counter-revolution". It remains to be seen whether the Co-ordinating Committee will heed General Fabião's warning when the time comes. An economic crisis and industrial unrest could provide Major Alves with his excuse.

If the present coalition survives next year's elections, the Communists' longer-term hopes will rest on a steady increase in the power of the radicals in the army at the expense of the moderates. The other parties hope the moderates will prevail, and the army withdraw from politics. General Spínola is due to produce another book before the election which may be the same sort of rallying-point for moderates as his "Portugal and the Future" was for those who wanted to get Portugal out of Africa. The struggle within the Armed Forces Movement could yet spill out into the open again. For the forces of moderation are stronger than General Spínola had reason to fear they were on September 28th.

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Fascism has ended after fifty years,
but what has begun?

Portugal: The Half Revolution

CHRISTOPHER JONES

Last April's military coup d'etat, motivated initially by the concern of a group of officers for their own prestige, has been transformed into half a revolution, a young communist soldier told me in Lisbon recently. The political forces released by the termination of the Salazar-Caetano regimes revealed themselves to be surprisingly strong. The people—of Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and Angola, as well as Portugal—have already carried the Armed Forces Movement and the governing junta further than they had planned to go before the elections scheduled for next March. General Antonio de Spinola was appointed president at the time of the coup because of his "progressive" outlook on the resolution of Portugal's colonial problem; he hoped the colonies would federate with Portugal but they preferred independence. He saw his federalist ideas become obsolete and himself deposed in five months, buried by history catching up to itself in a rush.

The Portuguese Communist Party is to be credited, to a large degree, for the progressive surge felt throughout the country. After the April 25 coup, that party finally saw the fruits of fifty years of clandestine struggle. The communists are solid in the industrial belts around Lisbon and Porto, in the freshly purged unions in all sectors, and among the rural workers in the south. In a country of ten million inhabitants, the party has more than 500,000 inscribed members.

The Socialist Party, headed by Mario Soares, is also strong, and the only other party of importance is the liberal Peoples Democratic Party.

The Right has only recently begun to organize intensively. At first, each regional or industrial strongman believed that he could form a personal party. Union is being forced upon them by the realization that much more sophisticated political structures and techniques will be necessary to erode the Left's solid base.

The Right has also been under siege by the Left and Center, charged with plotting the assassination of President Spinola, in one of a number of crises that led to his resignation in September. But the ebb and flow of the fortunes of the various factions making up Portugal's "half a revolution" are only the surface manifestations of the workings of a complex society suddenly freed from two generations of repression by an iron dictatorship.

The social fabric of Portugal is composed of extremes. At one extreme is a large mass of people still encumbered by a feudal heritage; at the other are several of the largest fortunes in the world. Between them, and demanding more elbow room, is a dynamic left movement based in the poorly developed industrial sector. Taken together, they make an explosive mixture.

The ingredients of this mixture can be identified in various ways, but some clear distinctions are those among the cities and the towns and the villages.

There are only two cities, Lisbon and Porto, of one million and five hundred thousand inhabitants respectively. In the planning stages of the April coup d'etat, the Armed Forces Movement considered only objectives in the Lisbon and Porto areas, correctly assuming that the provinces would follow if the urban centers fell. The two areas are the country's heart and lungs, the centers of wealth and culture. They are also the centers of cholera, because of the *bairros de lata* (shanty towns) which encircle them.

Lisbon is physically charming, built low on a series of hills—a profile broken only recently by the towering new Sheraton Hotel. The life of the city is that of any large city which has existed for millenia—unfathomable. Traditional social life goes on in closed circles

within rigid social classes, making a web of nearly impenetrable complexity.

In early September, Lisbon was bustling with commerce and politics, the prostitutes had taken to the streets, and the traditional *fado* singers were still holding forth in the old quarters for the benefit of tourists and the rich. In a small club for poets and artists, the habitues ignored a Maoist attack and continued singing satirical songs about the leaders of the Left. Downtown, a musical called *Liberdade, Liberdade* introduced the anomaly of revolutionary theater for the upper classes into one more Western country.

With censorship gone, only erotic or politically oriented films were to be found. These were the top ten best sellers in Lisbon bookstores: three works of Lenin; an expose of the fascist secret police; histories of Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique by their respective nationalist liberation movements; *Toward Victory*, by the secretary-general of the Communist Party, Alvaro Cunhal; *The Resistance in Portugal*; a book on Albania; and an expose of Tarrafal, the infamous political prison on Cape Verde.

September 4-11 was the Week of Solidarity with the Chilean People. In Lisbon, ten thousand people squeezed into the ancient Sports Palace to demonstrate that solidarity. Inside, the balconies were draped with red-and-green Portuguese flags with the green half partly folded out of sight, and banners with slogans like: *Allende nao morreu* (Allende didn't die); *o Chile Verdera!* (Chile will be victorious), and the Chilean slogan, which the Portuguese have adopted as their own—*El pueblo unido james sera vencido/O povo unido jamais sera vencido* (The people united will never be defeated).

The crowd was composed not only of students and intellectuals; there were also steelworkers, secretaries, bus drivers, and bank clerks.

It was not a demonstration of intellectual convictions. The participants knew through gut experience the meaning of imperialism, and knew as well that the Chilean tragedy could tomorrow be their own.

Though the new freedoms are a source of joy and strength for many, for others they are traumatic. Not everyone was prepared to shout slogans in the street which only yesterday would have been considered high treason against the state and cause for torture and imprisonment. Of this the city police are the most visible examples. Though they formally adhered to the program of the Armed Forces Movement, their subsequent attitude has been: "If the Armed Forces now dictate law, let them worry about order as well." With arms crossed they have watched cars being stolen, acting only when pressured by indignant bystanders.

The resistance to change is even more apparent when one leaves the cities for the intermediate communities, the towns. Figueira da Foz, like many Portuguese coastal towns, depends on the fishing and tourist industries for survival. Each evening at sunset, a large fleet of sardine boats chugs out of the river port and over the horizon, to return at daybreak low in the water with the weight of the catch.

The tourist trade functions only in the months of July, August, and September. Then the area's population jumps from 10,000 to 100,000, the hotels in the new quarter spring to life, and the casino is jammed every night. One resident described the local population as "lower middle-class people who put on upper-class airs for the summer season."

But there are surprises. As I sat eating codfish in a local restaurant, a plump little boy came in to join his family with a portable record player under his arm. A few minutes later we were all treated to his musical preference—*The Internationale.*

Cacao Biscaia is a painter and schoolteacher who was considered undesirable by "right-thinking" society under the old regime. Since April 25 he has been elected to the city council. Cacao declared that for four years he had been a member of the clandestine Communist Party. He has been a good friend of mine for five years, and I never knew.

He is one among many. The journalist, the sardine fisherman, the shop owner—all had limited themselves to such cryptic comments as, "It's not good," concerning the then reigning fascist regime. But all belonged to a web which has now surfaced. The Communist Party occupies an eight-room headquarters in Figueira da Foz, just down the street from the Socialist Party headquarters and across from the Portuguese Democratic Movement—the old anti-fascist front group.

The prime barrier to change, however, is the reluctance of a large part of the population to get involved. One wonders how many times the advice of Senhora Dias to her daughter has been repeated in the small stone houses of Figueira da Foz: "Don't get mixed up in politics. We've always been able to eat. Besides, if they succeed in doing something, we'll benefit."

The marks of fifty years of fascism will not disappear overnight.

But if there is a noticeable difference in the political climate of the cities and that of the towns, there is a vast gulf between both and the villages.

Alguber is a small village in the Estremadura region. Its only links with the outside world are the twice-daily buses which wind down the small road into the valley, then turn and wind back out after stopping in Alguber. There is no through road. There are no newspapers, television, running water, or adequate sanitary facilities. The bucket-flushed toilets drain onto the dirt streets and down the hill on which the few dozen houses are built.

But the villagers are proud. As Maria Helena says: "We are just the little poor, but we do our best." Her house is immaculately clean inside; the tiny dining area is unused except on "festa" days when "no one is poor."

The land is the source of all well-being. It supplies fruit and vegetables, supports chickens and pigs;

wheat is ground for a percentage by the owner of the village windmill, then carried home to be baked into bread. Goats give milk or serve as a festa delicacy. Each family has a vineyard, and the homemade wine is plentiful and good.

Rarely do Alguber's products reach the city markets. Last year the prices paid to the farmer were so low that a villager buried his truckload of onions in disgust. From 1957 to 1972 agricultural production in Portugal was static. The increase in consumption was compensated by imports, augmenting the pressure on an extremely weak manufacturing base. Since the coup, saying that agriculture must lead the way to an economic renewal has become a cliche. The news has yet to reach Alguber.

It is not surprising. The isolation of small villages like Alguber can be almost complete. In the north, would-be emigrants to Germany have been known to set out on foot. A "long way" to them was a day's walk, so they calculated that Germany should be about three days away. I have been asked if I came from America by train.

The fall of fascism has not gone unnoticed in Alguber, however. The reign of silent fear which characterized life under the former regime was strong in the villages, where whispered rumor was the only form of news. As one villager said: "Under fascism, even the soul was lost." Now, that fear has been replaced by an uncertainty born of lack of information about the turmoil in the cities. Socialism and even democracy are referred to without comprehension. The word communism is connected with a respected local landowner who spent thirty of his sixty-eight years in prison for his beliefs. Antero states his electoral preference thus: "I want Alvares [*sic*] Cunhal for president," (referring to Alvaro Cunhal, secretary-general of the Communist Party).

In fact, abstract political categories are meaningless to people whose only realities are the village and the land. The villagers react only to concrete situations, but then with a surprising directness.

The district priest, a symbol of corruption under the old regime, was the first to experience the villagers' wrath. As they say, "He arrived on a Vespa, now he travels in a limousine." His transgressions include saying an illegal number of masses each Sunday, then tacking on masses for the dead, and performing collective baptisms for each of which the villagers pay a fixed per capita fee. For people who rarely see money at all, the priest's conduct was beyond forgiveness and they now feel free to vent their rage. He has been menaced in Alguber and beaten in Alcoentre, a nearby village. His villainy is now discussed in terms which "no one would have dared to say before April 25."

Until those terms are turned against "*os senhores da terra*" (the large, often absentee, landowners), little will change. The majority of the villagers still accept social differences which are a direct heritage from the feudal era. That is the legacy most difficult to combat.

In the cities, in the towns, and in the villages, April 25 was a turning point in the history of the Portuguese people. What has already been gained will never be altogether lost. It remains to be seen, however, if the half-revolution will become whole or end as something less than half.

Portugal, in one blow, has found itself confronted with problems similar to those of France and Italy—specifically, the participation, or not, of the Communist Party in the governing process. In Portugal, because of the party's strength among the working classes, it will be difficult to govern without the communists, but including them raises immediate problems.

International investors tend to have two reactions toward a rising communist influence. One of them is panic, especially among smaller interests. Example: The French owners of Sogantal, a small clothing factory near Montijo, arrived with a commando team to dismount and carry off machines and existing inventory in reaction to the wage demands of their female employes. The women were earning roughly $13 for a week's work. They asked for $25.

By contrast, the action of the management at the Sheraton Hotel in Lisbon (an ITT holding) was almost too enlightened. The Sheraton offered a wage increase of nearly 300 per cent before the union had even formulated a demand. The offer was, correctly, refused. If it had been accepted, smaller hotels would have collapsed under wage pressure, and the union itself would have faced serious divisions.

Portuguese capital reacts in similar ways. One well-known liberal politician established bank accounts in five countries under five different names. A landowner from the Alentejo region fled to Biarritz with jewels and liquid assets.

Difficulty in obtaining loans from international institutions—the World Bank, for example—is the most serious problem, and repeats the pattern experienced in Allende's Chile. Here the hysterical American reaction to a communist presence plays a determining role.

The Right will not hesitate to exploit economic confusion, in an anti-communist campaign difficult to refute among a population whose majority is without political preparation or understanding.

It would be heartening to see American foreign policy abandon the doctrine of narrow self-interest behind a liberal smoke screen and instead help the Portuguese people stand on their own feet. Will it happen? The unfolding story of U.S. involvement in the Chilean tragedy leaves little hope, though the Lajes air force base in the Azores is a useful lever in Portuguese hands.

The ability to obtain foreign assistance may tip the scales toward the progressive forces and away from the new representatives of the old Portuguese oligarchy. If the scales tip toward the latter, many are prepared to take up arms. For the good of all it is hoped such a step will not be necessary. □