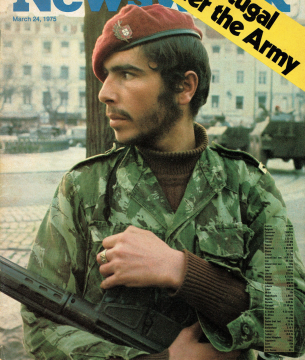


# Newsweek

March 24, 1975

**Portugal  
Under the Army**



# Portugal: Lurch to the Left

The attack came, quite literally, out of the clear blue sky. Shortly before noon on a sunny winter morning last week, two AF-8 landing planes flew in formation over an artillery barracks near Lisbon. On the ground, soldiers cheered by the Portuguese crest on each wing gave a friendly wave to the passing planes. Then, suddenly, all hell broke loose. The apparently innocuous aircraft began spitting machine-gun fire and bombing bombs on the soldiers' barracks. Minutes later, they were joined in the attack by a pair of helicopters and on the ground green-bereted paratroopers surrounded the thoroughly confused artillerymen. For the second time in a year, Portugal was engulfed in a coup.

The fighting was over in half an hour with the country's leftist military government in firm control. This time around, however, there were no real casualties for the soldiers. Instead, the uprising ended with the capture and exile of Gen. Antonio de Spínola, once the country's most popular soldier. And it also seemed to abruptly terminate Portugal's brief fling with democracy that Spínola himself had inaugurated with his celebrated Flores Revolution last April.

**Coup.** In the wake of the coup, Portuguese President Francisco de Costa Gomes announced that the ruling Armed Forces Movement (AFM) had actual control of the government. An all-powerful Council of the Revolution, similar to the leftist military junta in Peru, was established to run the country. And though Costa Gomes emphasized that next month's elections for a constitutional Assembly would take place as scheduled, the campaign was to begin this week, most people thought the vote would be meaningless. "This is a sad day for democracy," noted one French diplomat.

The abortive coup was apparently a result from the right led by Spínola and his associates. The maverick general, who had been living in semi-retirement on a farm

near Lisbon since he was removed last fall as the country's President, had watched with alarm as Portugal under the army drifted rapidly left. And last week's revolt appeared to be a last-ditch effort by the 64-year-old Spínola to keep his country from falling into the hands of an increasingly powerful coalition of left-leaning soldiers and Communists.

Though officials in some Western capitals may well have sympathized with

Spínola's aims, they were dismayed at his failure; an unsuccessful right-wing coup was the last thing they wanted to see in Portugal now. Aside from their concern for stability in an important NATO ally, they were also worried that the coup might be a boon for Portugal's Communists—and especially for Communist parties throughout Western Europe. "For genuine hell," declared former French Premier Pierre Mendès-France

after a recent trip to Lisbon, "whatever happens in Portugal will set a precedent for Spain, Italy and Greece and will not be without profound effect in France." Ironically, though, Western European Communists were not once they heard what they are going on in Portugal. The Italian Communist Party, for one, feared that any non-democratic actions on the part of its comrades in Lisbon could discredit its own slow but steady march toward power.

**Dictator.** But it was in Portugal itself that the uprising had its greatest impact. Only eleven months ago, thousands of Lisbonites had poured into the streets hailing Spínola as a hero and demanding restoration onto his soldiers who had overthrown the dictatorship of Marcello Caetano. Suddenly, freed from a half century of Fascism, the Portuguese were deluged with freedom.

In downtown Lisbon poets strolled through the streets reciting verses that were once forbidden and talk-shows shouted of the victory over Fascism. At restaurants people suddenly had a free choice of newspapers and magazines of every shade, even Playboy. City landmarks, including the old regime's favorite statue (a marble carving of the eighteenth-century despot the Marquis de Pombal and his loyalists), were splattered with the golden revolution. And in what was once a dictatorship, politics became everyone's game; by one count there were nearly 80 political parties vying to bring their brands of democracy to the Portuguese. "These are better days for



Lisbon lies low under attack! Suddenly, all hell broke loose



Celebrating the April coup? PM's smashed office last week. This time no flowers.

the people," exulted one elderly Lisbonite. "We have more freedom." A blind beggar in Lisbon put it another way. "Help me, help me!" he cried. "I am the last unhappy man in Portugal."

At first the euphoria of revolution inspired Portugal's new government to decisive, democratic action. It abolished censorship, promised independence for the African colonies of Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Angola, and made free men of thousands of political prisoners jailed under Salazar and his far more repressive predecessor, Antonio Salazar. Inevitably, however, the strain of running a country with an unruly coalition of soldiers, socialists, Communists and centrists began to show as the government split increasingly along ideological lines. The AFM, which prides itself on consensus solutions, blamed partisan civilians for failing to approve legislation. ("We can't obey like us!" complained an army colonel.) But, in fact, it was differences between the AFM's right- and left-wing factions that produced Portugal's most serious post-coup crisis, the forced resignation of President Spínola last September.

Already tainted in the eyes of some AFM leaders for his conservatism, Spínola left office accused of plotting a rightist takeover. (The general and his followers had allegedly planned to assassinate President Vasco dos Santos Gonçalves and other radical army leaders. Spínola also reportedly threatened to ask the U.S. to send in the marines to save Portugal from Communism.) The AFM quickly patched up its differences enough to agree on Francisco de Costa Gomes as a successor to Spínola. But Spínola's ouster gave army leftists the upper hand and raised disturbing questions about the political role of the AFM's

officers and young officers.

Back in the heady days of the April 25 revolution, most people regarded the Portuguese Armed Forces Movement (then, page 12) as a loose coalition of liberals eager to right the wrongs of the old regime. But the army soon moved sharply to the left and there is now little doubt that some of its officers harbor Communist sympathies. The Communists, in turn, have spared no efforts in making themselves indispensable to the politically unsophisticated AFM. "The AFM discovered that the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) was a disciplined party, and it then discipline," explained a PCP member.

**Portugal:** The Portuguese Communists were nothing if not disciplined. Though they had been banned for 42 years they had developed a sophisticated underground network that helped them to quickly infiltrate unions and the teaching profession and also to amass a party kitchen. Instantly legitimized by the coup, they organized as Portugal's richest and best-organized political party. With 15 minutes, it seemed, they were on the streets pushing their cause to the people and posting their banners and signs everywhere from Oporto to the Algarve. A short time later, when the army tapped the PCP's resources, silver-haired leader, Álvaro Cunhal, as a minister without portfolio, Communists had their first foray into a contemporary Western European government.

Much to the surprise of many Westerners, the 69-year-old Cunhal behaved with considerable moderation in the days immediately following the coup. When the government proposed a tough anti-strike law last spring, Cunhal jumped to condemn it. And his feelings about U.S. planes refueling in the Azores



en route to Israel, as they did during the 1973 Middle East war, were a model of compromise. "We are resigned to an American base in the Azores," declared Cunhal. "After all, Cunhal has learned to live with Guantanamo." Nevertheless, Cunhal's secret reservations cannot be taken entirely at face value, if only because the PCP is the most openly pro-Soviet party in Western Europe. Álvaro Cunhal, says French Socialist Pierre Joxe, "represents one of the last really hard Communist leaders."

Indeed, it is the Portuguese Communists' undignified attention for the Soviet Union that has led to their greatest weakness in Portugal: quite simply, most people cannot stand them. Fifty per cent illiterate, 80 per cent rural, 80 per cent Catholic, the Portuguese masses are terrified of Marxism. So unpopular is the PCP, in fact, that despite its impressive organization, it is expected to win no more than 20 per cent of the vote in next month's elections in northern Portugal, where the church is strongest; priests have allegedly threatened to excommunicate anyone who votes for the PCP.

Partly because they have failed to win the hearts and minds of Portuguese voters, the Communists have been accused of stirring up trouble to delay elections that are certain to diminish their weakness. Two months ago in Oporto, Communists and their allies boycotted and broke up a meeting of a rightist party, the Center Social Democrata. And since the Oporto incident, often gatherings of Portuguese moderates have been rudely interrupted by leftist rowdies. The AFM, moreover, has been unable slow to come to the aid of the rightists because, as one army leader puts it, "We can't act like fascists."

Adding to the trouble is the fact that



Cruz: One of the last of the really Red Communists



Socialist Soares, President Costa Gomes and Spínola (right): How far in the left will Portugal barrel?



Goulart: Frightening the middle class with socialism



the PCP has been maneuvering its men into positions of power and securing a grip on the government that some fear is infinite to keep—no matter how the vote might go. In January it merged through a law consolidating Portugal's trade unions into a single federation; since the PCP controls most local unions, the federation is virtually guaranteed to be under the thumb of the Communists. The PCP is also the brains behind "workers' committees" that have usurped control of 200 Portuguese businesses in recent months. "We can't go on like this," bemoaned one Spínolista. "Nobody works. There is anarchy everywhere. The country is going broke."

In fact, the Portuguese economy is in shambles. Drained by African wars that until a year ago took 40 per cent of the national budget, Portugal has long been the poorest country in Europe. And since the April coup, an already dismal economic situation has deteriorated still more. Inflation is leaping along at 30 per cent, with unemployment running at 5

per cent and due to war as soldiers come home from Africa. To make matters worse, the country's political uncertainty has prompted many businessmen to send their families out of the country as fast as they can; there was an economic drain that is exacerbated by a precipitous decline in foreign investment in Portugal. "You can't expect foreigners to invest in Portugal," says Socialist leader Mario Soares, "if they're going to be bogged by their factory officers."

Anyway, until last week, the AFPM's only cause for alarm (it had been a modest economic program designed to bring about "a more just society.") As announced last month, the program called for state control of key industries (coal, uranium, oil), as well as the breakup of the country's large land holdings. By Western standards, the reforms were moderate. But to the 200 fascists who came to control 75 per cent of Portugal's wealth under the old regime, they were heresy. Thus it was partly to see that his reforms were carried out to the letter that

Goulart also announced that, contrary to previous army promises to return to the barracks after elections, the AFPM would be indefinitely extending its tenure in Portuguese politics.

Although Portugal's civilians were disappointed by the army's decision to remain in the watchdog of its revolution, they did little to prevent it. Moreover, except for the centrist Popular Democratic (PPD), few of the rebels led against the AFPM's blatantly authoritarian proposals for institutionalizing their, which included the right to appoint Presidential candidates and veto legislation approved by an elected assembly. Socialist leader Soares, for one, has looked upon the AFPM as Portugal's guardian of democracy—and, in the last resort, as a counterweight to the Communists. "The AFPM," explained Soares in an interview with *Newsweek*, "must continue to exist in this period of instability."

But the centrist PPD was far less convinced of the AFPM's democratic motives. Indeed, it has worried that the

AFM's plan all along has been to settle into a comfortable coexistence with the Communists. As evidence of this, it pointed to the AFM's most controversial political enterprise—the cultural-dramatization program, according to the army, cultural dramatization is an attempt to raise the political consciousness of the Portuguese, who the AFM says have been lulled by 80 years of Pseudo-Portuguese mediocrity. However, any dramatization is a neo-fascist attempt to instill the voters with Communist sympathies—an accusation the AFM does not totally deny.

**Exposure.** Not surprisingly, many Portuguese have not taken kindly to the AFM's portmanteau dramatization teams who roam the countryside lecturing and putting on pacifist plays. But the Socialists and centrists, too, have been hard pressed to win voters with their own, more moderate platforms. One problem is that Portugal's leftist press has reserved most of its headlines for Canelas and the Communists. The Socialists, moreover, are handicapped by ineffective leadership despite his reputation as Portugal's best-known civilian politician, Soares, 51, has failed to exploit either his own popularity or his party's numerical advantage. "We've been waiting for Soares to make his move for five months," complains one U.S. official, "and I bet we could wait three years without seeing much more action."

With the Socialists in disarray, the FPD has emerged as Portugal's most formidable moderate force, vigorously wooing voters in several rallies that have become common in Portugal since April 25. It was just such a rally two weeks ago that precipitated Portugal's latest crisis. The voters were all too familiar. An AFM Popular Democrats gathered in Lisbon, a Communist stronghold near Lisbon, leftist students allied with the PCP stormed into the meeting shouting "Death to the Communists." Shooting broke out and by the time the smoke was over, one person was dead and more than two dozen injured.

**Proting.** For conservative officers in the AFM, the violence at Lisbon was the final straw. "We must move quickly and kill maybe 80 or 90 AFM radicals," declared one Spínolaite last week. "Then we'll put the Communists in their place, throw them out." The Spínolaite were convinced they were plotting here strength. Two weeks ago in important elections within the AFM structure, associates of Spínola had ousted a handful of top radicals from the army promotion boards. One of those defeated was Gen. Otelo de Carvalho, a brilliant demographic soldier who is head of CONGOS, the revolutionary security force. Because the board debate who will advance through the ranks and, more important in these revolutionary days, who will be purged, their control is crucial.

The board victory obviously went to the heads of the conservatives. Early one morning last week, Spínolaite officers at

## Soldiers in Politics

Their impact has been staggering. The idealistic young officers of Portugal's Armed Forces Movement (AFM), the leaders of last April's coup, unleashed a revolution in Europe's poorest and most backward nation and abruptly changed their country's 580-year-old empire. And by so doing, they have totally upset the balance of power in both southern Europe and Africa.

But what belongs to the Movimento das Forças Armadas and what does it really stand for? A political organization of army, navy and air force officers, the AFM has somewhere between 1,000 and 2,000 members. For the most part, they were malnourished by repeated years of duty in Africa, where they were ordered to preserve a colonial empire in the face of a 13-year-long guerrilla war that Portugal was clearly destined to lose. Desertions were high among their troops and when they returned home to Portugal they discovered that their countrymen were as weary of the colonial war as they were—and looked down upon them.

Most of the officers had never studied political theory—but since classic Marxism, their first introduction to political radicalism was often through pamphlets in *Man and One* (Goncalves published by the African Liberation Movement) they were fighting.

**Tap.** At first, the officers who later became prominent in the AFM agitated for nothing more than better pay. The April coup might not have happened, "if Salazar and Carrasco had been less mean to their officers," but happens it did and the AFM promptly toppled Gen. Antonio de Spínola for the job of first President of the new government. Their reasons were twofold: Spínola had just won worldwide acclaim for his book "Portugal and the Future," calling for gradual decolonization and his presence would require moderates that the coup had not been engineered by radicals. But while the AFM officers pledged shortly after the uprising that they would "return to our barracks" in the very near future, they also are so it that the military and civilian governing bodies overlapped in such a way that the military always had the upper hand.

Spínola's successor, Gen. Francisco de Gama Goncalves, is a capable but colorless leader. Although he has not been identified with the most radical group of young officers, the 60-year-old Costa Gomes has carefully avoided any commitments with them. His primary aim has been to place his supporters into top command positions. Ambition, in fact, has always been the key to Costa Gomes's character.



General Carvalho: Angling for power

Back when he was attending the Portuguese military academy, he already had earned the nickname of "João."

**Rank.** Right behind Costa Gomes in the complex AFM hierarchy is Brig. Gen. Vasco dos Santos Goncalves. The 50-year-old Premier is a competitive worker who has heightened the middle class with his ideological zeal and inspired fears that he is a Communist. But recently, Goncalves had been moving toward the moderate societies who form a large part of the AFM's membership. Other officers are also obviously angling for the top posts within the AFM—most notable the flamboyant Gen. Otelo Inacio de Carvalho, head of the security forces. The Mozambique-born soldier was operations chief for the April 25 revolution. And his grand army record has made him a folk hero as well as one of the AFM's most powerful leaders.

Small as it is, the AFM has already clearly left the strains of competing personalities and ideologies. Although the leftists appeared to have gained the upper hand after last week's decisive counter-coup, the AFM still has a sizable group of officers whose political views can loosely be classified as right of center. And the large majority of officers still seems to be distinguished primarily by their lack of a sharply defined political philosophy. But despite their transient views, almost all of the AFM officers are now united on one point: they have no intention of letting anyone else take control of Portugal's fate. "In my opinion," asserted one Lisbonite in an obvious understatement of last week, "the AFM is growing too fast of power."

—REPORTER/PHOTOGRAPHER AND COMMENTATOR



Reza, commander, Portuguese revolutionary  
battled by half a century of aggressive rule?



PHOTO BY MICHAEL LEWIS

Tancos, a military base north of Lisbon, told 200 paratroopers they were to prepare for a special mission—an attack on Portugal's First Artillery Regiment, which is well known for its extreme-left-wing sentiments. To ensure the paratroopers' revolutionary fervor, the Spínola-led them to believe the regiment had captured Spínola and several other officers—including, ironically, the radical Otelo who is popular even among the right-leaning paratroopers.

Thus inspired, the paratroopers were flown to the First Artillery installation near Lisbon's Fátima Airport. As they began to move, the instant Portuguese training planes bombed the military installation, killing one soldier and wounding a score of others. But after fifteen minutes, two powerful F-86 fighters appeared and forced the attacking trainers to fight it back to Tancos. The moment at the airport was utter confusion. Civilians, curious about all the noise, milled around shouting "Dagito-Fascism" and "Long live the revolution," although it was still unclear who was on which side. The paratroopers were equally bewildered. "Where is Otelo?" asked one soldier. "They told us Otelo would be here."

**Surprise.** In fact, the 37-year-old Otelo was comfortably installed in a military command post directing the operation that ridged Spínola's camp in less than 30 minutes. At 5 p.m. Otelo assumed Costa Gomes that the revolt was crushed. By 4 p.m. radio broadcasts announced that Spínola—now referred to as ex-General Spínola—had fled to Spain (and later Brazil). That night leftist crowds surged into the streets, making the offices of the rightist Christian Democrats (PDC). And by the next morning the army had created a Council of the Revolu-

tion to rule the country. In a matter of hours, the abusive camp had transformed Portugal into a virtual dictatorship of the left.

Since the uprising was so badly bungled and came just at a time when rightists were making major political gains, there was inevitable speculation that it had been engineered by the left as an excuse to tighten its rule. "No one in his right mind would launch a coup with a handful of light aircraft and helicopters," scoffed one skeptical Portuguese. "Certainly not in the middle of the morning." Another rumor making the rounds in Lisbon was that the U.S. had inspired the uprising to forestall a leftist take-over—a charge given impetus by the brah Otelo, who said that U.S. Ambassador Frank Carbozo had been implicated in the coup and had better leave Portugal because his safety could not be assured.

The U.S. heatedly denied any involvement in the matter, and in reality the coup appears to have been just a poorly planned and shoddily executed revolt by Spínolistas who miscalculated their strength. "Spínola was a cancer eating away at the country," declared a PDC leader last week. "Now that we know he did this crazy thing, we can forget him."

But Portugal's militant left was not inclined to forget—or forgive. Moving quickly to capitalize on the aborted coup, the AFM imposed a rapid-fire series of leftist decrees. In what he called "the most revolutionary measure ever passed in this country," Costa Gomes ordered the nationalization of Portuguese banks, a decision that will drastically alter the entire economy since the banks control most of the country's industry (as well as its newspapers).

On the political front, the Council of

State, one of the few government structures that included civilians, was dissolved amid hints that a Cabinet reshuffle would soon give the Communist Party's sister organization, the Portuguese Democratic Movement (MDP), a voice in the government. Costa Gomes also threatened to abolish rightist political parties that did not conform to "democratic" principles and launched a campaign the extreme allegedly involved in the coup. At the weekend, close to 200 soldiers and civilians had been arrested, among them some of Portugal's most prominent industrialists.

**Back** Appearing on television, Costa Gomes promised severe punishment for the Spínolista plotters. And though he warned that "the hard core of opposition still exists," AFM radicals seemed well on their way to gorging anyone who might block their efforts to take Portugal down the road to the left. In view of this revolutionary fervor, it was questionable whether the government could go through with elections next month—and, if it did, whether they would mean anything, given the AFM's vice-like grip on politics. "If the elections take place they will be a farce," asserted a British official. "They have definitely been a bludge to the left."

For the Portuguese man in the street, with his head in a country and respect for other points of view, the latest developments must have come as a shock. In the months since their glorious Flores Revolution, ordinary Portuguese had celebrated democracy by electing three-fourths most of them never knew before. Now, as last week's events make clear, those freedoms are in jeopardy and the bloom is off Portuguese democracy.

—GREGORY MARSHALL, CORRESPONDENT IN LISBON, AND JOHN SCOTT, BUREAU CHIEF IN PORTUGAL AND NEARBY AREAS