

Title: The Response of the Labour Government to the “Revolution of Carnations” in Portugal, 1974-76

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I, Simon Justin Cooke confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

This thesis examines the response of the Labour Government to events in Portugal following the coup d'état in April 1974. Britain, as Portugal's traditional ally and largest trading partner, with close partisan ties between the Labour movement and Portuguese Socialist Party, was a leading player in the international response to developments in Lisbon. The Portuguese Revolution also had wider implications for British foreign policy: the presence of communist ministers in government threatened both the cohesion of NATO and detente with the Soviet Union; West European leaders sought to influence events in Lisbon through the new political structures of the EEC; the outcome of events in Portugal appeared to foreshadow a political transition in Spain; and decolonisation in Angola and Mozambique made Rhodesia's continued independence unlikely. This study therefore contributes to historical debate concerning the Labour Government and its foreign policy during the 1970s. It considers the extent to which the domestic, political and economic difficulties of the Labour Government during this period undermined the effectiveness of its foreign policy. This thesis also considers the relative importance of, and interplay between, the factors which shaped post-war British foreign policy: the Cold War, membership of NATO and the EEC; relations with newly independent states in the developing world and the Commonwealth; and the relationship with the United States. It also examines how those within the government who play a role in foreign policy- principally the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, Cabinet, Treasury and the Foreign Office- interpreted the national interest and sought to influence policy-making accordingly; the role of outside groups, such as the political parties, Trade Unions and the media, are also considered.

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List of Abbreviations

AFM	Armed Forces Movement (Movimento das Forças Armadas)
CBI	Confederation of Business Industry
CDS	Social Democratic Centre Party (Centro Democrático e Social - Partido Popular)
COPCON	AFM military command (Comando Operacional do Continente)
Coremo	Revolutionary Committee of Mozambique (Comité Revolucionário de Moçambique)
CSCE	Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe
EIB	European Investment Bank
FNLA	Angolan Liberation Front (Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola)
Frelimo	Mozambique Liberation Front (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique)
G77	Group of 77 (loose grouping of developing nations)
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ILO	International Labour Organisation
JIC	Joint Intelligence Committee
MBFR	Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola)
NEC	National Executive Committee
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
ODM	Ministry for Overseas Development
PAIGC	African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde)
PCP	Portuguese Communist Party (Partido Comunista Português)
PSP	Portuguese Socialist Party (Partido Socialista Português)

SED	Southern Europe Department
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence (Rhodesia)
ZANLA	Zimbabwean African National Liberation Movement

Chapter I – Introduction

Britain's role and status as a world power, following its rapid decolonisation and gradual economic decline, had effectively ceased by the late 1960s. The 1956 Suez crisis had signalled that Britain was no longer an independent power, and the 1960s Rhodesia crisis ended initial optimism that global influence might be retained through the Commonwealth. The decision in January 1968 to withdraw British military forces from 'East-of-Suez' confirmed its decline as a world power, leading to the conclusion of the 1969 Duncan Report that Britain had become "a power of the second order."¹ During the 1970s, the country sought to reinvent its global role as a regional power through membership of the European Economic Community. This was also a period of significant change in the nature of power within international politics following the rise of global energy prices, superpower détente and the emergence of a multi-polar world order. However, Britain's worsening economic difficulties during the 1970s world recession, alongside domestic political instability resulting from minority governments, led many to question its continued relevance in international affairs.

The Labour Government elected in February 1974 faced very different circumstances from those of its 1960s predecessors. These had begun with great optimism, but there was now widespread cynicism towards a government which had not been expected to win the election and appeared to lack a clear strategy for addressing Britain's problems. Harold Wilson sought to learn from his previous experience of Cabinet divisions by adopting a new style of government where ministers had greater independence. He appointed James Callaghan as Foreign Secretary, a previous rival but an able politician with experience of every other major ministerial role (including being his predecessor's shadow since 1972). His brief was to renegotiate Britain's membership of the EEC and restore a close Anglo-American relationship. Despite initial successes, including the referendum on EEC membership and a settlement of the industrial disputes which undermined the previous government, global recession led to worsening economic conditions in Britain which alongside the failure to achieve a Parliamentary majority in the October 1974 election, led to a steady erosion in the effectiveness of the Labour Government. Throughout its remaining period in office, the Labour Government struggled to pass legislation and was in almost permanent crisis. Harold Wilson's surprising and unexpected resignation in February 1976

¹ Report of the Review Committee on Overseas Representation, 1968-9 (Duncan Report) (HMSO, 1969).

led to his replacement by James Callaghan, but Britain's domestic and economic difficulties continued, culminating in its humiliation during the IMF crisis in 1976.

The revolution in Portugal was one of the most important foreign policy crises faced by the 1970s Labour Government. The removal of the Caetano regime on the 25th April 1974 led to a two-year power struggle which brought “six provisional governments, two presidents, a failed right-wing coup attempt, a failed left-wing coup attempt, three elections, countless seizures of land and housing, bombings, strikes, demonstrations and still more turmoil.”² By 1976 parliamentary democracy was established in Portugal, but in the immediate aftermath of the April coup d'état this had seemed the least likely outcome; the presence of Marxist military officers and members of the Portuguese Communist Party within government led many contemporary observers to believe that they were “witnessing one of the most revolutionary socialist developments to have occurred in Western Europe since World War Two.”³ Portugal was also the last European state to retain its overseas territories and its commitment to grant them immediate independence threatened civil war and proxy Cold War conflict. Thus developments in Portugal had wider implications for international politics, particularly the potential to undermine east-west détente. This led to a division between the United States, which sought a robust western response, and its West European allies who took a more restrained view of events and provided assistance to the political moderates in Lisbon.

The removal of the Caetano regime presented an unexpected opportunity for the Labour Government. Its replacement by a provisional government dedicated to establishing democracy in Portugal and granting independence to its overseas territories meant two recent Labour election manifesto commitments (to remove authoritarian regimes in Western Europe and white racist states in southern Africa) might be achieved. In particular, Harold Wilson immediately realised that an independent Mozambique would enable the effective enforcement of international sanctions against Rhodesia, and so might lead to a resolution of one of the most intractable issues which had faced successive British governments. It also meant that Anglo-Portuguese relations, which had been damaged during the Caetano period, might be restored. Furthermore, as Portugal's ‘oldest ally’, with historic diplomatic and trade

² Paul Christopher Manuel, *The Uncertain Outcome: The Politics of the Portuguese Transition to Democracy* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1995), p. xii.

³ Bill Lomax ‘Ideology and Illusion in the Portuguese Revolution: The Role of the Left’, in L. Graham and D. Wheeler, ed., *In Search of Modern Portugal: The Revolution and its Consequences* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), p. 105.

links, alongside the existence of close partisan ties between the Labour Party and the Portuguese Socialist Party, the Labour Government was in a favourable position to have influence in Lisbon.⁴ However, the wider international implications of the Portuguese Revolution endangered the Labour Government's foreign policy elsewhere. The presence of communist ministers within the provisional government raised concern at Portugal's continued membership of the NATO alliance and threatened to undermine Anglo-Soviet relations. Differences within the response of the western alliance, including between Britain and the United States, complicated its multilateral approach to foreign policy. The leftward direction of the revolution also endangered British business interests in Portugal.

This study will consider Britain's response to the Portuguese Revolution and will contribute to historical debate concerning the Labour Government and its foreign policy during the 1970s. It will do so in three central ways. Firstly it will consider the extent to which the domestic, political and economic difficulties of the Labour Government during this period undermined the effectiveness of its foreign policy. Immediately after the April coup d'état Britain had some success in achieving its objectives, particularly in encouraging independence for Portugal's overseas territories by supporting political moderates in Lisbon. However, as the political crisis in Lisbon worsened, threatening Britain's national interests elsewhere, the Labour Government was unable to conduct a coherent foreign policy. In particular, it was unable to provide substantial bilateral economic assistance and official visits were cancelled because ministers needed to attend Parliament to ensure the survival of a minority government. This thesis will contribute to historical debate concerning the effectiveness of the Labour Government's foreign policy during the mid-1970s.

This thesis will secondly contribute to our understanding of the nature of British foreign policy during this period. The recent transformation of its world role, alongside important developments in international politics, meant this was an era of significant change in Britain's approach to foreign relations. Because the Portuguese Revolution had wider implications for international politics, several of the most important influences on Britain's post-war foreign policy shaped its response to events in Lisbon. In particular, this study will allow a consideration of (a) the importance of Cold War imperatives, with the presence of

⁴ Anglo-Portuguese relations went back to 1373, with the forming of the world's oldest alliance; treaties in 1703 and 1810, and Portuguese commitments during World War One, cemented this diplomatic and economic relationship. However, Portuguese neutrality in World War Two, the loss of Goa in 1961 and British protests at the anti-colonial wars in Africa had strained relations between the two countries.

communist ministers in government threatening the cohesion of the NATO alliance and superpower relations; (b) the impact of its recent membership of the EEC including whether there was a distinctively 'European' approach to events in Portugal; (c) the nature of the Anglo-American relationship, particularly the existence of institutional cooperation and shared values; (d) the importance of Britain's relations with sub-Saharan Africa in its approach to the Portuguese overseas territories, particularly those Commonwealth states directly affected; (e) the Labour Government's socialist values, including its membership of the Socialist International; and (f) the importance of protecting British business interests, after the expropriation of British farmers' property during the revolution. Because these are many of the factors that shaped Britain's post-war foreign policy, this study allows an analysis of their interplay and relative importance, thereby providing a valuable insight into the nature of its foreign policy during the 1970s.

Thirdly, this thesis will contribute to historical debate on British foreign policy making during this period. There was a range of influences both inside and outside government on this process, and Britain's changing world role led to innovations in diplomatic practice. It will consider (a) the role of the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister (and Labour Cabinet), particularly during periods of domestic crises, and their leadership styles and working relationship; (b) the influence of individual Labour ministers and MPs who demonstrated a particular interest in events in Lisbon, alongside the Labour Party and how it was able to influence policy through the National Executive Committee; (c) the influence of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, particular those departments concerned with Portugal and the British Embassy in Lisbon; and (d) whether the opposition political parties were able to shape the policy of the Labour Government. Being a pluralistic democracy, there were also several influences on policy-making in Britain outside government; these included business interest groups, the British media, and trade unions. The importance of their role will enable a consideration of whether the Labour Government grasped the potential of 'Soft Power' in response to the Portuguese Revolution.⁵

⁵ Soft Power is the idea that state power can be measured not only by military and economic strength but also through cultural influence. Joseph S. Nye, Jr. Soft Power: the means to success in world politics (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), pp. 5-8.

Historiography

The record of the Labour Governments of the 1960s and 1970s has been the subject of continuous historical research. There was initially greater interest in the 1960s governments as memoirs and archival records for the period became available first. The 1970s Labour Government has been frequently portrayed as the moment when British decline reached its nadir. Its record was important to contemporary debate amongst British political commentators considering the necessity of Thatcherism. During the 1990s the archives for this period were opened and the memoirs of Labour ministers were published. The memoirs of Harold Wilson and James Callaghan include Portugal prominently in their accounts of foreign policy during the 1970s.⁶ This meant that subsequent biographies and historical studies of the Labour Government did likewise. The opening of papers in the National Archives under the thirty-year rule has often brought new insights into previous British governments. The publication of an FCO document series on NATO's southern flank crisis included a section on Britain's response to the Portuguese Revolution which has been used in several historical studies. More recently, diplomatic historians have begun to research closely the archival records and consider the effectiveness of different aspects of the 1970s Labour Government foreign policy.

The international dimension of the Portuguese Revolution has been the subject of ongoing historical study. The first writings, published immediately after the revolution, relied on first-hand interviews, memoir accounts and released government documents, and stressed the importance of outside actors. During the 1980s the memoirs of western leaders were published, within which they sought to explain their role in events during the Portuguese Revolution.⁷ This decade also saw the emergence of an influential school of Political Science which viewed the Portuguese Revolution as an archetypal democratic transition, in which international support was critical to the outcome. In the 1990s, the opening of government archives in western and former communist states led to a renewed interest in the international dimension of the Portuguese Revolution. The opening of British archives led to interest

⁶ James Callaghan, Time and Chance (London: Collins, 1987). Harold Wilson, Final Term: The Labour Government 1974-76 (London: Wiedenfeld & Nicolson, 1979).

⁷ Willy Brandt, My Life in Politics (New York: Viking, 1992). Gerald R. Ford, A Time to Heal: the Autobiography of Gerald R. Ford (London: W.H. Allen, 1979). Henry Kissinger, Years of Renewal (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999). Richard M. Nixon, The Memoirs of Richard Nixon (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1990). Helmut Schmidt, Men and Powers: a Political retrospective (New York: Random House, 1989).

amongst Portuguese historians in Britain's role in developments in Lisbon. The Carnation Revolution remains a subject of great significance in Portugal. The process of national reconciliation following authoritarian rule, familiar to its Iberian neighbour, means historical revelations often shape contemporary political debate.

A number of historiographical debates are relevant to this thesis, and although not all directly address Britain's response to the Portuguese Revolution, they consider areas necessary for understanding its foreign policy during the period. The following historiographical survey is organised into a section of historical debates on the Labour Government and British foreign policy during the 1970s, and a section on those concerned with Britain's response to the Portuguese Revolution.

a) **The Labour Government and its foreign policy**

The first studies of the Labour Government were dominated by the view that Britain had entered a period of irreversible decline.⁸ Initially written by political commentators during the 1980s, these accounts were often influenced by an image which "owes more to the back-projection of Conservative hagiography."⁹ Robert Skidelsky is typical when he contends that "Not much can be salvaged from the Wilson-Callaghan years of 1974-9 except lessons. They were among the low points of British Government in the twentieth century, perhaps the lowest point."¹⁰ These accounts are principally concerned with domestic economic failings, especially rampant inflation, rising unemployment and industrial unrest. The impact of Britain's economic recession on the effectiveness of her foreign policy is widely recognised, especially the damage to its global reputation caused by continuing defence spending cuts.¹¹ The Labour Government's role in encouraging Portugal's decolonisation and transition to democracy are either overlooked or not seen as being significant within these studies. But the argument that Britain was unable to conduct an effective foreign policy during this period is directly relevant to this thesis.

⁸ See, Robert Skidelsky, 'The Worst of Governments', Anthony Seldon and Kevin Hickson, eds., New Labour, Old Labour: the Wilson and Callaghan Governments, 1974-79 (London : Routledge, 2004), pp.316-320.

⁹ Ann Lane, 'Foreign and Defence Policy', *Ibid.*, p. 154.

¹⁰ Robert Skidelsky, 'The Worst of Governments', *Ibid.*, p. 316.

¹¹ Ritchie Owendale, ed., British defence policy since 1945 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 131-157. John Baylis, Anglo-American Defence Relations 1939-1980: The Special Relationship (London: Macmillan, 1981). Robb Thomas, 'The 'Limit of What is Tolerable': British defence cuts and the Anglo-American 'special relationship', 1974-1976, Diplomacy and Statecraft, Vol. 22, No. 2 (June 2011), pp. 321-337.

A revisionist interpretation of the Labour Government began with the publication of Ross McKibben's article, "Homage to Wilson and Callaghan."¹² A number of historical studies using the newly published memoirs of former ministers followed to give a more favourable interpretation of the Labour Government's record.¹³ This was particularly the case with biographies of Wilson and Callaghan, written during the 1990s, which are broadly sympathetic to the Labour Government. These accounts tend to be concerned with, or to emphasise, its achievements during the 1960s, with its final term viewed as a less successful postscript.¹⁴ More recently, there has been greater academic attention on the government of the 1970s.¹⁵ The period is seen as interesting to historians because of the "unfortunate conjunction of a new government lacking a secure base in the House of Commons, with a major international economic turning-point signalled by the breakdown of Bretton Woods and the 1973 oil price hike."¹⁶ In particular, there have been several studies of the 1976 IMF crisis, the background of which is relevant to this thesis.¹⁷

The impact of Britain's economic recession on the effectiveness of its foreign policy is widely recognised in these accounts. Historians sympathetic to the Labour Government argue that, considering the scale of its domestic problems, its achievements during the 1970s are impressive, thus demonstrating the outstanding ability of its Cabinet ministers. The foreign policy successes of the Labour Government are central to this revisionist argument.¹⁸ Kenneth Morgan, for example, argues that "Above all, it was a constructive period in foreign policy, quieter than the later Blair years, but with more obvious achievement and certainly no risky adventure like an invasion of Iraq."¹⁹ The recent opening of the archives for this period

¹² Ross McKibbin, 'Homage to Wilson and Callaghan', *London Review of Books* 20:3 (October 1991), pp. 3-5.

¹³ Michael Artis and David Cobham, ed., *Labour's Economic Policies: 1974-1979* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991). Kenneth Morgan, *Ages of Reform: Dawns and Downfalls of the British Left* (London: Tauris, 2011).

¹⁴ Clive Ponting, *Breach of promise: Labour in Power, 1964-1970* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989). John Young, *The Labour Governments, 1964-70, vol.II: International Policy* (Manchester University Press, 2003). Richard Coopey, Steven Fielding and Nick Tiratsoo, ed., *The Wilson Governments 1964-1970* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1993). Glen O'Hara and Helen Parr, ed., *The Wilson Governments 1964-70 Reconsidered* (London: Routledge, 2006).

¹⁵ A number of recent accounts on Britain during the 1970s combining research using government archives and cultural analysis have been popular amongst the wider reading public. Andy Beckett, *When the lights went out: Britain in the seventies* (London: Faber, 2009). Dominic Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun: the Battle for Britain, 1974-1979* (London: Allen Lane, 2012). Alwyn Turner, *Crisis? What Crisis?: Britain in the 1970s* (London: Aurum, 2013).

¹⁶ Edmund Dell, *A Hard Pounding: politics and economic crisis 1974-76* (Oxford, 1991), p.3.

¹⁷ Kathleen Burk and Alec Cairncross, *Goodbye Great Britain* (Yale University Press: New Haven & London, 1992). Richard Cooper and Nicholas Woodward, *Britain in the 1970s: the troubled economy* (London: UCL Press, 1996). Kevin Hickson, *The IMF crisis of 1976 and British politics* (London: Tauris, 2005)

¹⁸ Ann Lane, 'Foreign and Defence Policy', *New Labour, Old Labour*, p. 154.

¹⁹ Kenneth O.Morgan, 'Was Britain dying?', *New Labour, Old Labour*, P. 306.

has led a number of historians to consider the Labour Government's response to foreign policy crises during the 1970s, to which this study will be an addition.²⁰

The eventual democratic outcome in Portugal has been essential to the argument that the Labour Government conducted an effective foreign policy during this period, but this reflects the prominence of the Portuguese Revolution within the memoir accounts of Wilson and Callaghan rather than British archival research. Britain's response to events in Portugal is also given a prominent place in their biographies. Austen Morgan gives a detailed chronological account of Britain's role in international diplomacy over Portugal using the memoirs of Harold Wilson and James Callaghan. He concludes that British intervention "was nothing less than interference in the internal affairs of another country", even suggesting the probability that this involved the use of MI6.²¹ Morgan also sees Britain as playing a key role in reversing Soviet intervention in Portugal by threatening to end trade negotiations. Ben Pimlott, a freelance journalist in Lisbon in 1975, argues that Britain played a role in diplomacy between the superpowers over Portugal (with a degree of independence from the United States), and refers to divisions within the Labour party over Portugal.²² The chapters on Callaghan's period as Foreign Secretary by Kenneth Morgan are extensively researched using his memoirs, press reports, biographies and personal papers (at that time unreleased).²³ His argument closely follows Callaghan's memoir, with Portugal and Cyprus seen as the most important foreign policy crises of the period. He contends that Callaghan was prominent in Britain's response throughout the crisis, and concludes that his action in supporting democracy in Portugal was one of his greatest achievements.

There are two studies of the 1970s Labour Government which are particularly relevant to this thesis. David Allen gives an overwhelmingly positive account of James Callaghan's period as Foreign Secretary, although his view is based almost entirely on the memoirs and biographies of Wilson and Callaghan.²⁴ He sees Callaghan's approach to Portugal as a "great success", particularly by changing the US approach to relations with the PSP. Callaghan's effectiveness as Foreign Secretary is given detailed consideration. He

²⁰ Aoife Collins, 'The Cabinet Office, Tony Benn and the Renegotiation of Britain's Terms of Entry into the European Community, 1974–1975', *Contemporary British History* 24:4 (2010), pp. 471–49. Geraint Hughes, 'Soldiers of Misfortune: the Angolan Civil War, The British Mercenary Intervention, and UK Policy towards Southern Africa, 1975–6', *The International History Review* 36:3 (2014), pp.493–512.

²¹ Austen Morgan, *Harold Wilson: A Life* (London: Pluto Press, 1992), pp.483–484.

²² Ben Pimlott, *Harold Wilson* (London: Harper Collins, 1992), p.670.

²³ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Callaghan- A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp.408–466.

²⁴ David Allen 'James Callaghan: Foreign Secretary 1974–76', Kevin Theakston, ed., *British Foreign Secretaries since 1945* (London: Routledge, 2004), p.47–66.

argues that his close personal ties with fellow leaders at the Commonwealth and Socialist International were a critical aspect of his approach to foreign policy. Allen contends that Callaghan had a strong working relationship with Wilson, which was a significant feature of this government, leading him to conclude that “Callaghan probably enjoyed better relations with the Prime Minister than any other Foreign Secretary in recent times.”²⁵ He analyses Callaghan’s personal leadership style, recognising his willingness to defer to his strong ministerial team and expert advice from the FCO, alongside regular consultation with the Trade Union Congress and the International Committee of the NEC. Allen argues that Callaghan took an innovative approach to diplomacy, for example appointing private officials (such as Tom McNally) as political advisers, and allowing them a prominent role. This leads to his overall conclusion that “Callaghan brought a distinct style to his time at the FCO.”²⁶ He gives little consideration though to the difficulty of conducting an effective foreign policy during a period of domestic crises; his contention that Callaghan was adept at uniting factions within the Labour Party will also not be supported by the findings of this thesis.

The second relevant study is Anne Lane’s chapter on foreign and defence policy within a collection on the 1970s Labour Government. Britain’s involvement in the Portuguese Revolution is seen within the context of its wider approach to the Cold War (especially its intervention during the Helsinki Summit), although her analysis is limited to memoir accounts. She argues that Callaghan’s commitment to multilateral diplomacy, rather than being a reflection of his personal leadership style, was a means to maintain Britain’s global influence in response to changing international circumstances. Her overall conclusion is that because “Labour was necessarily preoccupied with domestic issues during this period,” this gave Callaghan the opportunity to “impose a fresh vision of British interaction with the outside world which was rooted in the principles of socialist internationalism” which recognised the realities of Britain’s global decline.²⁷ His commitment to the Anglo-American relationship, Lane concludes, was “embedded in a broader strategy” of British foreign policy informed by these principles.²⁸

There are a number of historical debates on Britain’s post-war foreign policy which, although rarely making specific reference to the Portuguese Revolution, are relevant for an

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.51.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.52.

²⁷ Ann Lane, ‘Foreign and Defence Policy’, *New Labour, Old Labour*, p 154.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

understanding of the Labour Government's approach to foreign policy during the 1970s. This thesis will consider issues relating to the historical debate on the extent to which Britain had declined as a world power during the 1970s. To some historians, economic decline and withdrawal from global commitments signalled that Britain was no longer a global power, whilst to others (although a significant gap now existed between its capabilities and the superpowers) its influence was successfully maintained through the perception, domestically and internationally, that it was still capable of shaping developments elsewhere.²⁹ Britain's ability to effectively and realistically manage its existing resources to maintain a global role is central to this argument. A number of historians, however, argue that because Britain's diplomacy was increasingly conducted through multilateral organisations, its exact role and influence are difficult to assess.³⁰

The importance of the Anglo-American relationship to Britain means its post-war foreign policy has always been made with reference to that of the United States. The historiographical debate on the nature of the relationship is therefore relevant to this thesis. The dominant interpretation is the functionalist school, influenced by 'realism', which argues that the Anglo-America relationship is a result of shared interests; others argue that the relationship is not merely between leaders but that there exists "an institutionalised 'special relationship' with Britain centring on patterns of consultation, nuclear sharing, and defence and intelligence cooperation."³¹ There is wide agreement amongst historians that the Anglo-American relationship had been damaged during the Heath Government because of its reorientation of British foreign policy towards Europe, but after its electoral defeat both parties sought its restoration, leading to the mid-1970s being a period of particularly close

²⁹ Historians stressing Britain's post-war decline include Paul Kennedy, The realities behind diplomacy: background influences on British external policy, 1865-1980 (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981); C. J. Bartlett, British Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1989); and K. Robbins, The Eclipse of a Great Power: Modern Britain, 1870-1992 (London, 1997). By contrast, historians who see the period as one of transformation in Britain's role include John Young, Britain and the World in the Twentieth Century (London, 1997); David Reynolds, Britannia Overruled (Harlow: Longman, 2000) and Mark Curtis, The Ambiguities of Power: British Foreign Policy since 1945 (London, 1995).

³⁰ David Reynolds, Britannia Overruled, p.315-317. Michael Smith, Steve Smith and Brian White, ed., British Foreign Policy: Tradition, Change and Transformation (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), pp. 14-16.

³¹ John Dumbrell in A Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations in the Cold War and After (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 8-9. The concepts applied to the Anglo-American relationship are reviewed in Alex Danchev, On Specialness: Essays in Anglo-American Relations (Oxford: Macmillan, 1998). A range of academic perspectives are offered in Roger Louis and Hedley Bull, ed., The 'Special Relationship': Anglo-American Relations since 1945 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986). Historians incorporating a cultural element in their approach include David Dimbleby and David Reynolds An Ocean Apart: The Relationship Between Britain and America in the Twentieth Century (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1988). Historians who stress that strategic interests underpin the relationship include Robert Hathaway Great Britain and the United States: Special Relations since World War II (Boston, Massachusetts: Twayne Publishers, 1990).

relations, especially between Callaghan and Kissinger.³² There is no specific reference to the Portuguese Revolution in the historiography of the Anglo-American relationship, aside from John Dumbrell's argument, based on British memoirs, that Britain took the diplomatic lead on this issue. There have also been a number of studies on the relationship between the Labour Party and the United States.³³ These explore the paradox that Anglo-American relations have often been closest between US administrations and nominally socialist British governments, leading Kenneth Morgan to argue that, despite "residual anti-Americanism" within the Labour movement, "Labour was the main custodian of the idea of the Special Relationship."³⁴

There are a number of studies on the Labour Government's post-war approach to foreign policy, with particular interest in the extent to which they have followed democratic socialist principles. The record of the 1960s Wilson Governments on contentious foreign policy issues, such as the retention of the nuclear deterrent, Rhodesia and the Vietnam War, has been the subject of several studies.³⁵ These give a useful context to understanding its approach to foreign affairs during the 1970s. In his account of the Anglo-American relationship, Peter Jones considers the tension between the largely pro-American Labour leadership and its more left-wing party members, arguing that its approach to foreign policy tended to be more radical in opposition because of the role of its members within the National Executive Committee which shaped its policies.

There have been a number of studies which consider British foreign policy making during this period. The changes in Britain's world role and in wider international politics meant that the 1960s and 1970s "were something of a golden age for such studies in Britain"³⁶ In particular, there was great interest in the functioning of the recently merged

³² A chronological overview of the Anglo-American relationship are provided by, C.J. Bartlett's 'The Special Relationship': A Political History of Anglo-American Relations since 1945 (London: Longman, 1992); Ritchie Ovendale's Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998) and John Dumbrell, A Special Relationship Anglo-American Relations in the Cold War and After (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).

³³ Peter Jones, America and the British Labour Party: the special relationship at work (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1997). Kenneth O. Morgan, Ages of Reform: Dawns and Downfalls of the British Left (London: Tauris, 2011).

³⁴ 'Labour and the Special Relationship', Morgan, Ages of Reform, p. 196.

³⁵ Stephen Howe, 'Labour and International Affairs', Duncan Tanner, Peter Thane, Nick Tiratsoo, ed., Labour's First Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 120-122. John Callaghan, The Labour Party and Foreign Policy (Oxford: Routledge, 2007), p.268.

³⁶ John Young, Twentieth-Century Diplomacy: a case study of British practice, 1963-1976 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.3. See also James Barber, Who Makes British Foreign Policy? (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1976). Wallace, W., The Foreign Policy Process in Britain (London, 1975). Geoffrey Moorhouse, The Diplomats: The Foreign Office today (Jonathon Cape, 1977).

Foreign and Commonwealth Office.³⁷ These accounts were influential in shaping historians' subsequent understanding of British foreign policy. More recent historical studies address issues which are directly relevant to this thesis. They use published memoirs, interviews with participants and newly opened archives to analyse policy making (often through selected case-studies from post-war British foreign policy).³⁸ A number of historical debates are relevant to this thesis, particularly the changing role of the FCO, and the record of the protagonists who have shaped British policy making during this period.

There are two studies of particular relevance to this thesis. In his study of British diplomacy during the twentieth century the British historian, John Young, uses several case-studies from the 1960s and 1970s to argue that this was a critical era of innovation in diplomatic practice.³⁹ He focuses on a number of areas, such as the recognition of new regimes, the role of ambassadors, the conduct of multilateral diplomacy and official state visits, all of which are relevant to understanding Britain's policy making towards Portugal. The background to these changes he argues "was one of retreat from the world role, a corresponding attempt to escape from colonial conflicts, divisions within the Commonwealth, persistent economic weakness, a declining ability to wield military force, an intensification of the relationship between domestic and international problems, a focus on relationships with other western powers and growing multilateralism, especially thanks to membership of the EC."⁴⁰ The dilemma facing British policy makers at this time, he contends, was that "at any point this picture could be confusing and it was not clear how far or how fast Britain would decline in power relative to its main competitors."⁴¹ Although recognising the increasing importance of multilateral organisations, he argues that the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary remained central to foreign policy making throughout this period. He views

³⁷ Peter Hennessy, Whitehall (New York: The Free Press, 1989). Gaynor Johnson, ed., The Foreign Office and British Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century (Routledge, 2005).

³⁸ Ronald Barston, Modern Diplomacy (third edition, Longman, 2006). Tessa Blackstone and William Plowden, Inside the Think Tank: Advising the Cabinet, 1971-1983 (William Heinemann, 1988), John Dickie Inside the Foreign Office (Chapmans, 1992). John Dickie, The New Mandarins: How British Foreign Policy Works? (London, 2004). Ruth Dudley Edwards, True Brits: Inside the Foreign Office (London, 1994). Steve Smith, Michael Smith and Brian White, ed., British Foreign Policy: Tradition, Change and Transformation (London, 1988). Gill Bennett, Six Moments of Crisis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

³⁹ John Young, Twentieth-Century Diplomacy: a case study of British practice, 1963-1976 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 18.

Callaghan as “a key figure at the top of the Labour leadership, shrewder and more cunning than his rivals,” and was a successful foreign secretary.⁴²

The introductory chapter to a volume on post-war Foreign Secretaries by Kevin Theakston analyses changes to their role.⁴³ He argues that Britain’s increasingly multilateral approach to foreign policy during the post-war period makes it difficult for historians to assess their exact role and this means that studies of British foreign policy making tend to focus on the small number of case studies, such as the Falklands War, where Britain acted bilaterally.⁴⁴ In his concluding chapter to the volume David Hannay argues that multilateralism also meant, “Prime Ministers have increasingly moved into foreign affairs, limiting the Foreign Secretary’s independence by taking charge of key policy areas, attending international summits and conducting one-to-one diplomacy with other heads of government.”⁴⁵ He identifies this transformation as having occurred during the mid-1970s, noting that “In 1974 there were no regular European summits, only an occasional not very well prepared and organised meeting; the G8 did not exist; NATO did not have regular summits; meetings between the leaders of the main powers were sporadic.”⁴⁶ Theakston also claims that a number of significant changes to policy making were introduced by the 1970s Labour Government. He notes the important role given to Callaghan’s political adviser, Tom McNally, maintaining that he “was particularly influential and he had access to all FCO telegrams except those marked ‘Top Secret: Intelligence.’”⁴⁷ The Labour Cabinet is seen to have had very little involvement in foreign policy during this period; he observes that “The Prime Minister - Foreign Secretary axis normally dominates on foreign affairs: other ministers and the Cabinet have only limited involvement.”⁴⁸

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴³ Kevin Theakston, ‘The Changing role of the British Foreign Secretary’, Kevin Theakston, ed., British Foreign Secretaries since 1945 (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 1-46.

⁴⁴ Theakston, British Foreign Secretaries since 1945, p.2.

⁴⁵ David Hannay was second and later first secretary to the UK negotiating team for entry into the European Commission. From 1973 to 1977 he was Chef de Cabinet to Sir Christopher Soames (Vice-President of the European Commission) and from 1974 to 1984 he served as Assistant Undersecretary of State (EC) at the Foreign Office. From 1990 to 1995 he was ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations. British Foreign Secretaries since 1945, pg 272-273.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Page272.

⁴⁷ Kevin Theakston, ed., British Foreign Secretaries since 1945 (London: Routledge, 2004), p.25.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

b) Britain and the Portuguese Revolution

The first accounts of the Portuguese Revolution appeared immediately afterwards.⁴⁹ These relied solely on memoirs, newspaper records and interviews with participants, although the climate of free expression in Lisbon, including the release of government documents, meant valuable work was published. Their analysis is often speculative, with outside intervention habitually mentioned, but invariably without substantiation. The role of the United States, and to a lesser extent Britain, is often viewed as conspiratorial, with the existence of a covert programme widely assumed. There was renewed interest in the Portuguese Revolution during the twentieth anniversary of events. It remains, however, the source of great difficulty in the study of modern Portuguese history; many participants in the revolution, although ailing, remain alive, such as Mario Soares, whose historical foundation is influential.⁵⁰ The Carnation Revolution remains the subject of great debate in Portugal, with the release of new government documents and interviews with participants often leading to new interpretations. There has been increased interest in the international dimension of the revolution, especially since the study of diplomatic history became more established at Portuguese universities. However, Portugal enforces a thirty-year rule on access to documents relating to its foreign policy and the most important often remain closed for longer.

In Britain and the United States, Portuguese history had been a largely neglected area before the revolution. There was an (albeit incomplete) bibliography in Britain, with its historic links to Portugal, but in the United States Iberian studies only emerged as a distinct discipline during the 1970s. Histories of the revolution started to be written in the 1980s and early 1990s, when events continued to have contemporary resonance.⁵¹ Literature written in the late-1980s and 1990s made use of post-revolutionary Portuguese historiography, written after the key actors, through memoirs or public broadcasts, had attempted to secure their places in history.⁵² The role of outside powers was prominent in these accounts, influenced

⁴⁹ Mario Soares, Portugal's Struggle for Liberty (London: Allen and Unwin, 1975). Antonio de Spínola, Ao Serviço de Portugal (Lisboa: Ática/Bertrand, 1976). Alvaro Cunhal, Rumo a Vitória (Opinio, 1975).

⁵⁰ Fundação Mário Soares (<http://www.fmssoares.pt/>).

⁵¹ Lawrence Graham and Harry Makler, Contemporary Portugal – The Revolution and its Antecedents (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978). Bill Lomax, Revolution in Portugal 1974-76: A Bibliography (Durham: International Study Group on Modern Portugal, 1978). Ken Gladish 'From Autocracy to Party Government: Interpreting Regime Changes in Spain and Portugal' West European Politics vol. 8, 1985. Lawrence Graham and Douglas Wheeler, eds, In Search of Modern Portugal (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983).

⁵² Edi Clíjsters, Portugal 1974: A Non-Violent Revolution (Florence: European University Institute, 1999). Martin Kayman, Revolution and Counterrevolution in Portugal (London: Merlin Press, 1987). Paul Christopher

by international relations articles written during the Portuguese Revolution.⁵³ The Carnation Revolution had huge significance for US ‘transition studies’ literature written in the 1980s and 1990s. This field began with the seminal work by Samuel P. Huntington which saw the Portuguese Revolution as the beginning of a new stage in the history of liberal democracy.⁵⁴ Portugal is seen as the first case of what is known as the “third wave of democratisation”, which led to the collapse of authoritarian regimes, from Latin America to Eastern Europe, in the following decades. Political scientists specialising in ‘transitional theory’ stress the importance of international factors in democratic transitions, especially the role of the European Community in encouraging reform in southern and Eastern Europe.⁵⁵ The democratic transitions in Portugal and Spain have also been the subject of a number of comparative studies.⁵⁶

The historiographical debate most relevant to this thesis concerns international intervention during the Portuguese Revolution. The first studies considered the response of the United States. This was partly because there was easy access to official documents, alongside interviews with participants (and Kissinger’s copious memoirs), which allowed an analysis of its role. But there was also greater interest amongst Portuguese historians in the response of the United States because of its significance to post-war Lisbon.⁵⁷ Pedro Oliveira notes that “the relationship between Lisbon and Washington, or Portuguese involvement in institutions led by the Americans, became one of the favourite themes of Portuguese diplomatic history focusing on the period after 1945, relegating the London/Lisbon

Manuel, The Uncertain Outcome: The Politics of the Portuguese Transition to Democracy (New Hampshire: University Press of America, 1995). Kenneth Maxwell, The Making of Portuguese Democracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁵³ John C. Campbell, ‘The Mediterranean Crisis’, Foreign Affairs (July 1975). Kenneth Maxwell, ‘The Thorns of the Portuguese Revolution’, Foreign Affairs (January 1976). Tad Szulc, ‘Lisbon and Washington: Behind the Portuguese Revolution’ Foreign Policy 21 (Winter 1975). Jonathan Story, ‘Portugal’s Revolution of Carnations: Patterns of Change and Continuity’ International Affairs 52:3 (July 1976).

⁵⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, The Third Wave (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

⁵⁵ The most significant study is a collection of essays edited by Geoffrey Pridham (ed.), Securing Democracy- Political Parties and Democratic Consolidation in Southern Europe (London: Routledge, 1990). See also, Juliet Antunes Sablosky, ‘Transnational Party Activity and Portugal’s Relations with the European Community’, Paper Prepared for Delivery at the Fourth Biennial International Conference of The European Community Studies Association, May 11-14, 1995. http://aei.pitt.edu/7009/1/sablosky_juliet_antunes.pdf

⁵⁶ Benny Pollack and Jim Taylor, ‘The Transition to Democracy in Portugal and Spain’ British Journal of Political Science vol. 13 (1983). E. Ramon Arango, Spain: Democracy Regained (Oxford: Westview Press, 1995). Howard Wiarda and Margaret Macleish, Catholic Roots and Democratic Flowers – Political Systems in Spain and Portugal (London: Praeger, 2001).

⁵⁷ Friere Antunes, Nixon e Caetano: Promessas e Abandono (Lisbon: Difusão Cultural, 1992). Tiago Moreira de Sá, Os Americanos na Revolução Portuguesa (1974-1976) (Lisboa: Notícias, 2004). Bernardino Gomes and Tiago Moreira de Sá, Carlucci vs Kissinger : os EUA e a Revolução Portuguesa (Lisboa: Dom Quixote, 2008).

connection to secondary importance.”⁵⁸ There is now greater interest in the role of other states in the Portuguese Revolution, particularly since their archival records became available. A study of the German Democratic Republic’s involvement in Portugal, based on archives declassified after reunification, reveals that its participation (which was known) was made independently of the Soviet Union.⁵⁹ More recently, a study of the Federal Republic of Germany demonstrates the importance of its intervention which included substantial financial assistance to the Portuguese Socialist Party.⁶⁰ This research has allowed the first studies of the international response to the Portuguese Revolution (including the role of the Labour Government) based on multiple archival sources.⁶¹

The response of the Labour Government to events in Portugal has not received the same level of interest amongst diplomatic historians as that of other leading states. A number of studies exist on the historic relationship between Portugal and Britain, but little has been published on the post-war period.⁶² The Labour Government’s involvement in the Portuguese Revolution was widely recognised amongst historians, although it was seen as part of a collective western response, rather than as an independent policy. Pedro Oliveira argues that this was the result of the perception amongst historians that Britain’s economic weakness during the period prevented it playing a significant role in events in Lisbon.⁶³ The publication of the FCO document series on NATO’s Southern Flank Crisis led to greater interest in Britain’s response to the revolution, although the subject of the volume meant that the selection of documents and the introduction by Keith Hamilton are concerned exclusively

⁵⁸ (“A relação Lisboa/Washington, ou o envolvimento português em instituições lideradas pelos norte-americanos, tornou-se um dos temas de eleição da história diplomática portuguesa dedicada ao período posterior a 1945, relegando para um plano secundário o eixo Lisboa/Londres.”) Gomes and Moreira de Sá, Carlucci vs Kissinger, p.16.

⁵⁹ Tilo Wagner, “Portugal and the German Democratic Republic during the Carnation Revolution”, Portuguese Journal of Social Sciences, 1 (2008).

⁶⁰ Fonseca, Ana Mónica, ‘The Federal Republic of Germany and the Portuguese Transition to Democracy,’ Journal of European Integration History 15:1 (2009).

⁶¹ José Medeiros Ferreira ‘O 25 de Abril no Contexto Internacional’ Relações Internacionais June 2004, pp.143-158. António Simões do Paço ‘Friends in High Places - o Partido Socialista e a ‘Europa Connosco’, Raquel Varela, ed., Revolução ou Transição? : História e Memória da Revolução dos Cravos (Lisboa: Bertrand, 2012), pp.126-7.

⁶² José de Almada, Para a História da Aliança Luso-Britânica (Lisbon: IN-CM, 1955). Tom Gallagher, ‘Anglo-Portuguese Relations Since 1900’ History Today Volume 36, June 1986. Armando Marques, A Aliança Inglesa. Notas de História Diplomática, 1383-1943 (Lisboa: Editorial Enciclopédia, 1943). Glyn Stone, The Oldest Ally: Britain and the Portuguese Connection, 1936-1941 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1994)

⁶³ Pedro Aires Oliveira, ‘The United Kingdom and the Portuguese transition to democracy, 1974-75’, História das Relações Internacionais 39 (Novembro, 2008), p.1.

http://www.ipri.pt/publicacoes/working_paper/working_paper.php?idp=303

with the Cold War implications of events in Portugal.⁶⁴ Because these sources are easily accessible to historians in Portugal and elsewhere (being in a widely spoken language), they have been used to assess the role of other states, such as the Soviet Union, whose archives remain closed.⁶⁵ More recently, diplomatic historians have begun a detailed exploration of the national archival records for this period, which has led to a wide-ranging understanding of Britain's policy towards Portugal.⁶⁶

The Labour Government's response to the Portuguese Revolution has often been included within studies of the United States and Portugal. Because analysis was based on British documents accessible through US archives, its policy is considered to be an adjunct to Washington's (motivated by Cold War concerns).⁶⁷ The broader approaches of the Labour Government, such as encouraging Lusophone decolonisation and protecting British business interests, are not considered. There is also an assumption that there was a close Anglo-American relationship during this period because of regular contact on Portugal, but the Labour Government's motives for this, given its wider policy of pursuing closer relations with Washington and its differences on Portugal, are not explored. However, a comparison of studies on the response of Britain and the US to the Portuguese Revolution enables a consideration of the nature and importance of Anglo-American relations during this period.

There has been a widespread assumption amongst Portuguese diplomatic historians that the United States planned covert operations in Portugal during the revolution. Because US archival records reveal that the Labour Government was aware that the Ford administration considered such a programme (through close institutional ties), there is an assumption that Britain was also involved in this planning. There has even been the suggestion that the Labour Government led these discussions. Tiago Moriera refers to a British covert operation called the 'Plano Callaghan', a supposed British initiative in late 1975 to supply political moderates with military assistance⁶⁸, this based on an interview with

⁶⁴ Keith Hamilton and Patrick Salmon, ed. Documents on British Policy Overseas Series III, Volume V: The Southern Flank in Crisis (London, 2006).

⁶⁵ Jonathan Haslam, Russia's Cold War: from the October Revolution to the Fall of the Wall (New Haven, Conn.; London : Yale University Press, 2011), p.279-285.

⁶⁶ Norrie MacQueen and Pedro Aires Oliveira, 'Grocer meets Butcher': Marcello Caetano's London visit of 1973 and the last days of Portugal's Estado Novo', Cold War History 10:1 (2010), 29–50.

⁶⁷ José Freire Antunes, Os Americanos e Portugal (Lisboa: Dom Quixote, 1986). Tiago Moreira de Sá, Os Americanos na Revolução Portuguesa (1974-1976) (Lisboa: Notícias, 2004). Del Pero, Mario, "Which Chile, Allende?" Henry Kissinger and the Portuguese Revolution." Cold War History 11:4, November 2011.

⁶⁸ Tiago Moreira Os Americanos, pp.138-144

a Portuguese participant in the revolution.⁶⁹ In a more recent study, his claims are supported by material from the US archival record, although no evidence of such an operation is given from British sources.⁷⁰ This study will investigate the possibility that such a plan existed, or any other programme. It will argue that Portuguese historians conflate limited British support for the PSP with US proposals for covert operations in Lisbon.

A number of recent historical studies have stressed the significance of Western European involvement in the Portuguese Revolution.⁷¹ These emphasise its collective response, with little consideration given to differences between states; the importance of the close cooperation between Western Europe and the United States during the final stages of the revolution is also downplayed. The Portuguese diplomatic historian, Antonio Jose Telo, contributes a chapter on Western European involvement to a volume of revisionist interpretations of the Carnation Revolution. He argues that although the US played an important role immediately after the April Revolution, it was the contribution of Western Europe, particularly through financial aid, which was critical to the democratic outcome in Portugal.⁷² The Labour Government is seen as both a leading participant in the Western European response and the main proponent of a role for the EEC in Portugal. However, its regular contact with the United States on Portugal is not seen as being significant.⁷³ Britain's support for Lusophone decolonisation is briefly mentioned, but because this is based on Portuguese sources, the Labour Government's motives are not explored.⁷⁴

The Portuguese diplomatic historian, António Simões Do Paço, explores the support given to the PSP by the Western European socialist movement.⁷⁵ He uses the memoirs of Portuguese and European leaders to consider its origins during the early 1970s. But his

⁶⁹ Rui Mateus, Contos proibidos: Memórias de um PS Desconhecido (Lisboa: Dom Quixote, 1996). His rather colourful memoirs also contend that Harold Wilson's alcohol problems largely explain the British response to the Portuguese Revolution (p.79).

⁷⁰ Gomes & Moreira de Sa, Carlucci vs Kissinger, p. 355.

⁷¹ José Telo 'Revolução e a posição de Portugal no mundo', Fernando Rosas, ed., Portugal e a Transição para a Democracia: 1974-1976 (Lisboa: Edições Colibri, 1999). Mario Del Pero, 'A European Solution for a European Crisis. The International implications of Portugal's Revolution', Journal of European Integration History 15:1 (2009). António Simões Do Paço, 'Friends in High Places – O Partido Socialista e a 'Europa Connosco'', Raquel Varela, ed., Revolu-cão ou Transi-cão? História e Memória da Revolu-cão dos Cravos (Lisboa: Bertrand, 2012), pp. 117-138. Varsori, Antonio, "Crisis and stabilization in Southern Europe during the 1970s: Western strategy, European instruments", Journal of European Integration History 15:1 (2009).

⁷² António Simões Do Paço, 'Friends in High Places', Revolu-cão ou Transi-cão, p.303.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.304.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.290.

⁷⁵ António Simões Do Paço, 'Friends in High Places – O Partido Socialista e a 'Europa Connosco'', Raquel Varela, ed., Revolu-cão ou Transi-cão? História e Memória da Revolu-cão dos Cravos (Lisboa: Bertrand, 2012), pp. 117-138.

research on the Carnation Revolution is based almost exclusively on British archival sources, leading to the assumption that the rest of Western Europe shared the Labour Government's approach. He also does not consider that its encouragement of the PSP was motivated by other factors besides partisanship, particularly its support for Lusophone decolonisation. His main argument is that the PSP's ties with Western Europe were critical to its electoral strategy in 1976, especially the meeting of socialist leaders held in Porto, the 'Europa Connosco'.⁷⁶ However, despite listing each attendee, he does not analyse the rather surprising absence (given its involvement on every other occasion) of a single representative of the Labour Government.

The Italian diplomatic historian Mario Del Pero has written an article on the response of Western European governments to the Portuguese Revolution.⁷⁷ His premise is that the Western European approach was fundamentally different from that of the United States, being principally concerned with a "Chilean Shadow" (a return to right wing authoritarian government), whereas Washington feared that the leftward direction of events might undermine the integrity of the NATO Alliance.⁷⁸ Del Pero makes extensive use of historiography on the Portuguese revolution but primary research only from US and British archives. His article assumes that there was a common response by Western European socialist parties to events, arguing that "The early/mid 1970s were in many ways the heyday of Western European democratic socialism."⁷⁹ Del Pero does not consider the impact of the Anglo-American relationship on the Labour Government's response to events in Portugal, especially whether close institutional ties brought cooperation on covert activity. He also downplays the significance of the divisions on Portugal within the Ford Administration (meaning that the State Department shared similar views to Western Europe) and the eventual decision of the US to support the PSP through the Socialist International.

There have been a number of recent studies on Lusophone decolonisation which consider, using British archives, the role of the Labour Government.⁸⁰ As one of the leading diplomatic

⁷⁶ 'Europe is with us', *Ibid.*, pp.122-124.

⁷⁷ Del Pero, 'A European Solution for a European Crisis. The International implications of Portugal's Revolution', pp.15- 34. See also Mario Del Pero, "Which Chile, Allende?" Henry Kissinger and the Portuguese revolution", *Cold War History* 11:4 (November 2011), pp.625-657.

⁷⁸ Del Pero, 'A European Solution for a European Crisis', p.25.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p.34.

⁸⁰ There is an extensive historiography concerning Lusophone decolonisation. Gonçalves Ribeiro, *A Vertigem da Descolonização : da Agonia do Êxodo à Cidadania Plena* (Mem Martin: Inquérito, 2002). Emídio Fernando, *O Último Adeus Português - História das Relações entre Portugal e Angola - Do Início da Guerra Colonial até à*

actors in Africa concerned with ending white minority rule, Britain is mentioned in much of the literature on Portuguese decolonisation.⁸¹ There is particular interest in the Labour Government's role in sponsoring talks on Guinea Bissau's independence after the April Revolution.⁸² There is also an extensive historiography of the Rhodesian crisis, including the effect of the Portuguese Revolution on Mozambique, which altered the military balance away from the white racist regime towards the black national movements.⁸³ The prospect of sanctions against Rhodesia being effectively enforced were Mozambique granted independence is explored within existing literature, but this thesis will consider how this shaped the Labour Government's response to the Portuguese Revolution.⁸⁴

The British historian, Norrie MacQueen, has written an extensive account of Lusophone decolonisation, using a range of source material, interviews with participants and Portuguese historiography.⁸⁵ Influenced by neo-dependency theory, he traces the role of Britain in supporting Portuguese acquisition of its colonies and the capital investment that enabled their development. He argues that Britain then played a crucial role, as a trusted ally, in assisting the new Lisbon government in the diplomatic process that led to rapid decolonisation. More recently, MacQueen has written an article on Britain and the issue of

Independência (Lisboa: Oficina do Livro, 2005). Abdul Koha Rony, Ieda Siqueira Wiarda The Portuguese in South-East Asia: Malacca, Moluccas, East Timor (Hamburg: Abera, 1997).

⁸¹ There have been several historical studies of the Anglo-Portuguese relationship in Lusophone Africa, although few have been published on the period since World War Two. Neil Bruce, Portugal: The Last Empire (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1975). Richard Eddis, 'The British and Mozambique: four centuries of contact' The British Society of Portugal Annual Report (21, 1994). Glyn Stone, 'Britain and Portuguese Africa, 1961-65', Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History (Vol. 28: 3, 2000). Alex Vine, 'Estudo de caso: UK Policy Toward Angola and Mozambique,' Fernando Cardoso, ed., Diplomacia, Cooperação e Negócios: o Papel dos Actores Externos em Angola e Moçambique (Lisboa: Instituto de Estudos Estratégicos e Internacionais, 2007).

⁸² António Duarte Silva, A Independência da Guiné-Bissau e a Descolonização Portuguesa (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 1997), Basil Davidson, No Fist Is Big Enough to Hide the Sun (Basildon: Penguin, 1981). Joseph C. Miller, 'The Politics of Decolonization in Portuguese Africa' African Affairs (1975). Michael Harsgor, 'Aftereffects of an Exemplary Decolonization' Journal of Contemporary History 15:1 (January: 1980). Norrie MacQueen, 'Belated Decolonization and UN Politics against the Backdrop of the Cold War: Portugal, Britain, and Guinea-Bissau's Proclamation of Independence, 1973-1974', Journal of Cold War Studies 8:4 (2008), pp. 29-56.

⁸³ For a polemical account of the Portuguese authorities' breaching of sanctions prior to the 1974 revolution: Jorge Jardim Rodésia, o Escândalo das Sanções (Lisboa: Intervenção, 1978). Anthony Verrier, The Road To Zimbabwe 1890-1980 (London: Cape, 1986). Ian Hancock, White Liberals, Moderates and Radicals in Rhodesia 1953-1980 (London: Croom Helm, 1984). Norma Kriger, Zimbabwe's Guerrilla War (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Elaine Widrich, Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence (London: Croom Helm, 1978). Sue Onslow, ed., Cold War in Southern Africa: White Power, Black Liberation (London: Routledge, 2009). Jamie Miller, 'Things Fall Apart: South Africa and the Collapse of the Portuguese Empire, 1973-74', Cold War History 12:2 (2012).

⁸⁴ Ken Flower, Serving Secretly: An Intelligence Chief On Record: Rhodesia Into Zimbabwe 1964-81 (London: Murray, 1987), pp.142-144. Anthony Verrier The Road To Zimbabwe 1890-1980 (London: Cape, 1986), pp.166-185. Ian Hancock White Liberals, Moderates and Radicals in Rhodesia 1953-1980 (London: Croom Helm, 1984), pp. 193-194. Elaine Widrich, Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence (London: Croom Helm, 1978), pp.221-257.

⁸⁵ Norrie MacQueen, The Decolonisation of Portuguese Africa (London: Longman, 1997).

recognising Guinea-Bissau's independence.⁸⁶ He uses the British archives to outline a number of influences on its approach, including its reputation in the UN amongst newly independent states and wider Cold War implications. MacQueen maintains that the Labour Government was fortunate in the timing of Spínola's decision to grant independence to the overseas territories because it would otherwise have faced the dilemma of whether to support Portugal or Commonwealth Africa during a forthcoming United Nations debate on the issue.

The Portuguese historian, Pedro Oliveira, has written an account of the post-1945 Anglo-Portuguese relationship in the Lusophone overseas territories.⁸⁷ It is an extensive study using recently opened British archives and interviews with FCO officials; the final chapters consider the role of the Labour Government in Portuguese decolonisation. Oliveira considers Anglo-Portuguese relations in Lisbon, but only as context for their relationship elsewhere. He argues that the election of a Labour Government in February 1975 is important, given that radical ministers within the Cabinet had close ties to the national liberation movements in southern Africa. This meant that the Labour Government was able to facilitate negotiations on the overseas territories with the new government in Portugal. Oliveira also suggests that "the Watergate affair could doubtless also have prevented the British and the Americans from working to produce a joint approach to Portugal's overseas problems", to explain why the Anglo-American relationship was a less significant factor in Britain's approach to Portugal during 1974.⁸⁸

Sources

A range of primary sources relevant to understanding the Labour Government's policy towards the Portuguese Revolution are accessible in the United Kingdom. The most important are the official government records held at The National Archives at Kew, London. Under the thirty-year rule the documents for 1974-75 were available after cataloguing in 2006. Although documents on Portugal were opened almost in their entirety, some are restricted and remained closed. During research an unsuccessful Freedom of Information request was made in August 2012 concerning a number of closed documents for this period;

⁸⁶ Norrie, MacQueen, 'Belated decolonization and UN Politics against the Backdrop of the Cold War: Portugal, Britain and Guinea-Bissau's Proclamation of Independence, 1973-1974', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 8:4 (October 2006), pp.29-56.

⁸⁷ Pedro Aires Oliveira, *Os Despojos da Aliança: a Grã-Bretanha e a Questão Colonial Portuguesa: 1945-1975* (Lisboa: Tinta-da-china, 2007).

⁸⁸ ("na sequência do caso Watergate, podera também ter impedido britânicos e norte-americanos de estudarem uma abordagem conjunta aos problemas ultramarinos portugueses"). *Ibid.*, p.415

the small number of restricted documents and their distribution within files suggests that this decision was made to protect participants in the revolution who remain alive, such as Mario Soares, rather than to disguise a particular policy response. The main archives consulted were those of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the Prime Minister's Office (PREM), the Ministry of Defence (DEFE), the Ministry of Overseas Development (ODM) and the Cabinet Office (CAB). Relevant material on the Portuguese Revolution has been published in the FCO documents series.⁸⁹ British officials who participated in events were either unavailable for interview or deceased when this study began.

The private papers of Harold Wilson and James Callaghan are deposited in the Bodleian Library (Oxford), although the latter remain uncatalogued, thus reducing their usefulness. The memoirs of Harold Wilson and James Callaghan both recall their involvement in the British response to the Carnation Revolution. Harold Wilson gives a meticulous chronological account of the diplomacy between London, Washington and Moscow concerning Portugal in his memoirs, but there is little analysis of the Portuguese Revolution, suggesting that his concern as Prime Minister was with the international ramifications of events rather than the revolution itself.⁹⁰ By contrast, the Portuguese Revolution has, alongside the Cyprus crisis, a prominent place within James Callaghan's memoirs in the chapters concerning his period as Foreign Secretary. He viewed events in Portugal as extremely important and the British response as equally significant. Callaghan stresses the differences in interpretation of events by Washington and London, but within a context of close personal relations between Kissinger and himself.⁹¹ The memoirs and diaries (and there are many) of other Labour cabinet ministers also mention events in Portugal. They feature prominently in some accounts but only fleetingly, or not at all, in others, suggesting that whether cabinet ministers viewed events in Portugal as noteworthy depended on their personal interest in the politics of the revolution. There is a clear division of sympathy between those enthusiastic about the leftward direction of events in Portugal and those supportive of Callaghan's approach.⁹²

⁸⁹ Keith Hamilton and Patrick Salmon, ed. Documents on British Policy Overseas Series III, Volume V: The Southern Flank in Crisis (London, 2006). Useful background material can also be found in G. Bennett and Keith Hamilton, ed. Documents on British Policy Overseas Series III, Volume III: Détente in Europe (London, 2001).

⁹⁰ Harold Wilson, Final Term: The Labour Government 1974-76 (London: Wiedenfeld & Nicolson, 1979).

⁹¹ James Callaghan, Time and Chance (London: Collins 1987).

⁹² Tony Benn's Against the Tide: Diaries 1973-77 (London: Hutchinson, 1987) and Barbara Castle's The Castle Diaries 1974-76 (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1980) are examples of the former. Michael Stewart's Life and Labour (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1980) is an example of the latter.

There are also a number of other archives relevant to a study of the British response to the Portuguese Revolution. Hansard records of Parliamentary debates on Portugal are accessible on-line. The TUC Library Collection (Modern Record Centre, Warwick University) holds records of the Trades Union Congress and of its General Secretary Jack Jones who helped to organise non-communist trade unions in Portugal. The Labour History Archive and Study Centre (Manchester) holds Labour Party records. There is a range of relevant material, including National Executive Committee minutes, party conference resolutions, correspondence with the Socialist International and the private papers of several Labour Ministers who took an interest in Portugal, although these are not clearly catalogued, meaning the material available is not always conducive to reaching adequate conclusions. There was an extensive coverage of the Portuguese Revolution in British newspapers, journals and periodicals. The British Library (London) holds a wide range of materials, from broadsheet newspapers to the left-wing press. In particular *The Economist* and *The Financial Times* featured regular editorials on events in Lisbon and their impact on British business interests. The Marx Memorial Library (Clerkenwell, London) and Modern Record Centre (Warwick University) hold material from fringe left-wing parties which influenced the far-left of the Labour party.⁹³ The Anglo-American relationship during the Portuguese Revolution can be explored through a recently released volume of the *Foreign Relations of the United States Series (F.R.U.S.)* on Western Europe during the 1970s.⁹⁴ The collection includes papers from the Nixon and Ford Archives, and the State Department and CIA. There is an extensive section of documents relating to the Portuguese Revolution, including communications with the Labour Government during the crisis.

Methodology

A study of the British Government's response to the Portuguese Revolution requires a state-centred approach, limited to the perspective of the government sphere as revealed by the exchange of communication between political and diplomatic actors. Hence this thesis largely uses official government records and memoir accounts of leading politicians. The limitations

⁹³ Both the Labour History Archive and the Marx Memorial Library are currently closed due to financial constraints.

⁹⁴ Kathleen B. Rasmussen, ed., *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume E–15, Part 2, Documents on Western Europe, 1973–1976*, (United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 2014). All US sources referred to in this thesis are taken from this volume unless otherwise stated. Documents accessed on-line (<http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2>.)

of official records will be addressed through close textual analysis and contextual awareness. The approach taken during research was to understand how events in Lisbon were perceived by the Labour Government, the policy debate within government and the influences on each policy outcome. This will include a consideration of the foreign policy of other states as revealed by historical research. As a pluralistic democracy, it is also necessary to consider non-governmental influences on the Labour Government, such as the role of the Labour Party, British media, trade unions, businesses and public opinion.

A critical question will be how the British national interest in Portugal was defined by the Labour Government. The methodological approach taken will be the international relations concept of Bureaucratic Politics.⁹⁵ This considers whether different government departments cooperate together to define the national interest, or whether policy outcomes are the result of compromise between competing interest groups within government. The concept has been widely applied to the study of post-war US foreign policy; this thesis will consider its relevance to a case study of British policy making.⁹⁶

This is not intended as a transnational study of the Anglo-Portuguese relationship. The significance of trade relations, media coverage, tourism and cultural exchange, although important, are considered only where relevant to an understanding of bilateral state relations. Nor is it intended to assess Britain's importance in the outcome of the Portuguese Revolution and so contribute to historical debate in Portugal on the Carnation Revolution, but rather to demonstrate how the Labour government perceived developments in Lisbon and to assess the effectiveness of its foreign policy response.

One problem will be that descriptive terms such as 'political moderate' and 'radical left' are limited in their value given the fluidity of political allegiances in Lisbon and controversy over their role, but these were the terms of analysis used by British politicians, diplomats and public commentators to understand the Portuguese Revolution. Therefore such terminology will be used with reference to relevant debates, such as whether the April coup d'état was a dramatic revolution or in reality a gradual political transition which began during the Caetano regime.

⁹⁵ Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little Brown, 1971), p.67. Graham Allison, 'Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications', *World Politics* 24 (1972), pp. 40-79.

⁹⁶ J. Garry Clifford, 'Bureaucratic politics and power', Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson, eds., *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 91-101. John Dumbrell, *The Making of US Foreign Policy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 18-21.

Structure

The Labour Government's foreign policy towards Portugal will be considered within the periodisation of the Carnation Revolution most widely used by historians. The organisation of the thesis will therefore be largely chronological, with a chapter on the response of the Labour Government during each stage of the Portuguese Revolution, plus a thematic chapter which will consider Britain's role in Lusophone decolonisation. There is naturally some inter-connection between these chapters and so cross-referencing will be made. The argument of this thesis is organised within the succeeding chapters.

Chapter II is concerned with the immediate response of the Labour Government to the April Revolution. It will consider the difficulty in relations between Britain and the Caetano regime prior to the coup d'état. A thematic section will examine Britain's relationship with Portugal and how this changed after the coup d'état. It will then consider the Labour Government's relations with the first provisional government. This chapter will argue that the primary motivation of British policy during this period was to encourage Portuguese decolonisation. This meant that the close relationship between the Labour Government and the PSP was not only partisan but arose because they were the leading proponents of immediate independence for the overseas territories. The consequence for the Labour Government, however, was that its relations with President Spínola were formal rather than close, in contrast to that of the Nixon administration, and this weakened its influence in Lisbon.

Chapter III looks at the Labour Government's role in encouraging Portuguese decolonisation. It examines the importance of the Rhodesia Question to the Labour Government, and the implications of political change in Lisbon for this situation. It considers the important role played by the British Government in facilitating talks between the new government in Lisbon and the national liberation movements, particularly the conference held in London at the end of May 1975 between Portugal and representatives of Guinea Bissau. It will argue that Britain was in a unique position to do so, particularly because of its historic relationship with post-independence leaders in southern Africa. It will also argue that the political idealism of the Labour movement explains its commitment to Portuguese decolonisation. The chapter will conclude by showing that once the principle of

independence was conceded by Lisbon, the Labour Government became concerned with the implications of such a rapid decolonisation.

Chapter IV considers the Labour Government's reaction to the events in Lisbon after President António de Spínola's resignation. The leftward direction of events meant that Britain became concerned with Communist Party activity in Lisbon. It sought to support both independent trade unions and moderate political parties, while encouraging the embryonic democratic institutions. The Labour Government encouraged this support through the Labour Party and the TUC to avoid being seen to intervene in Portugal's sovereign affairs. This chapter will also argue that British interests were now directly threatened by events. It will explore the visit of Wilson and Callaghan to Moscow in February 1975 when concern about communist influence in Lisbon was raised with the Soviet leadership. It will finally consider the Labour Government's response to the provisional assembly elections in April 1975.

Chapter V will consider the Labour Government's response to the events in Lisbon during the 'Hot Summer' (the attempt of the radical left to consolidate power). It will argue that Britain now considered events in Portugal to be a Cold War crisis leading to close cooperation between the US and its European allies. At the Helsinki Summit in July and August 1975, the Labour Government raised events in Lisbon with the Soviet Union. The Labour Government's response was also shaped by the need to defend British business interests in Portugal. However, British influence in Lisbon was now limited by its inability to provide substantial economic assistance. Its response was also complicated by opposition from democratic socialist Labour Party members who expressed sympathy with the radical left in Lisbon.

Chapter VI considers the transition to democracy in Portugal following the appointment of a moderate government in September 1975, which led to parliamentary and presidential elections in early 1976. It will consider the dramatic events of the 25th November, when the radical left made one final attempt to seize power. This chapter will argue that although the opportunity now existed to increase British influence in Lisbon, Britain's own domestic crises meant that it was unable to provide the same level of assistance as its western allies and therefore, paradoxically, British influence declined during Portugal's final transition to democracy.

This study contributes to our understanding of Labour Government foreign policy during a period when Britain's global influence declined. Political scientists have seen the transition to democracy in Portugal as an archetypal political event of the late-twentieth century. The international response is seen as crucial to that outcome and became a template for future interventions from neighbouring Spain at the time to Eastern Europe in the 1990s. The challenge of encouraging parliamentary democracy after a period of authoritarian rule, despite Britain's military and economic decline, remains a contemporary concern of her foreign policy.

Chapter II –The April Revolution and Spinola Government (25th April – 30th September, 1974)

The first response of the Labour Government to the coup d'état of the 25th April was to promote immediate independence for Portugal's overseas territories. The principal motivation behind this policy was that if Mozambique were to achieve independence, sanctions against Rhodesia might be fully enforced, thus giving the prospect of a resolution to a foreign policy issue which had bedevilled successive British governments.⁹⁷ However, decolonisation required the success of politicians in Lisbon committed to achieving this aim. The Labour Government's support for Mario Soares and the Portuguese Socialist Party was, therefore, not only partisan: their success best served the British national interest. Paradoxically, its support for a political rival meant relations with the newly inaugurated President Spinola remained formal rather than close; consequently, the Labour Government's approach weakened rather than bolstered the political position of the Portuguese leader as he struggled to meet the challenge from the radical left. The British commitment to the success of moderate politicians also meant they did not develop contacts across the political spectrum and, therefore, failed to predict accurately the leftward direction of politics in Lisbon.

The main argument of this chapter will be that Britain's policy towards Portugal was in many respects an inadequate response to a propitious set of circumstances. President Spinola needed to end Portugal's diplomatic isolation and Britain could have been his closest partner. The United States was tainted by close ties to the Caetano regime; other European states had neither the shared interests nor sentiment which characterised Portugal's relationship with Britain. The eventual resignation and replacement of Spinola by a radical left-wing government led to a Cold War crisis which threatened to undermine superpower détente. Furthermore, because the approach of the Labour Government differed markedly from that of the Ford Administration (which was fully committed to supporting Spinola) relations between the two became strained. However, British policy was shaped primarily by the belief that its national interest in relation to Portugal was a solution to the Rhodesia problem. While

⁹⁷ Flower, *Serving Secretly*, pp.142-144. Verrier *The Road To Zimbabwe*, pp.166-185. Hancock *White Liberals*, pp. 193-194. Widrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, pp.221-257.

Britain both supported and encouraged a transition to parliamentary democracy in Portugal, during the Spínola presidency this was only a secondary concern.

The departure of the Caetano regime was met with relief by the Labour Government; Britain's relations with Portugal, albeit within the framework of close historic ties, had become increasingly difficult as a result of the Lusophone African wars. Britain came under pressure to vote for UN resolutions condemning Portuguese activities, while the Caetano regime embarrassed Portugal's NATO allies, undermining the alliance's legitimacy as an organisation defending democratic values. The anniversary of the 'oldest alliance' in 1973 became less of a celebration of Anglo-Portuguese relations than a diplomatic test to be skilfully negotiated.⁹⁸ A Foreign Office official later concluded that "The overthrow of the authoritarian Caetano regime and the present Portuguese Government's commitment to self-determination and independence for Portugal's overseas territories has removed the major cause of friction in Anglo-Portuguese relations."⁹⁹ With a new government committed to ending the colonial wars, the opportunity existed for the restoration of Britain's traditional influence in Lisbon, particularly now that Nixon's strategy of close relations with Caetano had backfired.¹⁰⁰

However, the April 25th coup d'état was greeted without great enthusiasm in London. Although an unpleasant regime, it was not brutal, and Britain had been able, by and large, to maintain constructive relations with Salazar and Caetano. Its removal by a military coup did not appear to herald a transition to democracy. Portugal seemed to have exchanged an ossified authoritarian system for an uncertain period of military rule, which promised change but might bring chaos. As welcome as developments may have appeared to the Portuguese people, it could become more difficult to defend Britain's interests. A British official at the Lisbon Embassy observed: "It is clear that this consequence of the April Coup is disturbing the British community as much as the collapse of the cosy political order which they have been familiar with for so long."¹⁰¹ That Portugal could become a parliamentary democracy, integrated economically and eventually politically with its neighbours, was not considered the most likely outcome of events.

⁹⁸ Norrie MacQueen and Pedro Oliveira, "Grocer Meets Butcher". Marcello Caetano's London Visit of 1973 and the Last Days of Portugal's Estado Novo' *Cold War History* 10:1 (February 2010), pp.29-50.

⁹⁹ Thomas to Killick, 'Position Paper', 24 September 1974, FCO 9/2047.

¹⁰⁰ US policy toward Portugal was reviewed by the British Embassy in Washington. Reeve to Foster, 'United States Relations with Portugal: African Territories', 23 January 1974, FCO 9/2049.

¹⁰¹ Clark to Brimelow, 14 August 1974, FCO 9/2047.

The United States, disappointed in its strategy of close relations with the Caetano regime, was more sceptical of the direction of events in Lisbon.¹⁰² There was unease at the presence of Communist ministers in the new coalition government and at the strength of the party in the country as a whole. Therefore, the foremost concern in Washington was the strategic implications for NATO: the negotiations for the renewal of the lease of air-bases on the Azores (which had begun before the coup d'état¹⁰³) and the security of sensitive information at meetings attended by the Portuguese representatives.¹⁰⁴ The United States pursued close relations with President Spínola. Kissinger noted approvingly that "Spínola appears to be off to an auspicious start. His prestige is such that, despite the divisions within the armed forces, he may be able to keep them fully under control."¹⁰⁵ During a meeting in the Azores on the 18th and 19th June, President Nixon assured the Portuguese leader, "he would explore any way the US can assist Portugal, both overtly and covertly."¹⁰⁶ The Labour Government sought to promote Soares in Washington, but Kissinger disliked the Socialist leader, commenting that "Soares is typical of the type who has brought disaster to Europe – well meaning, nice, and ineffectual."¹⁰⁷ However Callaghan, with his strong commitment to the Anglo-American relationship and a warm friendship with Kissinger, was able to robustly advocate support for the PSP leader during their discussions.¹⁰⁸

Harold Wilson's victory in March 1974 brought significant changes to British foreign policy. The newly appointed Foreign Secretary, James Callaghan, was instructed to renegotiate membership of the EEC, deal with the implications of the economic crisis caused

¹⁰² For the Nixon administration's relations with the Caetano regime, see Mario Del Pero, 'Which Chile, Allende?', pp.627. Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, pp. 105-132.

¹⁰³ Memorandum from Lord to Kissinger, 'Status of Azores Base Negotiations', March 8, 1974, US National Archives, RG 59, Policy Planning Council, Policy Planning Staff, Director's Files (Winston Lord), 1969–1977, Entry 5027, Box 345, March 1974. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 131).

¹⁰⁴ The Azores enabled a rapid reinforcement of the US military in Western Europe in the event of an invasion by Warsaw Pact countries and therefore were crucial to the credibility of the United States' commitment to the NATO alliance. The strategic importance of the Azores had been demonstrated during the Yom Kippur war in October 1973; the airbases had allowed a rapid resupply of Israeli armed forces when they faced defeat.

¹⁰⁵ Memorandum from Kissinger to Nixon, 'Coup in Portugal', April 29, 1974, US National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 701, Country Files, Europe, Portugal, Vol. II (1972–1974) (2 of 2). <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 132).

¹⁰⁶ Memorandum for the President's File by the President's Assistant (Haig), Washington, June 24, 1974, 'Meeting between the President and President Antonio Spínola of Portugal', Ford Library, National Security Adviser, Memoranda of Conversation, Box 4. No classification marking. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 133).

¹⁰⁷ Memorandum of Conversation between Kissinger and Ford, 18 October, 1974, Ford Library, National Security Adviser, Memoranda of Conversation, Box 6. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 139).

¹⁰⁸ Callaghan to Ramsbotham, 'Instructions for message to Kissinger', 2 May 1974, FCO 9/2068. Kissinger and Callaghan developed noticeably close ties whilst in office. James Callaghan, *Time and Chance*, p. 319. Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, pp. 608-610.

by the oil cartel and re-affirm Britain's commitment to the Anglo-American relationship, which had been allowed to fall into a state of atrophy by Edward Heath. The Labour Party's National Executive Committee had written an election manifesto which committed a Labour administration to a left-wing agenda on a number of foreign policy issues, including promoting democracy in the Iberian Peninsula and support for the national-liberation movements in Portuguese colonies.¹⁰⁹ These causes were actively supported by the radical FCO minister, Joan Lestor, and Jack Jones, the Trade Union Congress leader, Spanish Civil War veteran and forceful Labour affiliate. Therefore, coincidentally, there was a convergence between the foreign policy goals of the new Labour Government and the changes in Lisbon.

Between the coup on April 25th and the resignation of President Spínola on September 30th, Britain's foremost concern in its relations with Portugal was to encourage Lusophone decolonisation. In so doing, although strongly supporting a transition to democracy in Portugal, it did not closely engage with the internecine factional politics which came to dominate political life in Lisbon. The Labour Government's understanding of what was happening in Portugal was shaped more by the views of Soares than those of the British Embassy (which only had limited contacts with the new political actors in Lisbon). Consequently it was often bewildered by the course of events, failing to predict accurately the resignation of Prime Minister Palma Carlos on 9th July and of President Spínola on 30th September. The foremost aim of British policy was achieved with Spínola's announcement on 21st September that Portugal's overseas territories would be granted their independence. However, with increasing concern at the leftward direction of events in Lisbon, the Labour Government now acted more assertively to support democracy in Portugal.

The April Revolution

The sudden and dramatic 25th April coup d'état brought to an end fifty years of dictatorship in Portugal. However, while the foreign press corps descended on Lisbon to herald a revolution, experienced international observers of Portuguese politics, like the British Embassy, although confused by the identity of the coup plotters, were not surprised at the disappearance of the regime - the culmination of a reformist liberalising political process begun after the death of Salazar five years before and unrest in the military caused by the

¹⁰⁹ 'Labour's Programme for Britain, 1973', Callaghan Papers, box 129.

wars in Africa. Both contemporary observers and historians have used de Tocqueville's aphorism that authoritarian regimes are at their most vulnerable when they reform,¹¹⁰ to explain the course of events in Portugal (an FCO official noted that a colleague, "has pointed to De Toqueville's perception of the danger in which a Government stands when it begins to reform itself").¹¹¹ The British Embassy in Lisbon had sent more regular despatches after January, reporting differences within the regime on the need to liberalise the Portuguese economy and society. The unrest amongst the Portuguese armed forces was monitored by the Embassy's military attaché in Lisbon. The British press also reported rumours of an impending coup d'état in articles by *The Guardian* on the 31st December and the *Financial Times* on the 3rd January.¹¹²

The publication on 22nd February of a book by Spínola, the legendary former military-governor of Guinea-Bissau, calling for the establishment of a commonwealth between Portugal and its African colonies, further divided the political class in Lisbon between reformists and conservatives and triggered unrest in the military. The exact nature of relations between President Caetano and General Spínola has been the subject of debate amongst historians.¹¹³ The Spínola affair was judged by the Embassy to have the tacit support of Caetano, as part of his efforts to liberalise the regime.¹¹⁴ A Cabinet Office minute, written by Lord Bridges, concluded: "A key point is that there was not a great deal of difference between Spínola and Caetano on African policy. The differences were within factions within the Portuguese army, and Caetano was a victim of their struggle."¹¹⁵ The British Ambassador reported ominously that "I feel that the ripples caused by events 13-26 March have not yet died down and their full effect is not yet known."¹¹⁶ A flow of correspondence concerning the likelihood of a coup passed between Lisbon and Whitehall during March and April.

The British considered a coup probable but judged it unlikely to be successful, and that, even if it were, it would not have popular support. Although the Labour Government was encouraged by the internal debate in Lisbon and supported the idea of liberalising Portugal, it neither sought nor encouraged regime change. While the British perceived that the

¹¹⁰ Alexis De Tocqueville, translated by John Bonner, *The Old Regime and the Revolution* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1856), p.214 (accessed on-line).

¹¹¹ Goodison to Ure, 'Spinola Affairs', 16 April 1974, FCO 9/2044.

¹¹² Muirhead to Goodison, 9 January 1974, FCO 9/2044.

¹¹³ Manuel, *The Uncertain Outcome*, pp.28-29.

¹¹⁴ For an account of the Spínola Affair, see Maxwell, *The Making of Portuguese Democracy*, pp. 32-34

¹¹⁵ 27 April 1974, PREM 16/241

¹¹⁶ Huggan, 'Defence Military Attaché - Report to MOD', April 1974, FCO 9/2044.

Portuguese regime was on a precipice, they failed to note that the Portuguese people were also desperate for change. Illustrative of this is the judgement of a Foreign Office official that “If in point of fact the mass of the country is indifferent, and the debate in consequence takes place within a smaller circle, there is a better chance of a tidy solution and by no means necessarily the wrong one.”¹¹⁷ The British did not want to see Caetano replaced, the Ambassador noting that “I, for one, certainly hope that Caetano has continued to retain most of his authority if only because at the moment there are no reasonable candidates to succeed him.”¹¹⁸ The British Embassy in Lisbon appears to have had a cosy, comfortable relationship with the Caetano regime which it did not wish to have disturbed. Signs of unrest led the Ministry of Defence to consider cancelling British participation in a NATO naval exercise in Portuguese waters.¹¹⁹ That this failed to happen demonstrates that the Labour Government did not want to jeopardise its relations with a regime which it did not expect to disappear.¹²⁰

The coup d'état of the 25th of April caught the British Government by surprise. Those who made up the Armed Forces Movement, the military junta which plotted the coup, were unknown. Indeed, the nature and importance of the AFM as self-appointed guardians of the revolution would remain a mystery to the British throughout the Spínola presidency. Initially, the coup d'état was perceived to be a reordering of political factions within the Portuguese regime rather than a revolution. The appointment of Spínola as President by the military junta on the 15th of May appeared to confirm this.¹²¹ The prejudice that Portugal was a country incapable of establishing democracy is present in Foreign Office documents. The British Ambassador in Lisbon noted with disdain: “The Portuguese are, by and large, a docile people, not unduly addicted to intellectual activity, and a paternalistic regime, such as that of Salazar in his early years, is not by its nature unwelcome to many of them.”¹²² It is clear from the tone of reporting that events in Portugal were widely seen within the paradigm of perceived Iberian and Latin American politics: an endless cycle of coups and counter-coups. However, this was not a sentiment shared by many in the Labour Party, who immediately

¹¹⁷ Goodison to Ure, ‘The Spínola Affair’, April 1974, FCO 9/2044.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ There was a discussion in Cabinet about whether Britain should continue to participate in NATO naval exercises in Portuguese waters. ‘Cabinet Conclusions’, 14 March 1974, CC(74) 3rd Conclusions. It was decided that proposed visits should not be cancelled. Callaghan, ‘Naval Visits to Portugal’, 27 March 1974, DEFE 11/857.

¹²⁰ Ironically, the naval exercise that continued was later seen by the radical left in Portugal as part of a NATO conspiracy to prevent the Lisbon coup.

¹²¹ Ben Pimlott contends that although 25th April was a genuine revolution, the revolutionary process had begun earlier with the institutional reforms introduced by the Caetano regime. See Ben Pimlott, ‘Socialism in Portugal: Was It a Revolution?’ *Government and Opposition*, 12:3 (Summer 1977).

¹²² Trench to Wiggin, 5 June 1974, FCO 9/2046.

established contact with politicians in Lisbon committed to establishing democracy. The British Embassy's failure to understand developments in Portugal was also because it had no contacts amongst the military officers who had seized power. The longevity of the previous regime had meant that its analysis of opposition politics consisted of understanding factional differences from information provided by participants.

It was the May Day celebration in Lisbon which shifted perceptions of the coup d'état. Predicted by the British Embassy and other observers to be a day of violent protest and disorder, it became, to the amazement of many, an outburst of popular civic sentiment, symbolised by the placing of carnations in the rifle barrels of watching soldiers. The British Ambassador observed: "The Portuguese people gave vent to their pent up feelings, in a demonstration that was astonishing in its spontaneity and civic sense. There was virtually no disorder, just an overwhelming expression of joy that their self-respect had been restored to them."¹²³ The British Embassy now came to see the potential for genuine democratic change in Portugal. Indeed for a brief moment its reports became infected with the spirit of the moment. Ambassador Trench was reminded of Wordsworth's lines on the French Revolution: "Bliss was it to be alive, but to be young was very heaven."¹²⁴

The Labour Government immediately grasped the wider significance of the April Revolution, realising that, whatever the outcome of events in Lisbon, it had important implications for southern Africa. By contrast, the analysis of the FCO was principally concerned with the consequences of the coup d'état on Portugal, only speculating that "some kind of initiative on the overseas territories will be likely."¹²⁵ Harold Wilson was influenced by British media coverage of events, particularly *The Guardian*.¹²⁶ A Cabinet minute, written two days after the coup, recorded that "Mr Wilson has noted the comments in the press and the other media about the way in which the situation might develop, and has asked officials to prepare an early assessment of the general position. The particular aspect of closest concern to the Prime Minister is the effect of the coup d'état on the situation in Rhodesia."¹²⁷ The Cabinet Office, instigated by the Prime Minister, sent missives to the Foreign Office in the days immediately after the coup, which reveal an obsession with the technical details of

¹²³ Trench to Callaghan, 'The Coup D'état in Portugal: The Happy Revolution', 26 June 1974, FCO 9/2046.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ 'The Coup in Portugal', 25 April 1974, FCO 9/2045.

¹²⁶ The lead headline: "Lisbon junta pledges liberty – War in Africa may be ended", *The Guardian*, 26 April 1974. One article covered the divisions within the Labour Party over whether to welcome Caetano's overthrow or condemn its means - much was made of the recent precedent of Chile.

¹²⁷ Craddock, 'The Portuguese Coup and Africa', 27 April 1974, PREM 16/241.

sanctions enforcement.¹²⁸ Callaghan also raised the issue at a Cabinet meeting on the 2nd May.¹²⁹ The moment appeared propitious because the AFM's manifesto promised rapid independence for Portugal's African territories.¹³⁰

However, while an opportunity now existed for a diplomatic breakthrough in southern Africa, there remained an obstacle. President Spínola continued to favour a transition to a Lusophone community, based on the principle of self-determination, rather than immediate decolonisation. A Cabinet Office official wrote, "I do not think Spínola has yet said anything which could lead us to expect that Portugal will shortly change her basic policies regarding sanctions and the power line-up in Southern Africa."¹³¹ The Labour Government realised that only a "more liberal regime at home may push him in that direction", and concluded that "much would depend on the position of the Socialist Party in his administration."¹³² As the leading advocate of rapid decolonisation, it therefore served Britain's interest to support Soares and the Socialist Party.

The Labour Government expected Soares to be offered an important position in any provisional government. At the meeting between Soares and the British held in London on the 2nd May, he had intimated that he would only accept the role of Prime Minister.¹³³ They had discussed how General Spínola could be persuaded to appoint Soares to an important role in any government: it was agreed that Britain could play a role in doing so.¹³⁴ Callaghan sent instructions to the British Ambassador to raise the issue in his first meeting with General Spínola on the 6th May, leaving it to his discretion to decide "how far to go in your references to the inclusion of the Socialist Party in the government."¹³⁵ The Ambassador brusquely communicated to Spínola that "its composition would affect the warmth of future Anglo-Portuguese relations."¹³⁶ With Soares having only recently been the guest of the British Labour Party in London, meeting Wilson and Callaghan on the 2nd May, the implication of the Ambassador's statement should have been clear to General Spínola.

¹²⁸ Craddock to Bridges, 1 May 1974, PREM 16/241. Craddock, 14 May 1974, PREM 16/241. Alexander to Bridges, 20 May 1974, PREM 16/241.

¹²⁹ CAB 128/54/14, 2 May 1974.

¹³⁰ Trench, 'AFM Summary', 26 April 1974, FCO 9/2046.

¹³¹ Bridges to Wilson, 27 April 1974, PREM 16/241.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ 'Cabinet Office minute', 2 May 1974, FCO 9/2061.

¹³⁴ 'Record of conversation between Wilson and Soares', 2 May 1974, PREM 16/241.

¹³⁵ Callaghan to Trench, 2 May 1974, FCO 9/2044.

¹³⁶ Trench to Callaghan, 3 May, FCO 9/2044

The decision the Labour Government faced immediately after the coup d'état was whether to recognise the new regime in Lisbon. This was a surprisingly difficult issue.¹³⁷ The British realised that doing so would “encourage the new regime to continue in the seemingly hopeful direction in which they have set out; liberalisation at home and saner policies in Africa.”¹³⁸ They were also concerned that recognising the regime after other states might send a negative signal to Lisbon which would harm British interests.”¹³⁹ Hence the Labour Government liaised closely with other western allies. The Assistant Secretary of State, Stabler, telephoned the British Ambassador in Washington, Ramsbotham, to compare notes on recognition.¹⁴⁰ West Germany sought a coordinated EEC response and called a meeting of Lisbon representatives.¹⁴¹ However, France and Britain were uncomfortable with Bonn's desire for a positive endorsement of a regime which had come to power by unconstitutional means.¹⁴²

The problem was that the convention of British recognition differed from that of other states, the majority of which did not require an act of formal recognition.¹⁴³ The dilemma outlined in an FCO document was that “Unlike many other states, it is the long-established practice... to treat the recognition of a regime which has come to power unconstitutionally in a foreign country as subject to a conscious act of recognition.”¹⁴⁴ British recognition was not dependent on accepting the legitimacy of a regime. However, legal precedents, particularly the principles formalised by Ernest Bevin when Foreign Secretary, had to be met. On 26th April, Callaghan sent a telegram to Lisbon seeking urgent information on whether the new government met his criteria.¹⁴⁵ In contrast, countries like West Germany and the United States recognised states rather than governments, and the simple act of continuing relations with a country, by replying to the first correspondence sent by a new government, constituted recognition.

A telegram was sent to embassies in America, Europe and the Commonwealth states, asking whether each planned to recognise the new regime in Lisbon and, if so, when. Britain

¹³⁷ The FCO had to prepare for an Open Day motion in Parliament on the question of recognition for the new regime. Goodison to FCO, ‘Note for Mr Frank Allaun's (Salford East) Supplementary Question’, 30 April 1974, FCO 9/2061.

¹³⁸ Goodison to Wiggin, ‘Recognition of the new Portuguese Regime’, 30 April 1974, FC09/2061.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Ramsbotham to Callaghan, 27 April 1974, FCO 9/2044.

¹⁴¹ Trench to Callaghan, 30 April 1974, FCO 9/2061.

¹⁴² Henderson to Callaghan, 30 April 1974, FCO 9/2061.

¹⁴³ Young, *Britain and the World*, pp. 199-207.

¹⁴⁴ Goodison to Wiggin, ‘Recognition of the new Portuguese regime’, 30 April 1974, FCO 9/2061.

¹⁴⁵ Callaghan to Lisbon Embassy, 26 April 1974, FCO 9/2061.

also received telegrams from a number of states on the same issue, particularly the Commonwealth. States such as Indonesia, which did not have an embassy in Lisbon, requested guidance from Britain, demonstrating that it was considered by many states to be the leading diplomatic actor in relations with Portugal.¹⁴⁶ In the meantime, the British Embassy was sent firm instructions that “you should avoid any action which could imply recognition of a new government or head of state.”¹⁴⁷ Diplomacy became urgent once a note was received on the 27th April from the Portuguese Ambassador in London, requesting recognition: any response or any other contact with Portugal would now amount to recognition.¹⁴⁸

The Labour Government eventually recognised the new regime on the 2nd May. By the 30th April the new government had been recognised by the United States, Spain, France, Germany, and Brazil.¹⁴⁹ The British government delayed recognition until after the discussions were held with Soares in London. This meant that the Foreign Office had to prepare a rather guarded and disingenuous answer to a parliamentary question on the issue of recognition.¹⁵⁰ The delay enabled a linkage to be made between British recognition of the new regime and the advice of Soares. This is explicit in the record of the meeting between Wilson and the PSP leader at 10 Downing Street on 2nd May which noted that “He intended to try to strengthen Dr Soares’ position by announcing that the Government had decided to accord recognition to General Spínola following the discussion with Dr Soares in London.”¹⁵¹ The British Embassy was informed that “This will be done later today and the news made public by news department, who will set their statement in the context of Dr Soares’ visit.”¹⁵² It was hoped that this would bolster his political position in Lisbon by creating the impression that Soares was a politician whose advice was respected by leading states and who was able to influence their policy making.

¹⁴⁶ Combs to Trench, 2 May 1974, FCO 9/2061.

¹⁴⁷ Callaghan to Lisbon Embassy, 26 April 1974, FCO 9/2061.

¹⁴⁸ Fearful of a blunder, the resident clerk sought legal advice before physically accepting the note. Millington to Killick, 28 April 1974, FCO 9/2061.

¹⁴⁹ Telegram from the British Embassy in Rome, 30 April 1974, FCO 9/2061. In the case of the United States, recognition was the result of a bureaucratic confusion. The State Department had reached the decision to recognise the new regime, but before arrangements had been made the US Embassy had without instruction replied to a note from the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which constituted recognition - Telegram from Washington Embassy, 29 April 1974, FCO 9/2061.

¹⁵⁰ Goodison to FCO, ‘Note for Mr Frank Allaun’s (Salford East) Supplementary Question, 30 April 1974, FCO 9/2061.

¹⁵¹ ‘Record of the meeting between Wilson and Soares at 10 Downing Street’, 2 May 1974, PREM 16/241

¹⁵² James Callaghan, telegram to all embassies consulted over recognition of Portuguese regime, 2 May 1974, FCO 9/2061.

The decision of the Labour Party to invite Soares to London immediately after the coup d'état was made independently of the Labour Government. A hand-written note written by the Secretary of State (after the decision to coordinate British recognition with Soares' visit) makes this clear.¹⁵³ The Labour Party's links with the Portuguese Socialist Party supported government policy, but their activities were organised separately from the formal structures of policy making. This allowed them to act in a partisan way, supporting a fellow socialist party, something which would be difficult for a Labour Government to do considering the convention that British foreign policy is non-partisan and made in the national interest. Callaghan outlined this two-pronged approach to Portugal: "First, there was the question of Party support; Dr Soares should let the Labour Party know what he wanted. Secondly, as between Governments, he hoped General Spínola would tell the British Government what Portugal needed."¹⁵⁴ This enabled the ambiguity of formal relations between the governments to exist alongside partisan support for the Socialist Party, since they considered it the party whose success best served the British national interest.

The Labour Government also tried to encourage the United States to support Soares. At the meeting in London on the 2nd May, Soares had expressed an interest in visiting the United States.¹⁵⁵ The Foreign Secretary immediately contacted Kissinger in Washington; he promoted the PSP leader in a way likely to appeal to US concern at the course of events in Portugal.¹⁵⁶ The threat of a Soviet-backed Communist Party had not been discussed at the London meeting, but Callaghan stressed that "Soares sees the socialist party as the only force in the country capable of resisting the Communists who he believes have the full backing of the Soviet Union."¹⁵⁷ Callaghan also played down the possibility of a right-wing coup, arguing that "the right-wing are in no state to stage a counter coup or even to constitute a viable political force at the moment."¹⁵⁸ Soares visited Washington, and had a short meeting with Kissinger, but the United States, unlike Britain, was to pursue close relations with President Spínola.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵³ "But I should like the office to get in touch with the Labour Party (This is Mr McNally) + find out if Mario Soares is in fact coming here this week." Goulding to Acland, 30 April 1974, FCO 9/2061. Ron McNally was also present at the meeting at 10 Downing Street between Harold Wilson, James Callaghan and Soares on the 2nd May.

¹⁵⁴ 'Record of a Conversation between Harold Wilson and Mario Soares', 2 May 1974, PREM 16/241.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Callaghan to Ramsbotham, 'Instructions for message to Kissinger', 2 May 1974, FCO 9/2068.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Gomes and Moreira, Carlucci vs Kissinger, pp. 91-101.

The British Embassy and Southern European Department had been aware of the manoeuvrings between factions within the Caetano regime and understood the depth of the crisis it faced. However, the British had no knowledge that middle ranking officers were organising a coup d'état and, until the displays of enthusiasm for political change by the public on May Day, failed to grasp that Portugal had entered a revolutionary period. That the British were aware of developments within the regime, but not of the changes in public mood, was a result of the limitations of the Lisbon Embassy's operating procedures. The nature and longevity of the authoritarian government meant Britain assumed that political change would occur within the regime rather than by its removal. Consequently, the responsibility of the Embassy to measure attitudes across Portuguese society had been neglected.¹⁶⁰

The Labour Government realised that the coup d'état made independence for Portugal's overseas territories probable and that this would make the Rhodesian state unsustainable. However, although encouraged by the potential benefits to British interests, the diplomatic conventions concerning recognition, as well as the means by which the Spínola Government assumed power, made it difficult for Britain to seek immediate advantage from the coup d'état. The establishment of close ties between the Labour government and Soares also meant relations with President Spínola were formal rather than close. The immediate response of the British to developments in Portugal demonstrated that FCO officials were more comfortable understanding changes in the political arrangements by which Portugal was governed rather than the importance of the outpouring of democratic sentiment amongst the Portuguese people, unlike leading figures in the Labour Party who immediately grasped the significance of events in Lisbon.

British foreign policy making towards Portugal "After the Carnival" ¹⁶¹

Because the coup d'état affected a wide range of British interests, its policy response was shaped by a number of protagonists both inside and outside government. In particular, the British Embassy in Lisbon, the Southern European Department of the FCO, the Labour Party, the TUC and Fleet Street journalists, sought to influence the Labour government's

¹⁶⁰ The US Embassy in Lisbon faced the same issues; before Ambassador Carlucci's arrival a senior State Department official warned that "it was the worst embassy in the world." Interview with Frank C. Carlucci III. The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, p.4.

¹⁶¹ The sub-title of a Lisbon Embassy report, 'The Coup in Portugal II,' 3 July 1974, FCO 9/2046

policy making. There was also consultation with Britain's leading partners, above all the United States. Britain was a member of a number of multilateral institutions affected by events in Lisbon, particularly NATO and the EEC. There was a consensus amongst all parties for the need to encourage democracy in Portugal and independence for its overseas colonies. However, there was a distinct difference in reasoning between each participant, and they attempted to shape policy accordingly.

For the British Embassy in Lisbon and the Southern European Department within the FCO, which had dealt with the same regime for fifty years, the coup brought a dramatic change in operating milieu.¹⁶² The British Ambassador observed that "In short, the impression one gets is of an ant-heap which has been broken open. Frenzied activity is in progress and ants are scurrying in all directions."¹⁶³ He commented that in the past, "anyone who held views to the left of the British Conservative Party was liable to be denounced as a Communist."¹⁶⁴ The Embassy struggled to understand developments, a situation exacerbated by the fact that a new ambassador had been appointed a few weeks before the coup.¹⁶⁵ There was a failure to make connections across the political spectrum, particularly within the Armed Forces Movement. The Embassy was over-reliant on information from past acquaintances in the Salazar and Caetano regimes; rather than being impartial these contacts naturally sought to advance their own interests. The British Ambassador worked closely with his US colleague in Lisbon, Ambassador Stuart Nash Scott, whose analysis was increasingly at variance with that of Kissinger in Washington but was shared with London and with the position of the other ambassadors of the Nine European Community states.¹⁶⁶

The Labour Government followed events in Portugal, which soon became one of the most significant foreign policy issues it addressed. Harold Wilson took a close interest in Rhodesia, and participated in meetings with Prime Minister Palma Carlos and Soares on a number of occasions.¹⁶⁷ Callaghan regarded "sustaining the frail shoots of Portuguese democracy as a vital priority."¹⁶⁸ He held regular meetings with Soares, contributing to diplomatic initiatives to bring decolonisation to Africa; he also encouraged support for the

¹⁶² Trench to Wiggin, 17 July 1974, FCO 9/2046.

¹⁶³ Trench to Wiggin, 5 June 1974, FCO 9/2046.

¹⁶⁴ Trench to Wiggin, 17 July 1974, FCO 9/2046.

¹⁶⁵ Nigel Trench replaced Mr David Muirhead on the 22nd April 1974. Trench had no specialist knowledge of Portugal; his only previous posting had been HM Ambassador to South Korea, 1969-71.

¹⁶⁶ The account of Ambassador Scott's estrangement from Kissinger and replacement by Frank C. Carlucci III is given in Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, pp. 142-159.

¹⁶⁷ MS Wilson 818/1221 - Harold Wilson Papers.

¹⁶⁸ Morgan, *Callaghan - A Life*, p.433.

Portuguese Socialist Party from the Labour Party and TUC. However, during July-September 1974, Callaghan was distracted by the crisis in Cyprus, particularly after the Turkish invasion on 20th July. This meant that there was little consideration of unfolding events in Portugal, which culminated in the resignation of President Spínola on 30th September. The British Cabinet Office monitored developments in Lisbon, receiving regular reports from the Southern European Department. During the Spínola presidency, the British Cabinet discussed Portugal only on two occasions, on the 2nd May and 11 July.¹⁶⁹ Therefore, the British foreign policy response to events in Portugal was almost exclusively the preserve of the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, working with their advisers, rather than that of the Cabinet as a whole.

A number of parliamentary members took an active interest in developments in Portugal. The Labour MPs Tom McNally and Ron Hayward maintained regular contact with Soares, independent of the Labour Government and FCO.¹⁷⁰ The Labour Party began to plan how it could aid the Portuguese Socialist Party; a representative of the party, Ron Hayward, visited Portugal.¹⁷¹ The FCO minister, Joan Lestor, toured several of Portugal's overseas territories.¹⁷² The Conservative Party MP, Michael Young, also visited Portugal to assess the prospects for centre-right parties.¹⁷³ He received the support of the Lisbon Embassy during his visit, and the contacts and information he acquired were shared with the Foreign Office.¹⁷⁴ However, there was no coordination between Conservative and Labour Party activities. The interest shown by these MPs demonstrated their idiosyncratic concern with Portugal rather than a systematic approach by the leading parties to assisting the advancement of parliamentary democracy in Western Europe. The British Labour Party was a member of the Socialist International, which actively supported the Socialist Party in Portugal. Created before the First World War, it had been largely defunct since.¹⁷⁵ However, the Socialist International had a renaissance in the late-1960s, as resurgent west European Social Democratic movements, led by charismatic individuals such as Willy Brandt in West Germany and Olof Palme in Sweden, began to coordinate their internationalist approach to

¹⁶⁹ CAB 128/54/14 and CAB 128/54/25.

¹⁷⁰ Callaghan to FCO, 29 April 1974, FCO 9/2046.

¹⁷¹ Trench to Thomas, 5 August 1974, FCO 9/2047.

¹⁷² Lestor to FCO, 'Frelimo Talks', 17 July 1974, FCO 9/2057.

¹⁷³ Thomas to Killick, 'Political Parties in Portugal', 23 August 1974, FCO 9/2047.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ Peter Lamb and James Docherty, Historical Dictionary of Socialism (Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2006), pp. 320-321.

foreign relations.¹⁷⁶ There was a consensus across European states that the political situation in Portugal was most similar to their own immediately after World War Two, when democracy also appeared precarious but the presence of Communist ministers had not led to dictatorship.¹⁷⁷ The coup d'état was raised at a Socialist International meeting that took place at Chequers in June and support for the PSP was discussed.¹⁷⁸

There were also a number of British groups outside government who took an interest in Portugal. The Trade Union Congress had tried to maintain links with the labour movements in both Portugal and Spain despite their authoritarian governments.¹⁷⁹ The TUC's chairman, Jack Jones, as a veteran of the International Brigade in Spain, took a particular interest in the Iberian Peninsula.¹⁸⁰ Immediately after the coup d'état, the TUC planned how they could assist the development of independent trade unions in Portugal.¹⁸¹ As a corporatist state the previous regime only had one official union, the Intersindical, which enabled an industrial policy of cheap and compliant workers. The coup triggered a wave of spontaneous industrial activity.¹⁸² Portugal was the subject for discussion at the meeting of the TUC's International Committee on Monday 6th May, when a decision was reached that a delegation should visit Lisbon.¹⁸³ There was a rapid spread of new unions in Portugal, built with few resources. The TUC delegation planned how to assist the creation of strong independent trade unions that were not dominated by the Communist Party. They would later be approached by the British Government asking that the TUC offer assistance to Portuguese trade unions, but the initial impetus came from within the organisation.¹⁸⁴

British media interest in Lisbon (aside from journalists with expertise on Portugal such as Antonio De Figueiredo, writing for *The Guardian* and Bruce Loudon, writing for *The Daily Telegraph*) was only episodic, triggered by each political crisis in Lisbon. On these occasions the broadsheets' international correspondents would visit Lisbon for a few days and Portugal would be a lead story, supported by editorial articles. Otherwise, there were

¹⁷⁶ Donald Sassoon, One Hundred Years of Socialism: the West European Left in the Twentieth Century (London: Fontana, 1997), p.470. Brandt, My Life in Politics, p.317.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.597-598.

¹⁷⁸ Trench to FCO, 'Portugal Annual Review for 1974', 8 January 1974, FCO 9/2275.

¹⁷⁹ The TUC gave assistance to independent trade unions in Portugal prior to the April Revolution. MSS.292/946 - TUC Collection - Warwick University archives.

¹⁸⁰ Trench to Foggon, 'Advice and Assistance to Portuguese Trade Unions', 20 November 1974, FCO 9/2077.

¹⁸¹ Hurst to Marshall, 'The ICFTU', 9 May 1974, FCO 9/2077.

¹⁸² Manuel, Uncertain Outcome, pp. 74-76.

¹⁸³ Hurst to Marshall, 'The ICFTU and Portugal,' 9 May 1974, FCO 9/2077.

¹⁸⁴ There were notably close relations between the Labour Government and the TUC during 1974. James Callaghan, Time and Chance, p. 320.

regular inside page reports in the foreign policy sections of broadsheets, reporting on politics in Lisbon and violence in Mozambique and Angola. Interestingly, many articles were written on the likelihood of events in Portugal inspiring a similar reaction in Franco's Spain.¹⁸⁵ Although the Madrid Embassy wrote dispatches on the theme, this was not even considered likely or important at the highest level of the British Government. There were human interest reports on how events in Portugal affected British citizens, with stories about worried expatriates and stranded holidaymakers.¹⁸⁶ That there was no sustained coverage of events in Portugal is unsurprising, 1974 was a turbulent year: two General Elections, Watergate, Cyprus and economic recession all jostled for headline space. Press coverage, particularly that of the *Guardian* newspaper, was an important factor in explaining the level of interest of Harold Wilson and other leading political figures in Portugal. However, Callaghan and other Labour MPs sustained a personal engagement with Portuguese affairs which went beyond either their official roles or the interest raised by the British media.

The British media played an important role in events in Portugal as the regular source of reliable information for many Portuguese citizens. Writing in the late 1970s' Jean Seaton and Ben Pimlott stress the interplay between the international media and events in Portugal, noting that there was an "enormous increase in the audience of the Portuguese section of the BBC", and that British newspapers "were still eagerly read - even by politicians - as the most reliable sources on domestic events."¹⁸⁷ Rona Fields analysed the role of the western media in Portugal and concluded that the British media played a particularly significant role because of its perceived quality.¹⁸⁸ The *Panorama* team put together an extensively researched programme on Portugal, during which they interviewed many of the leading figures in Lisbon.¹⁸⁹ It is outside the scope of this study to try to assess the role of the British media, but its impact on the Portuguese political process would have increased the ability of the Labour Government to influence events.

¹⁸⁵ For example, see 'Spain and Portugal, *The Daily Telegraph*, 3 May 1974, p.4.

¹⁸⁶ For example, see '2000 Britons Stranded', *The Daily Telegraph*, 26 April 1974, p.1.

¹⁸⁷ Jean Seaton and Ben Pimlott, 'Political Power and the Portuguese Media', Graham and Mackler, *Contemporary Portugal*, p.52.

¹⁸⁸ Rona Fields, *The Portuguese Revolution and the Armed Forces Movement* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1976), pp. 189-191.

¹⁸⁹ Chatterjie to Ralph, 'Panorama on Portugal', 21 October 1974, FCO 9/2059.

There were a range of British businesses in Portugal who sought to protect their interests by lobbying the Labour Government during the Portuguese Revolution.¹⁹⁰ Britain had been involved in the Portuguese economy for centuries, including its Lusophone overseas territories. This meant that, “As the principal foreign lender to the Portuguese state, until the mid -30s the UK enjoyed a leading position in the foreign trade of its peninsular ally.”¹⁹¹ As a result British companies had significant assets which included “not only wholly owned British firms but also firms in which UK interests have a majority or minority holding.”¹⁹² Before the April Revolution, an FCO official noted that Portugal “is already one of our best export markets per head anywhere in the world.”¹⁹³ The FCO’s Annual Review for 1972 recorded that Britain’s share of the Portuguese import market was 12.8%.¹⁹⁴ In the north, in Porto, well-established wine merchants were largely insulated from the political instability in Lisbon and were able to defend their interests through Anglo-Portuguese trade associations, such as Canning House. British industrial firms were largely based in Lisbon, although these were not on the same scale as those from West Germany and the United States.¹⁹⁵ While affected by political developments after the April Revolution, they were not the primary target of industrial unrest as were other states.¹⁹⁶ In the south central region of Alentejo there were a significant number of British owned farms, although largely small-scale, and these were a target for communist organised land seizures during 1975.¹⁹⁷

The First Provisional Government, 15th May – 9th July, 1974.

President Spínola, after his investiture on 15th May, appointed Adelino Palma Carlos as Prime Minister. A coalition was formed from politicians across the political spectrum.¹⁹⁸ The intention was to ensure that no-one remained outside government in a position to criticise and undermine the coalition. The Armed Forces Movement, however, did not disband; rather,

¹⁹⁰ A series of recollections by British expatriates reveal their economic status at the time of the revolution. George Lind- Guimarães, ed., Eyewitness Accounts of the Portuguese Revolution, (British Historical Society of Portugal, 2009).

¹⁹¹ (“Principal credor externos do Estado português, o Reino Unido desfrutou até meados dos anos 30 de uma posição cimeira no comércio externo do seu aliado peninsular”). Oliveira, Os Despojos da Aliança, p.36.

¹⁹² Gullan to Baker, ‘Western Investment in Portugal’, 16 July 1975, FCO 59/1307.

¹⁹³ Edis to Callaghan, ‘Emigration from Portugal: Summary’, 13 March 1974, FCO 9/2077.

¹⁹⁴ Muirhead to FCO, ‘Annual Review of Portugal for 1972’, 8 January 1973, FCO 9/1785.

¹⁹⁵ See, Maxwell, The Making of Portuguese Democracy, p.46.

¹⁹⁶ Trench to FCO, ‘Foreign Investment in Portugal’, 5 July 1974, FCO 9/2076.

¹⁹⁷ Ure to Baker, ‘British Farms in the Alentejo’, 29 October 1975, FCO 9/2312.

¹⁹⁸ The reasoning behind Spínola’s controversial decision to appoint two communists to ministerial posts is discussed in Maxwell, The Making of Portuguese Democracy, p.76.

it formed a coordinating committee whose remit was to ensure that the provisional government remained true to the ideals of the coup d'état.¹⁹⁹ The mandate of the new government was to prepare Portugal for elections and renegotiate its relations with the overseas colonies. It also faced the urgent need to address Portugal's economic problems and end its diplomatic isolation. Predictably this first coalition proved unwieldy, lacking the unity of purpose to govern effectively, and it struggled to manage rising expectations and disorder. Palma Carlos' attempt to assert more control over his coalition triggered a crisis in relations between the Prime Minister and the AFM which culminated in his resignation on July 9th.

Relations between the Labour Government and President Spínola were problematic. The British disliked the unconstitutional means by which he had attained power and his continued commitment to the establishment of a 'Lusophone Commonwealth' in Africa rather than immediate independence. It is illustrative that while the British sent a note of congratulation to Soares on his appointment as Foreign Minister, no direct congratulations were given to Spínola. The message sent to Soares was informal in tone: "My Dear Mario."²⁰⁰ A similar note was not sent to President Spínola because "Such a message would have to go from the Queen, and this does not seem altogether appropriate, given the manner in which he arrived at that position."²⁰¹ The Labour Government was concerned at the political consequences for Portugal if there were no progress on decolonisation. Because Soares was devoting almost all his time to Africa, he stood "to lose much in terms of electoral advantage if he fails."²⁰² Lisbon was awash with rumours of a further coup d'état. The British speculated that "Should Soares' talks fail completely, there seems a real danger of a swing back toward authoritarianism. The machinery is there."²⁰³ The British feared that such an eventuality would slow down any settlement in the overseas territories.

The Labour Government assumed that the threat to the provisional government came from the political right, but soon became aware of the strength of the radical left. Initially it was surprisingly unconcerned at the potential prospects for the Portuguese Communist Party. They were well aware of its strengths. The PCP was positioned to do well; their situation was similar to that of the French and Italian Communist parties after World War Two. The PCP

¹⁹⁹ The nature and makeup of the Armed Forces Movement is explained in, Manuel, *The Uncertain Outcome*, pp.32-37.

²⁰⁰ Callaghan to Soares, 16 May 1974, PREM 16/241.

²⁰¹ Minute by Harold Wilson on Alexander to Bridges, 17 May 1974, PREM 16/241.

²⁰² Briefing Paper for meeting between Harold Wilson and Prime Minister Palma Carlos, 25/26 June 1974, PREM 16/11.

²⁰³ Wiggin to Trench, 17 June 1974, FCO 9/2046.

was respected for its resistance to the former regime; the British noted that its leader, Alvaro Cunhal, “has the further advantage of a martyr’s crown, derived from fourteen years in prison under the old regime.”²⁰⁴ Cunhal was a charismatic leader, and the British Embassy appreciated he “would romp home, twenty lengths ahead of the field, in any leadership stakes.”²⁰⁵ The PCP was also, the British Ambassador noted, “the only party to have a functioning organisation in the country.”²⁰⁶ However, throughout the Spínola presidency the Labour Government was surprisingly sanguine that the Portuguese Communist Party would not achieve power in Lisbon; this was a markedly different conclusion from that of the United States.

The Labour Government was baffled by the role of the AFM. The continued importance of the armed forces in Portuguese politics was clear by the presence, during talks between Soares and Callaghan in London on the 26th May, of Lieutenant Colonel Bruno; seemingly on good terms with Soares, “he made it quite clear that the armed forces were still in complete control and one was left with the strong impression that they played a considerable part in the decision-making process.”²⁰⁷ The British noted that “although not saying so the Colonel implied that the armed forces would intervene if the revolution took too leftward a swing.”²⁰⁸ However, the British were influenced by leading moderate politicians who “reported to us that General Spínola was (alone among the Junta members) prepared to stand up to them if he disagreed with their proposals.”²⁰⁹ The Labour Government came to believe that moderate politicians were in a position to resist any attempt by the radical left (in the provisional government and AFM) to achieve power.

The Lisbon Embassy’s principal sources of information in Portugal were leading moderate politicians. The British had very little contact with those on the radical left. They were continually being reassured that the political process in Lisbon was dominated by moderate politicians and not those on the radical left. However, British officials were being advised by Portuguese politicians who were in the process of forming competing parties, each of which desperately needed western support. It was, therefore, in the interest of each to exaggerate its importance, which collectively meant that a perception was formed of the strength of democratic parties relative to the radical left. The Lisbon Embassy came to

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ Trench to A. Goodison, 26 June 1974, FCO 9/2046

²⁰⁷ ‘Record of meeting between Callaghan and Soares’, 26 May 1974, PREM 16/241.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ Trench to Callaghan, ‘The Coup in Portugal II’, 3 June 1974, FCO 9/2046.

believe that if the new parties were to receive support and assistance Portugal would successfully make a transition to democracy, irrespective of the strength of other political movements. Paradoxically, support from overseas led moderate parties to assume their significance. An exasperated aide to General Spínola explained: “he felt that the respect and almost reverence with which Dr Soares was received overseas gave him an exaggerated idea of his own political strength at home.”²¹⁰

The Labour Government considered the success of the Portuguese Socialist Party to be essential. According to the British Embassy, “Soares is the only political personality of sufficient stature to meet Cunhal on equal terms.”²¹¹ However, the Labour Government aimed to support the PSP through the Labour Party rather than the Foreign Office. Thus when Harold Wilson expressed concern “over recent reports which point to the growing strength of the Portuguese Communist Party”, his proposed course of action was to ask James Callaghan “whether the Labour Party is now in a position to provide the help which the Portuguese socialists need and want,” suggesting that Ron Hayward visit Portugal because of his experience as a party organiser.²¹² These initiatives culminated in a discussion (at the Socialist International meeting on the 30th June) about the issue of aid and support to the Portuguese Socialist Party.

The Labour Government also encouraged British Trade Unions to support their Portuguese counterparts. They were aware that because the communists had infiltrated the former regime’s trade union, and that their repression gave them legitimacy, existing unions were vulnerable to total domination by the communists. The Labour Attaché at the British Embassy in Brussels noted: “They were mostly former migrant workers who had been trained by the French Communist union, CGT, in preparation for just such an occurrence as that of the 25th of April, and who were now making use of the training they had received.”²¹³ However, it would be difficult for the Labour Government to aid the development of independent Trade Unions. The British Embassy in Lisbon had no permanent Labour attaché. It also had to defend British economic interests against militant trade union activity. As Portugal’s largest foreign investor, Britain was seen to have exploited the previous regime’s industrial policy of maintaining a cheap and compliant workforce.²¹⁴ A proposal that an

²¹⁰ Ure to Baker, ‘Conversation with General Spínola’s Civil Aide’, 1 July 1974, FCO 9/2046.

²¹¹ Trench, 4 May 1974, PREM 16/241.

²¹² Alexander to Acland, June 1974, PREM 16/241.

²¹³ Marshald, 15 May 1974, FCO 9/2077.

²¹⁴ Trench to Goodison, 16 May 1974, FCO 9/2077.

industrial relations expert from the Foreign Office should be attached to the Portuguese Ministry of Labour was problematic because the department was led by a communist. The British Ambassador observed that “the Minister of Labour, being a Communist, may well have other ideas on the best source of advice.”²¹⁵ The Labour Government, therefore, liaised with the TUC. On 21st June the issue was discussed by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary with Jack Jones, its International Committee chairman.²¹⁶ The TUC also began talks with international trade union representatives in Brussels on giving assistance to independent Portuguese trade unions.²¹⁷

The TUC, however, having sent a delegation to Portugal soon after the coup d'état, decided on a “cautious and pragmatic line at present and would prefer to let the dust settle before making up their mind how to proceed.”²¹⁸ There was a gloomy prognosis that the communists were likely to dominate the development of Portuguese trade unions for the next two years. However, the TUC was confident that the Portuguese trade unions considered themselves to be “West European Movements.”²¹⁹ British delegations, although aware of the influence of the PCP amongst the trade unions, believed the workers saw “no point in swapping one dictatorship for another.”²²⁰ Therefore, although the TUC were pessimistic about the immediate prospects for the establishment of independent trade unions in Portugal, they did not believe that this would mean that PCP successes in organising trade unions would presage a communist takeover in Lisbon.

The Labour Government's relations with the provisional government in Portugal were conducted almost exclusively through a series of regular talks between Callaghan and Soares. They held a second meeting in London on the 26th May 1974, followed soon after by a meeting at a London airport on the 4th June, while Soares was on transit to talks with the representatives of Guinea-Bissau's national liberation movement.²²¹ The principal issue was Africa, although they also discussed how this related to the political situation in Portugal.²²² Soares affirmed the influence of British support for his position on Africa. Points of leverage, such as the economy, were discussed, particularly that “Portugal would probably need outside

²¹⁵ Trench to Goodison, ‘Labour Affairs’, 22nd May 1974, FCO 9/2077.

²¹⁶ Acland to Alexander, 21 June 1974, PREM 16/241.

²¹⁷ Marshall (Brussels) to Hurst, ‘Trade Unions in Portugal’, 16 May 1974, FCO 9/2077.

²¹⁸ Foggon to Brimelow, ‘Portugal: Labour and Trade Union Affairs’, 23 May 1974, FCO 9/2077.

²¹⁹ Marshald to Hunt, ‘The ICFTU and Portugal’, 15 May 1974, FCO 9/2077.

²²⁰ Hurst to Ralph, 9 July 1974, FCO 9/2077.

²²¹ ‘Record of Conversation’, between Callaghan and Soares, 4 June 1974, PREM 16/241.

²²² ‘Record of Conversation’, between Callaghan and Soares, 26 May 1974, PREM 16/241.

(EEC) help.”²²³ The Labour Government continued bilateral discussions with Soares at the Ottawa conference on the 18th and 19th June. This was a celebration of the 25th anniversary of the foundation of NATO. Attended by foreign ministers, it was organised in part to promote unity amongst the allies prior to President Nixon’s visit to the Soviet Union on the 21st June. There was a brief meeting between Kissinger and Soares, which was dominated by concerns at the security of NATO institutions. The Labour Government sought to act as an emissary between Portugal and the United States. A Cabinet Office minute of a meeting with Soares reveals: “Mr Callaghan said that Dr Kissinger was keeping in touch with him and regarded the U.K as being in the lead on this issue.”²²⁴ Soares’ strategy of encouraging the British to lobby for US restraint in Portugal can be seen at the meeting.²²⁵ He expressed concern at rumours that the Brazilian Government was encouraging the AFM to take over militarily, with the tacit support of the United States.²²⁶ Although Callaghan had no evidence that the United States planned an intervention, that these rumours were not dismissed suggests that the Britain considered it probable that the US would be planning a covert operation in Lisbon.²²⁷ Although the situation in Lusophone Africa dominated discussions between Soares and Callaghan, Portugal’s internal situation was now of a greater concern than had been the case at previous meetings.

The British and Portuguese Foreign Ministers next met at the meeting of the Socialist International at Chequers on the 30th June. Callaghan chaired the meeting and the issue of Portugal and the needs of the Portuguese Socialist Party were on the agenda. Soares was encouraged by Tom McNally to “bring a shopping list to the Chequers meeting.”²²⁸ The British Government’s understanding of the position of the Portuguese Socialist Party was shaped by an informative conversation between Tom McNally and Vera Matthews, Secretary of the International Council of Socialist Democratic Women.²²⁹ She gave the pessimistic prognosis that “The present state of the Portuguese Socialist Party’s organisation can be summed up in one word - ‘chaos’. The party has four full-time officials, little organisation in

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ Benn Pimlott judged that Soares’ character, because of his adept politicking, had “Wilson-like aspects.” Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, p.670.

²²⁶ Speculation began after Brazil appointed a new Ambassador to Lisbon who was “a former chief of military intelligence in Brazil and had many links with the United States intelligence authorities.” ‘Record of Conversation between Callaghan and Soares’, 19 June 1974, PREM 16/11.

²²⁷ It was recorded that Callaghan said, in relation to the rumours of Brazilian intervention, ‘he was distressed but not surprised by what Soares had said.’ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ McNally commented that she was a “very sensible girl, whose political judgement I value greatly.” McNally to Callaghan, ‘The Portuguese Socialist Party in Portugal’, 24 June, PREM 16/241.

the country and little coherent idea of how it plans to organise. The almost continual absence of Soares abroad as Foreign Minister and the presence in Government of his two most senior colleagues have left serious gaps in decision-making and party strategy.”²³⁰ McNally’s analysis of the strength of the Communist Party was more alarmist than the British Embassy’s, and he argued that it was imperative that the Socialist International must make available “organisational as well as financial help.”²³¹

Diplomacy between Britain and Portugal during Spinola’s first government was dominated by contact between Soares and Callaghan; however, the last meeting involved Harold Wilson and the Portuguese Prime Minister, Palma Carlos, at the British Embassy in Brussels on the 25th June, prior to a gathering of NATO leaders. Unlike Soares’ meetings with Callaghan, discussion of the internal situation in Portugal dominated. The Labour Government wanted information on recent developments, particularly the Communist Party’s electoral chances. The British Prime Minister gave a promise to assist in any way efforts to establish democracy in Portugal, although he noted ironically that the British Labour Party “was not always very good at organisation itself.”²³² There was a note of urgency in Wilson’s message that “If the Communist Party were to succeed in a free and open election, so be it; but no lover of freedom would want to see the other parties fail for sheer lack of organisation.”²³³ Palma Carlos, while noting the strengths of the Communist Party, defended the make-up of his political coalition. He expressed confidence that a majority of Portuguese supported democracy, but scepticism that they were pro-socialist, and in a veiled criticism of British policy argued that “they would wish for a centre-left rather than a Socialist party.”²³⁴ When pressed by Wilson, Palma Carlos shared an assurance given by President Spinola that if the Prime Minister could no longer hold together the coalition, the President would dismiss the government and then nominate him to form the next. The Portuguese Prime Minister expressed confidence that “He now knew that he had the full support of the Armed Forces.”²³⁵ The Labour Government was, therefore, aware of Palma Carlos’ weakness but assumed that Spinola was in a position to appoint another moderate government.

The British Embassy, through an unidentified informant, knew that Palma Carlos had twice tendered his resignation, seeking to form a narrower and more coherent coalition. A

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² ‘Record of Conversation between Wilson and Palma Carlos’, 25 June 1974, PREM 16/11.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

telegram sent from the British Embassy on the 5th July suggested that a show-down between Spínola and the radical left was likely the following day. Ambassador Trench reported that “pressure will mount on President Spínola to ‘take a firm grasp of the situation’, to save the country from anarchy.”²³⁶ However, the embassy judged that President Spínola was in a strong enough political position to assert his authority. The British Ambassador had a meeting with the president on the 8th July and the only issue discussed was Africa. There had been no discussion of any impending political crisis.

Prime Minister Palma Carlos, frustrated at having to resolve the increasing social and economic disorder facing Portugal without “requisite authority to forcefully address them”, resigned suddenly on the 9th July.²³⁷ President Spínola, having initially had his first choice rejected, was pressured to appoint the AFM representative Vasco Gonçalves as Prime Minister on the 17th July. The British had failed accurately to understand the changing political circumstances in Portugal. The meeting between Harold Wilson and Professor Palma Carlos had given Britain confidence that moderate politicians would overcome the AFM. Soares gave repeated assertions that the radical left would not threaten democracy in Portugal, and that any threat came rather from a right-wing authoritarian government. These assurances diluted warnings from other sources that the radical left could achieve power. The British Ambassador wrote that he now realised that “We had heard a number of accounts from sources closely linked with either the Prime Minister or the President about the issues involved. It is clear that these accounts, and by extension we ourselves, underestimated the cohesion and weight of the Armed Forces Movement”²³⁸

British policy had aimed to assist rapid decolonisation of Portugal’s African overseas territories; the fear had been that a right-wing authoritarian government would replace the coalition government if it failed in this course of action. The Labour Government had believed that any attempt by the radical left to achieve power, rather than being successful, would merely trigger a response from the right-wing in Lisbon. The British Embassy did not engage sufficiently with the internecine political manoeuvrings which dominated Lisbon after the coup d’état; instead British diplomacy had largely been conducted through bilateral meetings with Soares. The British Embassy, having few contacts across the political spectrum in Lisbon, relied on information provided by officials from the previous regime. Hence the

²³⁶ Trench to Callaghan, ‘The Coup in Portugal II’, 3 July 1974, FCO 9/2046.

²³⁷ Manuel, *The Uncertain Outcome*, p.59.

²³⁸ Trench to Wiggin, ‘Portuguese Political Class’, 17 July 1974, FCO 9/2046.

Labour Government was surprised by the dramatic political shift to the left which followed the resignation of Palma Carlos.

The Second Provisional Government (17th July to 30th September, 1974)

The inauguration on the 17th July of the AFM's nominee for Prime Minister, Colonel Vasco Goncalves, signalled a left-ward shift in Portuguese politics. The appointment of six members of the AFM to the new Provisional Government meant that the radical left had moved into a "position of direct and powerful involvement in the Government."²³⁹ The "hero of the 25th April", Otelo de Carvalho, was appointed military governor of Lisbon and deputy commander of a new military command, Continental Operational Command (COPCON), a military task force formed to intervene within Portugal. For the next two months Spínola and the AFM manoeuvred against each other, culminating in the 'silent minority' crisis in September which led to the President's resignation. What exactly happened remains contentious.²⁴⁰ The British Ambassador concluded: "The allegations of a right-wing plot seem implausible but Portugal came close to civil war on 27/28 September."²⁴¹ It appears that Spínola planned to mobilise the centre and right to remove the radical left from positions of influence. They, however, countered this by rallying supporters of the AFM to force the President's own resignation.

The Labour Government was unsure as to the exact nature of the recent political changes in Lisbon. The FCO thought that Goncalves and Carvalho were "left-wing idealists," rather than communists, but that their "associates are Marxists or even (in Goncalves' case for instance) Communists."²⁴² Rather than a right-wing army coup from the senior ranks of the army, a coup from the junior ranks, through the AFM, was now considered more likely. A Foreign Office official reached the pessimistic conclusion that "One of these consequences could be military government," and that this was "a prelude to the assumption of power by the Communists."²⁴³ There was a realisation that the role and importance of the AFM had been inadequately understood. The Southern European Department criticised the Lisbon Embassy, complaining that "It would have been useful to have had a post-coup assessment of

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ Manuel, *The Uncertain Outcome*, pp.61-62.

²⁴¹ Trench to Callaghan, 'The Fall of Spínola', 2 October 1974, FCO 9/2059.

²⁴² Trench to Wiggin, 'Portuguese Political Crisis', 17 July 1974, FCO 9/2046.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

the AFM's organisation and motives."²⁴⁴ Indeed, the first direct meeting between the AFM and the British Embassy did not take place until the 31st July, when the British Ambassador met Carvalho.²⁴⁵

The departure of the government of Palma Carlos appeared to complicate the British strategy of encouraging Portuguese decolonisation. However, in a surprise announcement on the 27th July, Spínola abandoned his idea of granting self-government to the overseas territories within a Lusophone commonwealth, instead declaring that Portugal would negotiate immediate independence with each national liberation movement.²⁴⁶ Britain had achieved the principal aim of its policy towards Portugal since the coup d'état, yet neither the Labour Government nor the British Embassy in Lisbon had been forewarned of Spínola's change of policy. Indeed, it was neither a consequence of, nor influenced by, British diplomacy; rather, it was a result of domestic political imperatives.

The policy of the Labour Government now shifted from a general concern at political developments in Lisbon to a strategy of immediate practical assistance aimed at ensuring that Portugal made a successful transition to democracy. This was instigated by the British rather than the Portuguese, motivated by fear that Portugal was teetering towards a populist coup d'état, which would bring the Communist Party closer to power. The Labour Government now gave their full support to the Spínola Presidency. The British Ambassador feared that, if Spínola could not restore order in Portugal, economic chaos would follow "with its obvious invitation to the Communists to exploit it."²⁴⁷ Despite its radical left-wing orientation, the Labour Government sought to establish close ties with the new coalition, arguing that "A reconstituted Provisional Government is likely to need all the moral and other support which we can give it."²⁴⁸ The Labour Government was no longer content with promoting democracy by encouraging assistance to Portuguese political parties and trade unions by their British counterparts. On the 14th August, Trench held a meeting with Prime Minister Goncalves, at which the Ambassador reiterated an offer made by Wilson on the 25th June to the previous Prime Minister, to help in the establishment of democratic institutions.²⁴⁹ The British assisted

²⁴⁴ Brimelow to Goodison, 18 July 1974, FCO 9/2046.

²⁴⁵ Ure to Thomas, 31 July 1974, FCO 9/2047.

²⁴⁶ For an account of Spínola's change of policy toward the overseas territories see, Norrie MacQueen, The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa, pp 88-93.

²⁴⁷ Trench to Wiggin, 'Portuguese Political Crisis,' 17 July 1974, FCO 9/2046.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ Thomas to McNally, 5 September 1974, FCO 9/2047.

in the development of electoral law; however, they were frustrated by Portuguese bureaucracy in their attempts to assist in police training and a new media law.²⁵⁰

However, effective intervention in Portuguese domestic politics was an extremely difficult proposition. An FCO official noted that “I think we might in any case approach it with caution. We are already tendering a lot of advice to the Portuguese on African problems. To involve ourselves in domestic problems as well would lay us open to the charge of interference in Portuguese internal affairs.”²⁵¹ It was, therefore, decided to support moderate politicians in Lisbon through the British Embassy. An FCO official argued that “Mr Trench had good contacts with the centre in Portugal and I see advantage in his using these contacts to convey the message of unity.”²⁵² Therefore, while Callaghan focused on bringing progress to negotiations on Africa, the British Embassy helped to promote democracy in Portugal by “giving a warning about the dangers of fragmentation of the moderate democratic forces in Portugal.”²⁵³ They were careful not to endorse any particular party or become “involved in party political manoeuvring in Portugal.”²⁵⁴ The Labour Government encouraged British political parties to establish links with their Portuguese counterparts, and the British Embassy supported the partisan activities of the Labour and Conservative parties.

The British Embassy demonstrated some bias in favour of centre-right parties in Portugal, despite their difficulty in attracting the support of a people overjoyed at the removal of an authoritarian government and the intimidating environment in which they now operated. The British Embassy was directly involved in the visit of Michael Young MP from the Conservative Research Centre to Lisbon where he met representatives of the emerging centre-right parties, particularly Spínola’s aspirant party, the Partido do Centro Democrático (CDS), but it was not involved when the Labour MP Ron Hayward visited the Portuguese Socialist Party.²⁵⁵ This was not only because Ron Hayward already had close connections with the PSP. The British Embassy followed closely the fortunes of the CDS party and urged the Foreign Office to encourage British political parties to provide assistance.²⁵⁶ Michael Young was also debriefed by the Southern European Department of the Foreign Office. His

²⁵⁰ Trench to FCO, ‘Portuguese Electoral Law’, 23 October 1974, FCO 9/2057. Trench to Thomas, ‘Call on the Prime Minister’, 14 August 1974, FCO 9/2047.

²⁵¹ Brimelow to Goodison, 18 July 1974, FCO 9/2046.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ Trench to Thomas, 5 August 1974, FCO 9/2047.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

report was somewhat at variance with the received wisdom in London, arguing that “the general opinion was that the Socialist Party (PSP) were in a weak position”, and pessimistically concluding, “A common guestimate was that the PSP would be lucky to get more than 10 per cent of the vote in the general election.”²⁵⁷

The Labour Government was also aware that moderate parties in Portugal were hampered “by the domination of the media by the extreme left.”²⁵⁸ Although coverage of events in Portugal by the BBC (noted for its traditional accuracy and impartiality) and the British national press played a significant role in Lisbon’s political discourse - suggesting that the Labour Government would be able to influence the political process through cultural diplomacy - the importance of the British media also caused difficulties. The Lisbon Embassy was concerned at the adverse reaction to reporting by British newspapers. This was raised by Prime Minister Goncalves at his meeting with the British Ambassador. Trench recorded that “He asked me in particular, whether I could not do anything to put a stop to the extremely exaggerated and tendentious reporting of Bruce Loudon, the *Daily Telegraph* Stringer.”²⁵⁹ The British Embassy was concerned that Loudon “might be thrown out of Portugal and that this might be blown into a cause célèbre by the British press.” This led the News Department of the FCO to “speak to the *Daily Telegraph* at a suitably senior level, to warn them.”²⁶⁰ The Embassy was also aware that a left-wing Portuguese newspaper had compiled a dossier of British involvement with the old regime and that, if this were published, it would complicate current relations between Portugal and Britain.

The Labour Government also encouraged a review of the support given by the TUC to the embryonic trade unions in Portugal. The Labour Attaché at the British Embassy in Brussels, where the activity of international trade union federations was monitored, liaised with delegations returning from visits to Lisbon.²⁶¹ The British Government encouraged the TUC to actively support the expansion of organised labour in Portugal. Advice was given on collective bargaining, dispute settlement and the type of legislative framework most suited for representational functions.²⁶² However, trade union delegations returning from Portugal remained optimistic about the prospects for democracy in Portugal. A report by an international delegation noted: “I believe that the accounts appearing in some foreign

²⁵⁷ Thomas to Killick, ‘Political Parties in Portugal’, 23 August 1974, FCO 9/2047.

²⁵⁸ Thomas to Killick, ‘Position Paper’, 25 September 1974, FCO 9/2047.

²⁵⁹ Trench to Thomas, 14 August 1974, FCO 9/2047.

²⁶⁰ Minute by Thomas, *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ Marshall (Brussels) to Hurst, ‘Trade Unionism in Portugal’, 6 September 1974, FCO 9/2077.

²⁶² Hurst to Ralph, 9 July 1974, FCO 9/2077.

newspapers or by radio and TV commentators that Portugal is currently moving toward the extreme Left are almost entirely mythical and based on very superficial impressions.”²⁶³

The Labour Government’s efforts to support the development of independent trade unions in Portugal were complicated by the criticism it faced that, as the largest investor in the Portuguese economy, it had exploited the previous regime’s policy of attracting overseas investment by controlling organised labour. The British Ambassador noted: “This resulted in labour being generally depressed in this country to a point where it was cheaper than elsewhere in Western Europe and noticeably less liable to industrial unrest.”²⁶⁴ It became increasingly difficult for the British Embassy to defend British business interests in Portugal. The British Ambassador noted: “Any representations by us could too easily be interpreted as an attempt to force the Portuguese to allow firms and individuals, which had come to Portugal for the advantages obtainable under the old regime, to continue to enjoy them against the tide of events.”²⁶⁵ The British Embassy had to deal with a Ministry of Labour headed by a Communist Minister unsympathetic to their concerns. Eventually, the British Ambassador raised the issue during his meeting with Prime Minister Goncalves, reminding him of “the need for the maintenance of a climate of confidence in Portugal, such as will encourage the foreign investment needed for development.”²⁶⁶

The leftward shift in Portuguese politics after the departure of Palma Carlos led the British Embassy to work even more closely with their US counterparts. The British Ambassador in Lisbon noted that “We have discussed recent events and future possibilities with the US Embassy here, who have received from different sources intelligence similar to ours, and whose conclusions appear to be broadly in line with our own.”²⁶⁷ Despite its erroneous analysis and limited influence over recent events in Portugal, the British Embassy was surprisingly still perceived to be one of the leading diplomatic players in Lisbon. The United States continued to be constrained in its ability to intervene in Portugal. The US Ambassador informed the British Embassy that he was aware “that the Communist Party would make a great deal of capital out of any evidence of American meddling.”²⁶⁸ Recent

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ Trench to Thomas, ‘Labour Management’, 21 August 1974, FCO 9/2077.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ Trench to Wiggin, 10 July 1974, FCO 9/2046.

²⁶⁸ Ure to Thomas, 31 July 1974, FCO 9/2047.

events brought a review of US policy toward Portugal.²⁶⁹ A meeting took place between the British Ambassador and his US counterpart in Porto on the 31st July. He had recently returned from “three days of intense discussions with the State Department, which had included a long session with Kissinger.”²⁷⁰ The minutes of the meeting between the ambassadors were widely disseminated across various Foreign Office departments. The United States decided to continue their policy of working closely with President Spínola, although they found him “a somewhat shrunken man.”²⁷¹ The US was becoming increasingly pessimistic about the direction of Portuguese politics.²⁷² The British Ambassador noted that “I found Mr Scott deeply worried about recent developments here.”²⁷³ However, although the British had the same concerns, their analysis differed.

The Labour Government did not share the United States’ pessimism about developments in Portugal, remaining optimistic about the likelihood of an eventual transition to democracy. After the meeting with Ambassador Scott, the British Embassy noted: “Perhaps one should discount to some extent Mr Scott’s gloom about Spínola’s position.” The Labour Government judged Soares’ presence in government essential. The British Ambassador argued: “Rightly or wrongly, he seems to have become a symbol in the eyes of the world.”²⁷⁴ The United States was extremely concerned at the electoral alliance between the PSP and PCP, and raised the issue with Soares. However, the Labour Government, whose analysis at the highest level of government was influenced by close personal ties to Soares (in whose interest it was to downplay the links between the PSP and PCP), accepted his explanation that the pact was a tactical manoeuvre to avoid being outflanked by the radical left. The British Ambassador believed that Soares’ left-wing statements have “led him to sound a good deal more extreme than he is in private conversation.”²⁷⁵

The impending sense of crisis heightened American concerns at Portugal’s membership of NATO. The United States now addressed the issue of Portugal’s participation

²⁶⁹ Telegram 163339/ Tosec 56, Department of State to the White House, Washington, July 26, 1974, 2208Z, National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1314, NSC Secretariat—Richard M. Nixon, Cables/Contingency Plans 1974, Portuguese Contingency Plans.

<http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 134).

²⁷⁰ Ure to Thomas, 31 July 1974, FCO 9/2047.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² Telegram 163339/ Tosec 56, Department of State to the White House, Washington, July 26, 1974, 2208Z, National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1314, NSC Secretariat—Richard M. Nixon, Cables/Contingency Plans 1974, Portuguese Contingency Plans.

<http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 134).

²⁷³ Ure to Thomas, 31 July 1974, FCO 9/2047.

²⁷⁴ Trench to Wiggin, ‘Portuguese Political Crisis’, 10 July 1974, FCO 9/2046.

²⁷⁵ Trench to Thomas, ‘Portuguese Political Parties’, 31 July 1974, FCO 9/2046.

in NATO's planning committees. The US had already taken the unilateral decision, at the Heads of State meeting in June, to limit Portuguese access to sensitive documents. The NATO Headquarters Office had been instructed "orally by the Secretary's office not to distribute Atomal and Cosmos Top Secret documents to the Portuguese."²⁷⁶ The Labour Government was informed through a contact that "The US were now going to ask for the arrangement to be formalised and also for Portugal to be invited to leave the Nuclear Planning Group."²⁷⁷ Clear differences existed between the US and its European allies. The latter concluded that, because Communists in the Portuguese government were not directly involved in foreign affairs, existing security arrangements were adequate. The Dutch delegation to NATO had expressed their fear "at the possible effect on Portuguese (and indeed Dutch opinion) of a Portuguese expulsion (even if ostensibly voluntary) from the NPG, as NATO's reaction to a generally applauded change in the Portuguese Government."²⁷⁸ The United States' approach also exasperated the British, but they did not attempt to use their influence to change Washington's policy. A Foreign Office official noted: "The Americans have not handled this well... Oh dear. But I'm not sure there's much we can do."²⁷⁹ Instead, Britain acted on their contacts' information so as "to be ready to respond to the US approach."²⁸⁰ The British liaised between the Portuguese and US delegations at NATO headquarters and sought a face-saving formula for the Portuguese. However, the approach failed; an official from the NATO UK Delegation concluded that "the US delegation had firm instructions from Washington to exclude the Portuguese from the beginning."²⁸¹ The Labour Government negotiated between the Europeans, whose views they largely shared, and the United States, whose actions they defended. The incident shows the British using information (known because of close institutional links) to formulate a diplomatic response aimed not at changing US policy, but to make other states accept US policy, without their being aware of the reasons for doing so.

President Spínola's resignation followed an unsuccessful attempt to assert his authority over the AFM. On September 28 and 29th, rumours spread that Spínola was planning to mobilise a 'silent majority' for a public display of support for the President, in response to which armed supporters of the AFM erected barricades on roads into Lisbon. After a stand-

²⁷⁶ Ure to Staples, 17 July 1974, FCO 9/2066.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ Peck to MacLaren, 5 September, FCO 9/2066.

²⁷⁹ Minute by MacLaren. *Ibid.*

²⁸⁰ Beaumont to Tickell, 'Portuguese Security', 7 August 1974, FCO 9/2066.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

off, Spínola resigned the following day. The British Embassy had reported on “growing popular dissatisfaction with the present provisional government, its failure to get its edicts obeyed and the direction in which it is moving.”²⁸² They foresaw that Spínola would attempt to reassert his authority and that this was likely to have some popular support. However, although the evolving political crisis in Portugal was discussed at Cabinet level in Britain, a fatalistic conclusion was reached: “It was agreed that in the short-term, and perhaps in the medium term too, there was little we could do other than watch and hope.”²⁸³ The only response was to ask McNally to consider what could be done at the party level, and the issue of Portugal was added to the agenda of the Foreign Secretary’s lunch with Dr Kissinger on 25th September.²⁸⁴

That the Labour Government, having endeavoured since the 25th April to influence events in Portugal, should now respond so ineffectually to the latest crisis is explained in part by the distraction of the Cyprus conflict. Regular meetings between Callaghan and Soares, which had been such a marked feature of Britain’s relations with Portugal immediately after the coup d’état, did not take place during this decisive episode. The Foreign Secretary’s shuttle diplomacy in the eastern Mediterranean, seeking a resolution to the Cyprus imbroglio, prevented anything but a cursory consideration of any other issue. John Killick in the Cabinet Office admitted: “Because of Cyprus, I inevitably have not been able to focus much on Portugal lately, but have become increasingly uneasy about the situation.”²⁸⁵ It was now decided that a visit to Portugal by James Callaghan was not appropriate. A Foreign Office official concluded: “One cannot help reflecting that – even Cyprus apart – this would hardly have seemed an appropriate moment for an official visit by the Secretary of State.”²⁸⁶ It is surprising that, given the perceived seriousness of the situation in Lisbon, a visit by a more junior minister or representative from another department was not proposed. This may have been because the Labour Party had begun campaigning for the General Election, which was called for 10th October, but it could also have been because, now that Portugal’s overseas territories were to be given their independence, Britain’s primary aim in its relations with Lisbon had been achieved.

²⁸² Ure to Thomas, ‘Change of Government in Portugal,’ 25 September 1974, FCO 9/2059.

²⁸³ Goulding to Thomas, 29 August 1974, FCO 9/2047.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ Handwritten minute on Thomas to Alexander, 23 August 1974, FCO 9/2047.

²⁸⁶ Ure to Thomas, ‘Political Rumours in Lisbon’, 21 August 1974, FCO 9/2047.

Britain and the Spinola Presidency

The coup d'état in Portugal affected Britain's interests in several ways, which meant there were a number of possible policy responses; the approach chosen by the Labour Government, therefore, reveals much about the nature of its foreign policy as well as the processes by which its decisions were reached. The Labour Government believed that the coup d'état benefited the British national interest by enabling a resolution of the Rhodesian crisis, one of the most intractable and contentious foreign policy issues facing Britain at the time. This required the success of moderate politicians in Lisbon who supported immediate independence for Portugal's overseas territories. Above all, the Labour Government gave complete and unequivocal support to Soares and the PSP. This was to the exclusion of all other political movements, including that of the Portuguese President, Spínola. Britain could have been his close ally, since diplomatic circumstances were propitious.²⁸⁷ Moreover, his eventual resignation threatened the transition to parliamentary democracy in Portugal and triggered a Cold War crisis. Britain's relations with Washington also became strained because of their markedly different approach to events in Portugal.

The Labour Government's support for a single political movement in Portugal so as to advance the British national interest suggests that its encouragement of democracy in Portugal was merely rhetorical. The Labour Government, while maintaining correct formal ties with the Portuguese President, did not give its unequivocal support, despite the threat to democracy presented by the AFM and radical left. This was not only because of the unconstitutional means by which he came to power (British governments had been willing to maintain a cosy, comfortable relationship with an authoritarian government in Lisbon). The Labour Government also appeared relatively unconcerned with the process of developing democratic institutions and civil society in Portugal. However, whilst support for Soares by the Labour Government was seen as the best possible means to achieve the Lusophone decolonisation, there was also a conviction that the PSP would be the most successful party in any forthcoming elections and that this would be the means by which parliamentary democracy would be consolidated in Portugal. This was not a belief held by the FCO and the Lisbon Embassy. The assumption by the Labour Government that a democratic outcome in Lisbon was assured showed an optimism that Europe now shared a common set of political

²⁸⁷ Trench to FCO, 'Meeting with General Spínola', 3 May 1975, FCO 9/2045.

values, and that, given the opportunity, the Portuguese people would embrace the same political system as other Western European states.

The assistance given to the PSP by the Labour Government might support an argument that the partisan advancement of democratic socialism was its principal concern. The existence of close ties between the Labour movement and the PSP prior to the coup d'état, and the detrimental consequences of that relationship on the conduct of British diplomacy in Lisbon, would appear to support this thesis. However, this is an erroneous assumption, not least because historians' understanding of this Labour Government's foreign policy is that, although influenced by its values, its approach was essentially pragmatic.²⁸⁸ The Labour Government's decision to assist Soares was a natural extension of the links established prior to the coup d'état and was made without much deliberation or consultation with Portuguese experts in the Southern European Department; however, its belief that a resolution of the Rhodesian crisis was possible and that this was most likely to be achieved through the success of the PSP was also grasped immediately after the coup d'état. Therefore, while partisanship is a necessary factor in explaining Labour Government policy, it is in itself not sufficient; rather, there was a convergence between the government's promotion of its values and the pursuit of the British national interest. This enabled the Labour Government to have an unusually coherent foreign policy towards Portugal where the Labour leadership worked alongside the wider Labour movement (including the affiliated TUC), unlike other cases during the Cold War when socialist governments in western democracies found it difficult to balance their values with power politics; relations with the US after the coup d'état in Chile were both a recent and pertinent example.

The Labour Government's response to events in Portugal demonstrates that, while foreign policy was shaped by the close relationship with the United States, Britain was prepared to act autonomously in pursuit of the national interest, even if this caused tension with Washington. The foreign policy establishments of Britain and the US worked independently of each other, only occasionally sharing information. There were exceptions, particularly between those departments concerned with defence and security issues which maintained close institutional ties; however, their input into policy making competed with actors for whom the tenets of the Anglo-American relationship were secondary. There were

²⁸⁸ John Callaghan, *The Labour Party and Foreign Policy*, p.268. Stephen Howe, 'Labour and International Affairs', *Labour's First Century*, pp. 120-2. Ann Lane, 'Foreign and Defence Policy', Seldon and Hickson, eds., *New Labour, Old Labour*, p.154.

regular discussions at the highest level of government and between those directly responsible for policy toward Portugal; while their analyses were broadly similar, the relative weight placed on different factors varied according to the foreign policy goals of each state. The United States was concerned with the strategic implications of events in Portugal, particularly the renewal of leases on the Azores bases and the security of NATO institutions; Britain's concerns were Rhodesia and the success of the PSP. The Labour Government, however, did not challenge American policy and worked assiduously to ensure that differences caused no damage to the wider relationship with the United States.

The British defence of United States policy towards Portugal within NATO, despite itself pursuing a radically different course, demonstrates the importance of the Anglo-American relationship in shaping its foreign policy. Indeed, because the Labour Government was in some ways better placed to influence events in Portugal, it was able to facilitate American diplomacy. Henry Kissinger, now dominant in foreign policy making after the Watergate scandal and Richard Nixon's resignation on the 9th August, viewed events in Portugal as a Cold War issue.²⁸⁹ However, James Callaghan was able to maintain a relationship of trust and cooperation with Kissinger throughout their discussions on Portugal.²⁹⁰ By contrast, Kissinger quarrelled bitterly with members of the State Department over the same issue.²⁹¹ This supports the argument that the Anglo-American relationship is based on shared values and culture which, particularly when a personal rapport exists between its proponents, allows marked differences on an individual issue to exist without damaging the overall strategic alliance.²⁹²

The divergence between how Britain and the United States understood the correlation between events in Portugal and the Cold War is interesting. While the United States was profoundly disturbed by the governing coalitions in Lisbon, which included communists and radical left-wing politicians, Britain was seemingly unconcerned. The United States disliked Soares, believing his success would lead to a radical leftwing government, antithetical to its interests, and fully committed itself instead to supporting Spínola. The Labour Government shared the view of other west European states that the success of the Socialist Party would serve as a bulwark against the emergence of a communist-dominated government. The United States saw instability within the Mediterranean region - which included the decline

²⁸⁹ Gomes & Moreira de Sa, *Carlucci vs Kissinger*, pp. 91-101.

²⁹⁰ James Callaghan, *Time and Chance*, p. 319. Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, pp. 608-610.

²⁹¹ Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, pp. 148-9.

²⁹² Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship*, pp. 8-9.

and impending death of Franco, the emergence of Eurocommunism in Italy and France, the Cyprus crisis (which triggered the coup d'état in Greece), as well as events in Portugal - principally in terms of their impact on superpower relations. The Labour Government believed that each crisis resulted from factors indigenous to each country.

The Labour leadership dominated how British policy toward Portugal was made throughout the Spínola presidency, although a wide range of protagonists both inside and outside government were involved in the process. It was the interest in Portugal shown by leading Labour politicians such as Ron Hayward, Joan Lester, Tom McNally and particularly James Callaghan which ensured that related issues were considered at the highest level of government. His importance in shaping British policy is illustrated by the ineffectual response of the FCO to the events that precipitated Spínola's resignation, since they coincided with Callaghan's attempts to resolve the Cyprus conflict. Such interest resulted from a conviction that democracy could be established in Portugal, a view not shared by those who believed that only authoritarian government could succeed in the Iberian Peninsula. The tone of the correspondence written by regional specialists in the Foreign Office on occasions demonstrated this prejudice. Although there were differences between those who shaped the Labour Government's response, policy was not an aggregate of competing interest groups and so does not fit the Bureaucratic Politics Model favoured by international relations scholars of American foreign policy.²⁹³

The Labour Government's diplomatic role in Lisbon during the Spínola presidency demonstrates that, despite the decline in its military and economic strength, Britain continued to have the ability to influence world events. It was perceived by other countries to be a leading diplomatic player in Lisbon, having excellent contacts with leading politicians in Lisbon, whilst the BBC had a significant influence on public discourse. However, its ability to shape events in Portugal was actually limited; the successes of British policy during the Spínola presidency were a result more of good fortune than of influence. The existence of links between the Labour Party and Soares prior to the coup d'état meant that the Labour Government had a close relationship with the politician who, in the following year, would form the first democratically elected government in Lisbon. It also meant that the Labour Government was able to support socialism in Portugal without contravening the principle of non-interference in a sovereign state's domestic affairs. Likewise, while Britain shared the

²⁹³ Allison, *Essence of Decision*, p.67. Allison, 'Bureaucratic Politics', pp. 40-79.

'oldest alliance' with Portugal and maintained constructive relations with the Salazar and Caetano regime (remaining Portugal's largest trading partner), the tension between the British government and the Caetano regime immediately prior to the coup d'état meant that their association with the old regime was not resented in the Portuguese collective memory as was that of the United States.

The resignation of Spínola and the emergence of the radical left in Lisbon meant that Portuguese affairs now became an international crisis. Since Britain had maintained only formal links with President Spínola, his resignation did not necessitate a shift in policy. However, the Labour Government now actively supported a transition to democracy in Portugal and worked more closely with the United States. The failure to predict the resignation of Spínola led to a review of the British Embassy's operating procedures in Lisbon, and contacts were now sought across the political spectrum. The Labour Government continued to believe that, although Portugal was entering a period of likely chaos during which the radical left would seek to achieve power, the Portuguese people desired democracy: if an election were to take place as promised, moderate politicians would be in a position to form a government with a strong mandate. The British continued to be less concerned than the United States at the presence of Communist ministers in the coalition governments and the implications for Portugal's membership of NATO. However, while Britain's concern at the direction of events in Portugal intensified, its ability to play an important role in Lisbon now declined in comparison to that of the United States and the Soviet Union.

Chapter III – Britain and Portuguese Decolonisation

(25th April – 30th September, 1974)

The previous chapter demonstrates that the principal concern of the Labour Government in its relations with Lisbon after the coup d'état was to promote immediate independence for Portugal's overseas territories.²⁹⁴ This chapter considers the approach taken to achieve this aim and the motives behind the decisions reached. British policy during the previous decade had been to encourage an immediate ceasefire in Portugal's African wars, to be followed by a negotiated independence. Britain condemned on moral grounds the continued existence of a Portuguese Empire, but its policy was predominantly concerned with Portugal's territories in Africa because of their impact on the British national interest.²⁹⁵ Its influence amongst the newly independent African states was damaged by its inability to bring to an end the white racist regimes in southern Africa, whilst the Rhodesian regime received critical support from the Portuguese colonial authorities.²⁹⁶ After the coup d'état there was also an awareness that a resolution of the African wars was necessary before Portugal itself could make a transition to parliamentary democracy. The Labour Party had a partisan interest in the outcome of events in both Portugal and Lusophone Africa. Therefore, because the Portuguese overseas territories affected British foreign policy in several ways, the Labour Government had a number of different options to influence the diplomatic process that brought independence to Portugal's overseas territories.

The debate in Lisbon on the future of the overseas territories began with a fierce disagreement over the principles that would determine its negotiating strategy with the national liberation movements. The decision was between decolonisation, which would grant immediate independence to the national liberation movements, and self-determination, whereby a more gradual process of consultation with the people (through elections and referendums) would eventually lead to independence, with ties retained with the former

²⁹⁴ In 1951, in order to circumvent Soviet opposition to their membership of international organisations, the Portuguese renamed their 'Colonial Empire' 'Overseas Territories', applying a similar formula to that used by France in Algeria.

²⁹⁵ The Portuguese Overseas Territories by 1974 consisted of Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, East Timor, the Cape Verde Islands, Sao Tome and Macau.

²⁹⁶ Richard Coggins, "Wilson and Rhodesia: UDI and British Policy Towards Africa", O'Hara and Parr, ed., The Wilson Governments, p. 73.

colonial power.²⁹⁷ The Armed Forces Movement promised rapid decolonisation immediately after the coup d'état, a position supported by the Socialist Party leader Mario Soares, and the Communist Party leader Cunhal. However, the newly appointed Portuguese President General Spínola, sought to implement the ideas outlined in his book, published immediately before the coup d'état, which called for gradual self-determination and the establishment of a Lusophone Commonwealth.²⁹⁸ In the uncertain political climate which followed the coup d'état, the emerging political groupings manoeuvred for influence in Lisbon in part by taking a stance on the issue of Portugal's overseas territories; Guinea-Bissau, Angola and Mozambique dominated this discussion. Unlike all its other overseas territories, in Guinea-Bissau Portugal faced certain military defeat (particularly after its air superiority was nullified by the Soviet Union's supply of the SAM 7 anti-aircraft missile) and had few options besides granting independence.²⁹⁹ However, once decided, this would set a precedent which would increase pressure for immediate independence elsewhere. Angola and Mozambique were Portugal's largest colonial possessions, with the most significance for the Portuguese economy and sizeable white settler populations. Granting independence to Angola and Mozambique was complicated by a lack of coherent national liberation movements with legitimacy across all ethnic groups. The other overseas possessions were small and, in most cases, not viable as independent states, a fact which was clear from the absence of significant political movements in their territories.

The Portuguese Foreign Minister Soares' initial contacts with the national liberation movements in Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique were unproductive, compromised by the negotiating position insisted upon by the Portuguese President. However, the weakening of Spínola's domestic political position seen in the previous chapter led to the surprise concession by the President of the principle of immediate independence for Portugal's overseas territories. The negotiations proceeded rapidly thereafter - between the signing of agreements with the liberation movements in each colony and the formal handover of power, there was an almost instantaneous erosion of the authority of the Portuguese colonial

²⁹⁷ MacQueen, *The Decolonisation of Portuguese Africa*, pp. 75-95.

²⁹⁸ António de Spínola *Portugal e o Futuro: Análise da Conjuntura Nacional* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Nova Fronteira, 1974).

²⁹⁹ MacQueen, *The Decolonisation of Portuguese Africa*, pp. 98-99.

authorities: in any meaningful sense, Portuguese sovereignty over its overseas territories ended long before actual independence.³⁰⁰

The Labour Government sought to encourage immediate independence for Portugal's overseas territories through their relationships with the Portuguese Foreign Minister and the moderate African Commonwealth states. The Labour Government judged that opposition by President Spínola and his supporters was the most significant obstruction to any progress and sought to use British influence to bolster Soares's political position in Lisbon. Britain also sought to facilitate Soares' diplomacy by using its influence amongst moderate Commonwealth states to urge the national liberation movements in Angola and Mozambique to moderate their demands. Britain failed to understand the weakness of Spínola's political position in Lisbon, however, and was taken by surprise by the announcement of the changed status of the overseas territories on 27 July. The Labour Government's concern now shifted from encouraging rapid independence to its likely consequences in Angola and Mozambique: brutal civil war and proxy Cold War conflict. However, while the British had significant influence in Lisbon before the principle of immediate independence was granted, once conceded British influence diminished.

Britain and Lusophone Africa

The history of Portugal's African colonies was closely connected to that of the British colonies in southern Africa. The Portuguese African Empire began as coastal enclaves and archipelagos acquired to enable trade with East Asia and to supply slaves to Brazil. However, the partition of much of Africa by European powers at the end of the nineteenth century caused a "dramatic invigoration of Lisbon's imperial project."³⁰¹ Although unsuccessful in acquiring new territories, Portuguese colonial administration now expanded into the interior of its possessions.³⁰² By 1914, Portugal was a major imperial power, although the development of effective administration and economic development in its overseas territories varied greatly. The economic development of Angola and Mozambique became closely tied with that of Rhodesia and South Africa: for example, the Zambezi railway, built in 1894, was largely financed with British capital. Norrie MacQueen has described how the relationship

³⁰⁰ The Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuściński memorably describes the breakdown of law and order in Luanda in the weeks before independence in his travelogue, *Another Day of Life* (London: Penguin, 2001).

³⁰¹ MacQueen, *The Decolonisation of Portuguese Africa*, p. 3.

³⁰² The British Ultimatum of 1890 ended the possibility of the Portuguese connecting Mozambique and Angola.

“fostered an image of Portugal’s possessions as an empire within an empire.”³⁰³ Dependency theorists have even posited a relationship of dependence between Britain and Portugal.³⁰⁴

After the Second World War, however, events in Lusophone Africa were to take a different course from those in other European colonies. Although Salazar never visited any of Portugal’s colonies, the empire was central to the regime’s legitimacy as a world power. Therefore, when European countries began decolonisation he was determined to retain Portugal’s overseas territories. The consequence was that, as MacQueen notes, “By the end of 1964 Portugal, one of the poorest countries in Western Europe, was embroiled in three separate guerrilla wars in another continent.”³⁰⁵ Portugal struggled to find the resources for such a conflict, and the impact on Portuguese society of increased conscription and military casualties was to have profound political consequences.

Salazar’s determination to retain Portugal’s overseas territories led inexorably to a crisis in relations with the British. Britain’s failure to offer military or even diplomatic support after India’s invasion of Goa in 1961 was seen by Portugal as a betrayal of the tenets of the Anglo-Portuguese alliance.³⁰⁶ Once the African wars began, Portugal became steadily diplomatically isolated. The important exception was the United States which judged Portugal to be of such geopolitical significance that relations should continue.³⁰⁷ By the 1970s the General Assembly of the United Nations voted to condemn the Portuguese and recognise the legitimacy of African national liberation movements. Portugal also became an embarrassment to its European allies in NATO who were unwilling to supply military equipment for fear of its use in Africa, while Nordic countries and Holland even gave assistance to Portugal’s opponents. Britain shared its European partners’ concerns although it abstained from voting against Portugal in the United Nations.³⁰⁸ A group within the Labour Party was formed to lobby for the interests of the Lusophone African national liberation

³⁰³ MacQueen, *The Decolonisation of Portuguese Africa*, p.7.

³⁰⁴ The Portuguese BBC and *The Guardian* journalist Antonio de Figueirido argued that the Portuguese Empire was “surrounded by five British possessions and South Africa” which “added an imperial dimension to the centuries old Anglo-Portuguese Alliance.” Antonio de Figueirido, ‘The empire is dead, long live the EU’, in Stewart Lloyds-Jones and António Costa Pinto, ed., *The Last Empire: Thirty Years of Portuguese Decolonisation* (Bristol: Intellect Ltd, 2003), p.127.

³⁰⁵ MacQueen, *The Decolonisation of Portuguese Africa*, p. 25.

³⁰⁶ Oliveira, *Os Despojos da Aliança*, pp. 110-116.

³⁰⁷ The Nixon administration adopted a new African strategy that secretly supported the continuation of white rule in southern Africa. This approach is discussed in Hanes Walton, Robert Louis Stevenson, and James Bernard Rosser, *The African Policy of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger: a documentary analysis* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), pp. 3-8.

³⁰⁸ The exception was British support for a UN investigation into the 1973 Wiraymu massacre in Mozambique.

movements.³⁰⁹ There was strong criticism of Portugal throughout the British media which MacQueen argues formed part of the “coterie of western journalists and academics enlisted as supporters of the liberation movements.”³¹⁰

Britain’s transformation from the leading exponent of colonialism to would-be partner of the newly independent states also led to increased criticism of Portugal’s African policies. Britain sought to maintain its considerable influence in the region (critically, even the United States continued to follow the British lead on most African issues³¹¹). Yet Britain’s failure to take decisive action against the Portuguese complicated its relations with the rest of Africa.³¹² The continued existence of white racist regimes throughout southern Africa was one of the few issues which unified otherwise disparate African states. Norrie MacQueen notes that “the African departments of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office were keenly aware of Britain’s status in sub-Saharan Africa at a time when the continent, now effectively decolonized, seemed to be emerging as an important new component of the international system.”³¹³ In particular, the principal aim of the newly formed Organisation of African Unity was the liberation of the African subcontinent from colonialism and racial discrimination.³¹⁴ However, British economic interests in that region and sympathy for white settlers amongst some politicians and sections of the public prevented effective action.³¹⁵ The potential for ruction within the NATO alliance if Portugal’s European allies criticised its colonial policy overshadowed all other calculations; a Foreign Office official observed: “So put, the question is rhetorical.”³¹⁶ This was not the only dilemma Britain faced; a series of crises from the Congo to Biafra had largely ended optimism for political and economic progress. During talks on Africa between the State Department and the FCO, the head of the UK delegation in his opening remarks argued: “One outstanding feature of the last 10 years,

³⁰⁹ Oliveira, *Os Despojos da Alianca*, pp. 405-6.

³¹⁰ MacQueen, *The Decolonisation of Portuguese Africa*, p.57.

³¹¹ The United States had a policy of defending its strategic interests by maintaining the status quo in southern Africa, but overall the region was amongst its lowest foreign policy priorities. This changed with the proxy Cold War conflict in Angola during late 1975, which led to covert US intervention and Kissinger’s diplomatic initiative to achieve a political settlement across the region. It was only at this point that the US became involved in efforts to resolve the Rhodesian Question. Hanes Walter Jr, Robert Louis Stevenson and James Bernard Rosser Sr, *The African Policy of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger: Documentary Analysis* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2007), pp. 3-8.

³¹² Frederick Cooper, *Africa since 1940 : the past of the present* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.136-137.

³¹³ MacQueen, ‘Belated Decolonization’, p. 31.

³¹⁴ Frederick Cooper, *Africa since 1940*, p.184-185. MacQueen, *The Decolonisation of Portuguese Africa*, p.214.

³¹⁵ Richard Coggins, ‘Wilson and Rhodesia’, pp. 60-74.

³¹⁶ Minute by Goodison on Martin to Richards, ‘Dutch Proposal for E.E.C. Action over Portuguese Territories’, 19 February 1974, FCO 9/2050.

both within Africa and outside it, was that the gap between expectations and achievements had been widening and this had led to growing realism, or possibly a growing disillusion and cynicism.³¹⁷ The failure of constitutional government in its former colonies and the radicalism of the regimes that followed meant even relations with Commonwealth states were in crisis.³¹⁸ Therefore, a successful resolution of the issue of white minority governments in southern Africa became crucial to Britain's wider strategy of maintaining influence throughout the continent.

Rhodesia became the dominant foreign policy issue facing British governments during the 1960s and 1970s.³¹⁹ Britain's refusal to cede ultimate sovereignty over the Rhodesian Parliament, unless the right of the black majority to representation was granted at some future date, led to the Unilateral Declaration of Independence by the Rhodesian Parliament in 1963. The UDI humiliated the British Government, which was held responsible for resolving the crisis by the international community (particularly the newly independent Commonwealth and African states). Kenneth Kaunda, the Zambian leader, reminded Sir Alec Douglas Home during talks that "This was a British responsibility and Britain could play a key role both by exercising pressures in Lisbon and Pretoria and because the United States looked to Britain for a lead on southern Africa."³²⁰ The Wilson Government had neither the means nor the inclination to resolve the issue by the threat of military force: rather it responded to UDI by sponsoring the United Nations' economic sanctions against Rhodesia.³²¹ The Labour Government sought to enforce the sanctions by a naval patrol around the port of Beira in Mozambique, during which "Britain deployed 76 ships and over 24,000 men to enforce the blockade."³²² Sanctions, however, proved ineffective as many states, particularly South African and the Portuguese colonial authorities, failed to comply and Britain refused to act against those that broke sanctions.³²³ The Labour Government entered negotiations with Rhodesia on several occasions but was repeatedly humiliated by the stubborn and manipulative Rhodesian premier, Ian Smith.³²⁴ A historian observes that "To be continually

³¹⁷ Mr Le Quesne, 'Anglo/US talk on Africa held at the Department of State', 14-15 February 1974, FCO 9/2063.

³¹⁸ Philip Alexander, "A Tale of Two Smiths: the Transformation of Commonwealth Policy, 1964-70", O'Hara and Parr, ed., *The Wilson Governments*, pp. 1-19.

³¹⁹ Oliveira, *Os Despojos da Aliança*, pp. 324-347.

³²⁰ Record of a meeting between Douglas Home and Kaunda, 1 February 1974, FCO 9/2063.

³²¹ Richard Coggins, "Wilson and Rhodesia", pp. 60-74.

³²² Carol Thompson, *Challenge to Imperialism*, p.41.

³²³ Jorge Jardim *Rodésia, o Escândalo das Sanções* (Lisboa: Intervenção, 1978), pp.263-266.

³²⁴ Meetings between Harold Wilson and Ian Smith took place on Royal Navy vessels HMS Tiger (December 1966) and HMS Fearless (October 1968); the Heath administration sponsored the Pearce Commission in 1972.

reminded of bearing the responsibility for Rhodesia, but lacking the power to enforce it, was a constant humiliation which Britain had to endure so long as the issue remained an issue of international concern.”³²⁵ Thus, when the Portuguese coup d'état occurred, despite Rhodesia's importance as an issue to the British national interest, an impasse had been reached in diplomatic initiatives to resolve the Rhodesian question.

Mozambique's political status was crucial to Rhodesia's continued independence. The ability of the Portuguese colonial authorities to maintain order in the border area of Tete prevented ZANLA (Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army) launching guerrilla operations from bases in Mozambique into the hinterland of Rhodesia, while the Portuguese colonial authorities' refusal to enforce UN sanctions against Rhodesia guaranteed their failure.³²⁶ During talks with Soares Callaghan concluded, “Apart from the link with South Africa, Portugal was the most important factor in keeping Rhodesia going.”³²⁷ Therefore, Britain, unlike certain European allies which expressed a general abhorrence at the racial principles of Portugal's colonialism, had a specific interest in the outcome of events in Mozambique. This did not mean support for the rebel Frelimo armies in Mozambique, although elements within the Labour Party favoured this approach. The tenets of Britain's long established alliance with Portugal and the desire to defend its economic interests in the region prevented this. However, successive British governments took a close interest in the political situation in Mozambique.

There was a dramatic change at the beginning of 1974 in the southern Africa situation even before the coup d'état in Lisbon. Frelimo liberated one-third of Mozambique, including the Tete province.³²⁸ Zambia, which bordered the white minority states, sought to avoid further violence and instability in the region and, despairing of effective diplomatic intervention by the British Conservative government, pursued clandestine talks with both the Portuguese and South African governments.³²⁹ The British, believing the course of the war demanded negotiation and that relations between Britain and the Black African states were being damaged by Lisbon's stance, became more insistent that the Caetano regime must now enter talks with the national liberation movements in its overseas territories. However, the need to avoid antagonising the Portuguese

³²⁵ Elaine Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), p.100.

³²⁶ Jardim, *Rodésia*, pp.263-266.

³²⁷ ‘Record of Conversation between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Portuguese Foreign Minister’, 26 May 1974, FCO 36/1621.

³²⁸ Thompson, *Challenge to Imperialism*, p.1.

³²⁹ Oliveira, *Os Despojos da Alianca*, pp. 402-404.

regime and the refusal of Black African governments to cooperate with a Conservative government prevented progress.

The Labour Party and Lusophone Africa

The Labour Party's manifesto of February 1974, although vague on detail, gave unambiguous support for change in southern Africa.³³⁰ It declared: "We shall oppose all forms of racial discrimination and colonialism. This will mean support for the liberation movements of Southern Africa."³³¹ The manifesto was then written, when in opposition, by the National Executive Committee rather than the party leadership, and this pledge would appear to have been sponsored by those on the ideological left of the Labour Party. The newly appointed Foreign Secretary, James Callaghan, had had previous experience working with leading Black Nationalist leaders in Africa and clearly sympathised with their cause. However, after the election it was left-wing MPs both inside and outside the cabinet, rather than the Foreign Secretary, who sought to ensure, against resistance within the FCO, that the manifesto commitment became policy. A number of Labour politicians took an active interest in southern Africa including the ministers Joan Lestor, Judith Hart and David Ennals, and Ron Hayward and Lord Gifford from the Labour Party.³³² The Committee for Freedom in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea had been set up during the previous parliament to lobby for their cause. It sought to ensure that one of the electoral manifesto commitments (according to Benn Pimlott, "In 1974, it was, at best, a shopping list, at worst a collection of slogans") became a reality.³³³ The election of a Labour Government, therefore, brought a radically new approach to the Portuguese overseas territories resulting from the partisan ties between the left of the Labour Party and the national liberation movements and their sponsors.

Immediately after his election in February Harold Wilson ordered a review of British policy toward southern Africa. An FCO official at the Rhodesian Department chaired the review, with submissions from interested parties. The process lasted until the end of 1974, but was largely superseded by events after the coup d'état.³³⁴ A number of actors were concerned with Britain's policy toward Lusophone Africa. The left-wing Labour Party MPs already mentioned worked

³³⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 406-407.

³³¹ Harold Wilson, *The Labour Party Manifesto - Let Us Work Together, Labour's Way Out Of Crisis*, January 1974 (Labour Party), p.14.

³³² Oliveira, *Os Despojos da Alianca*, p. 407.

³³³ Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, p. 618.

³³⁴ The Portuguese coup d'état transformed the position of other states: somewhat surprisingly South Africa now distanced itself from the Rhodesian regime and sought détente with its black African neighbours.

independently of the Labour Government to develop relations with Frelimo and the surrounding black African Commonwealth states. Lord Gifford invited representatives of PAIGC (Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde) informally to London immediately after the coup d'état.³³⁵ Callaghan worked closely with the Foreign Minister Soares and sought to facilitate his diplomatic efforts in Africa. The British consulates in the Portuguese Overseas Territories were principally concerned with the relationship between developments in Lisbon and the country in which they were based. This was a consequence of the FCO's organisation, with consulates reporting to the Lisbon Embassy, and officials that served in southern Africa largely coming from postings in Portugal rather than surrounding African states. Finally, the reporting of embassies in southern Africa can be separated into those representing British interests in white majority states and those in radical black African states. It appears that without clear guidance from London, because of the policy review, the concerns of these embassies came to reflect those of the states within which they were assigned. In particular, the concerns of the Ministry of Defence and intelligence services about the likely implications of political change in southern Africa on the Cold War did not appear to have been addressed during this critical period.³³⁶ However, the nuances in approach between diverse actors within the British Government would enable them to play a useful role in facilitating negotiations between the Portuguese and their adversaries.

The FCO had sought to signal a possible change of policy toward Portugal and the status of its overseas territories during the general election campaign. It emphasized that a period of deliberation rather than a change of policy was in progress, and was able to use the election as a means to assert this ambiguity. This was not done in the expectation of a Labour Party electoral victory, the FCO developing policy toward Guinea-Bissau "On the assumption that after the election we have a Conservative Administration."³³⁷ However, the FCO used the pretext of the constitutional convention of impartiality during campaigning, and the norm that policy is reviewed by Whitehall Departments when parliament is dissolved, to signal a possible change of policy direction towards the overseas territories. The mechanism for doing so was FCO participation in the Africa Planning Group, formed within the European Political Cooperation framework (an attempt to coordinate the approach of The Nine to foreign policy issues, but which operated on intergovernmental principles outside the EEC's existing institutions); this allowed discussion of the recognition and support for the national liberation movements in Portugal's overseas territories

³³⁵ Davies to Richards, 27 March 1974, FCO 9/2051.

³³⁶ The strategic implications of growing Soviet influence in southern Africa were outlined in 'Memorandum – Aims of Communist Expansion in Africa', 19th February 1974, FCO 9/2058.

³³⁷ Minute by Goodison on Martin to Richards, 'Dutch Proposal for EEC Action over Portuguese Territories', 19 February 1974, FCO 9/2050.

without damaging bilateral Anglo-Portuguese relations.³³⁸ This was a concession by Britain to its European partners who had long held that national liberation movements should be granted recognition and it was hoped that this might lead to reciprocal support for more effective enforcement of sanctions against Rhodesia. Although not the expected outcome, the approach also prepared the FCO for any potential change of government. A senior official admitted that “I think the specialist committee does offer a chance to change our line gracefully should we have a new government.”³³⁹ However, the FCO was clear that any new approach to southern Africa should not be pursued to the detriment of traditional bilateral ties with the Portuguese regime.

Immediately after the election, the FCO was confident that its approach to the question of the Portuguese overseas territories would be followed by the incoming Labour Government. It responded to a representation by the Portuguese Ambassador, concerned at a likely change of policy, by implying that the Labour Party’s manifesto commitment was mere electoral posturing.³⁴⁰ The FCO even took legal advice on the matter and was counselled that any recognition of the national liberation movements would not be legal under international law.³⁴¹ Immediately after the election, a public statement made by Lord Gifford and Joan Lestor, calling for a change in policy, was noted by the FCO, and politely ignored. It was, therefore, a rude awakening for officials in the FCO to be suddenly reminded by Labour ministers of the manifesto commitment.³⁴² The group of Labour MPs concerned with southern Africa (Joan Lestor, Lord Gifford, David Ennals and Lord McNally) sent, in minutes and attachments to other documents, instructions to officials to “come to grips with the party manifesto.”³⁴³ Neither Wilson nor Callaghan, in person or during cabinet discussion, was yet to be involved in this debate; rather, the disagreement appears to have been between individual ministers, supported by influential members of their party who, in the absence of Cabinet policy, pursued partisan interest against the FCO’s concern with the perceived national interest.

The episode appears to support Ben Pimlott’s contention that during Wilson’s second administration he aspired toward a style of government in which “The stress would be on

³³⁸ Daniel Möckli, European Foreign Policy during the Cold War: Heath, Brandt, Pompidou and the dream of political unity (London: Tauris, 2009), pp. 91-92.

³³⁹ Minute by Brimelow. *Ibid.*

³⁴⁰ Wiggin to Goodison, ‘Call by the Portuguese Ambassador’, 5 March 1974, FCO 9/2050.

³⁴¹ Freeland to Baker, ‘Support for National Liberation Movements in Portuguese African Territories’, 7 March 1974, FCO 9/2050.

³⁴² Guest to Foster, ‘Liberation Movements in the Portuguese Territories’, 9 April 1974, FCO 9/2050.

³⁴³ Handwritten minute by McNally on Guest to Foster, ‘Liberation Movements in the Portuguese territories’, 4 April 1974. FCO 9/2050.

teamwork - letting ministers do their work without interference.”³⁴⁴ The government was wary of the obstructive powers of Whitehall, and the left-wing of the party was now determined to achieve its objectives. It also shows the difficulty experienced by the FCO during election campaigning to appear impartial, whilst manoeuvring so that any possible policy change introduced after the election would still allow continuity in approach. Finally, it reveals how the FCO was able to use Britain’s recent membership of the EEC as an instrument to shift policy subtly against the Caetano regime within an intergovernmental decision-making body, whilst maintaining a national position of close Anglo-Portuguese relations.

The coup d’état in Lisbon abruptly transformed the prospects of Portugal’s overseas territories achieving their independence.³⁴⁵ It was clear that the coup d’état would have “far-reaching effects on her relationship with Africa.”³⁴⁶ An FCO official at the Rhodesian Department noted that “Whether or not the Portuguese coup leads to early changes on the ground, the uncertainty now surrounding Portuguese policies in Mozambique will be a major cause of anxiety to the Rhodesian regime and should significantly increase the pressure on Mr Smith to make concessions to the Africans in order to secure a settlement.”³⁴⁷ It resolved the dilemma for the Labour Government of balancing the manifesto commitment and maintaining close relations with the regime in Portugal. Indeed, the aspirations of the Labour Party in southern Africa were now shared by leading politicians in Lisbon and, therefore, were more likely to be achieved. The existence of ties between the Labour Party and the Lusophone African national liberation movements, and the states that sponsored them (which had once antagonised the Caetano regime), would now become an important element in Lisbon’s approach to negotiations.

The coup d’état in Lisbon meant that British policy toward Lusophone Africa was now considered at the highest level of the Labour Government and this was not only because Lusophone decolonisation was now an achievable objective rather than an aspiration. The Prime Minister was also responding to press coverage of events in Lisbon; front-page articles in the broadsheet newspapers gave equal weight to the implications of the coup d’état for southern Africa, including Rhodesia, and to those for Portugal. Harold Wilson ordered the

³⁴⁴ Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, p.617.

³⁴⁵ Ken Flower, *Serving Secretly*, pp.142-144. Anthony Verrier, *The Road To Zimbabwe*, pp.166-185. Ian Hancock *White Liberals, Moderates and Radicals in Rhodesia*, pp. 193-194. Elaine Widrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, pp.221-257.

³⁴⁶ Guest to Dales, ‘Review of Southern African Questions’, 4 June 1974, FCO 9/2053.

³⁴⁷ Byatt to Dales, ‘Speaking Note’, 1 May 1974, FCO 9/2064.

Cabinet to consider several questions relating to the impact of events on Rhodesia.³⁴⁸

However, the attention of the Labour leadership did not lead to an immediate change in strategy; rather, the existing approach was pursued with renewed vigour.

The London Talks on Guinea Bissau

The newly appointed Foreign Minister Soares was instructed to begin immediate talks with the nationalist movements in Portugal's overseas territories. There were disagreements, however, in Lisbon on what these negotiations should achieve. The military officers who had organised the coup d'état and the PSP and PCP sought immediate decolonisation. President Spínola and many of the white settlers in the colonies remained committed to the principle of self-determination. At his investiture Spínola declared that "Their future must be democratically decided by all who consider them their homeland. The action of minorities both in Portugal and the overseas territories must not be allowed to affect the free development of the democratic process."³⁴⁹ Hence Soares had to try to negotiate on the basis of self-determination. However, such an approach was considered absolutely unacceptable by all the national liberation movements and aroused scepticism regarding Portugal's motive for involvement in talks on the status of its overseas territories. Soares' negotiating position was also complicated by domestic political pressures. An FCO official commented that a problem with Soares' achieving progress on talks was that "the whole of the political scene here has been turned upside down by the coup and there is no fixed body of public doctrine on the basis of which the new regime could construct acceptable and coherent policies."³⁵⁰ The success of political manoeuvring in Lisbon was also closely tied to the outcome of negotiations on the future of the overseas territories. Kenneth Maxwell argues that the two sides "in fact set out positions so diametrically opposed that they contained seeds of a conflict that could only be resolved by the victory of one over the other."³⁵¹

Soares attempted to overcome these obstacles by beginning discussions between Portugal and the national liberation movements before agreement had been reached on what the overall outcome should be. A Foreign Office official observed that "Dr Soares hopes to gloss over these differences of interpretation in order to get agreement to measures which will

³⁴⁸ Bridges to Craddock, 'The Portuguese Coup and Africa', 6 May 1974, FCO 9/2064.

³⁴⁹ Trench to FCO, 15 May 1974, FCO 36/1621.

³⁵⁰ Clark to Baker, 'The Junta and Africa', 22 May 1974, FCO 9/2063.

³⁵¹ Maxwell, *The Making of Portuguese Democracy*, p.97.

build up the momentum of decolonisation.”³⁵² It was also hoped that because Soares was one of the only Portuguese politicians who shared the same socialist credentials as the nationalist groups, and because he was also an opponent of the previous regime who had suffered similar privations, his motives could be trusted.

The Labour Government was aware of the dilemmas that Soares faced having held discussions on the issue even prior to his appointment as Foreign Minister on the 2nd May. They reached the same conclusion that beginning talks was the best means to overcome obstacles to their progress and decided to give Soares’ diplomacy their unequivocal support. This not only reflected a partisan commitment to the success of Soares and the Portuguese Socialist Party (although there was a realisation that his success in negotiating with nationalist movements was critical to his political position domestically), but also crucially because it was judged that Soares’ approach to negotiations would best achieve the British national interest in southern Africa. However, the Foreign Office was more sceptical that Soares’ negotiating strategy would be successful; one official observed “But he may not be able to conceal this central difficulty and we cannot therefore be sure that his efforts and the negotiations will succeed.”³⁵³

Soares chose to address the overseas territories issue by first negotiating with the PAIGC on the status of Guinea Bissau.³⁵⁴ The military situation there was most deleterious to the Portuguese. The national liberation movement Portugal faced in Guinea Bissau, the PAIGC, was clearly considered their legitimate representative by the local people for whom it fought. Guinea-Bissau was geopolitically the least significant of Portugal’s African colonies, its original value as a fuelling station for steam-ships en route from Angola and Mozambique long since obsolete. International opinion was more strongly supportive of Guinea-Bissau’s cause than that of Portugal’s other overseas territories. The recently assassinated leader of the PAIGC, the charismatic intellectual Patrick Cambral, had propagated its cause so effectively that it obtained an international profile greater than Guinea-Bissau’s significance merited.³⁵⁵ The PAIGC received support not only from radical Black African and Marxist regimes but

³⁵² ‘Note on Herr Genscher’s talks in London’, 5 June 1974, FCO 9/2053.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁴ The African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde) was a Marxist national liberation movement which had fought the Portuguese colonial authorities since 1962 with assistance from the Soviet Union, China and Western European socialist parties.

³⁵⁵ MacQueen, The Decolonisation of Portuguese Africa, p.98-99.

also from various European socialist movements.³⁵⁶ Guinea-Bissau's very lack of geopolitical importance allowed western states to take a stance which nullified criticism of their policies toward issues, such as Rhodesia and South Africa, where their direct interests were at stake. The UN General Assembly had authorised a vote on the recognition of Guinea-Bissau during August, before the coup d'état, which would damage attempts by the new regime in Lisbon to change its international image.³⁵⁷ Hence Spínola's government agreed that negotiations on Guinea-Bissau's future status should proceed even though a consensus had not been reached in Lisbon on the principles which would govern negotiations with the nationalist movements in all the overseas territories.³⁵⁸

Before talks between the PAIGC and the Portuguese authorities could begin, contact had to be established, but no state was acceptable to both sides as an intermediary that would instigate negotiations. The military strength of the PAIGC meant that there was little need for it to compromise during any negotiations, and therefore without a sympathetic state to advocate their interests it was feared that Portugal's position in negotiations might soon become untenable. Although seeking an immediate withdrawal from Guinea-Bissau, the Portuguese were aware that the course of talks there would set a precedent for similar negotiations in Angola and Mozambique, in circumstances where Lisbon's political and military position was far stronger. The surrounding black African states were the PAIGC's sponsors and had not established diplomatic relations with Portugal in protest at its colonial policies. A press statement by the OAU in reaction to the coup d'état was uncompromising; it called for an "intensification of activities by Liberation Movements in Portuguese-occupied territories until final victory."³⁵⁹ Portugal's international isolation because of the African wars meant there was not an obvious candidate elsewhere to act as go-between.

Therefore, Soares approached the Labour government for assistance in arranging talks between Portugal and the PAIGC.³⁶⁰ At a time when Portugal was diplomatically isolated, Britain was a friendly base for negotiations.³⁶¹ During talks on 2 May, Callaghan had offered

³⁵⁶ Tor Sellström, Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa (Uppsala : Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1999-2002). Tore Linné Eriksen, eds., Norway and National Liberation in Southern Africa (Uppsala: Nordic Institute of African Studies, 1999).

³⁵⁷ Norrie, MacQueen, 'Belated decolonization', pp.43-47.

³⁵⁸ Clark to Baker, 'The Junta and Africa', 22 May 1974, FCO9/2064.

³⁵⁹ 'OAU Press Statement in Reaction to the Coup – No. 3/74 Press Release – Geneva', 29 April 1974, FCO 9/2063.

³⁶⁰ 'Record of Conversation between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Portuguese Foreign Minister', 26 May 1974, PREM 16/241.

³⁶¹ Goodison to Mallet, 'Portugal', 13 June 1974.

to help Portugal by providing a venue in London and the advice of experts who had experience of decolonisation in Africa.³⁶² In many ways Britain was a surprising choice to play this role. It had no diplomatic representation in Guinea Bissau and unlike other European states had had no previous dealings (aside from the Labour Party solidarity group) with the PAIGC.³⁶³ Britain was seen as sympathetic to Portugal and was viewed with suspicion by the PAIGC.³⁶⁴ That the PAIGC agreed to accept the invitation to London by the Labour Government demonstrates the respect with which those within the Labour Party who supported their interests were regarded. It also appears that practical factors were significant, in that the resources of the FCO and London's position on international flight routes made its location attractive to all parties.³⁶⁵

While Britain had no immediate national interest in Guinea Bissau, the Labour Government realised the importance of a settlement there to encourage independence in those overseas territories that were significant for its interests.³⁶⁶ The Labour Government also believed that successful talks between the Portuguese and the PAIGC would bolster Soares' domestic position, and would in turn make decolonisation more likely to occur elsewhere.³⁶⁷ If the Labour Government were to play a prominent role in negotiations this would placate the anger amongst Commonwealth states at Britain's previous ineffectiveness in challenging white racist states and so restore its leadership within the Commonwealth.³⁶⁸ The decision to support negotiations was also because Britain was concerned at the impending recognition by other states of the PAIGC as the legal representatives of Guinea Bissau. The Labour Government feared that at the UN debate in August, it would once again be pressured to abstain from voting against Portugal in solidarity with a NATO ally, and that this would further antagonise the G77 states.³⁶⁹ The PAIGC's Marxist ideology did not appear to concern the Labour Government who accepted the reality that it was dominant militarily and would therefore form a legitimate government after independence.³⁷⁰

³⁶² 'Record of Conversation between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Portuguese Foreign Minister', 26 May 1974, PREM 16/241.

³⁶³ Norrie, MacQueen, 'Belated decolonization', p.54.

³⁶⁴ 'Record of Conversation between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Portuguese Foreign Minister', 26 May 1974, PREM 16/241.

³⁶⁵ Goodison to Mallet, 'Portugal', 13 June 1974.

³⁶⁶ 'Record of Conversation between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Portuguese Foreign Minister', 26 May 1974, PREM 16/241.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁸ Norrie, MacQueen, 'Belated decolonization', p.33.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 53-56.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.42.

The Labour Government agreed to organise talks in London and these took place at the Hyde Park Hotel on 25-31 May.³⁷¹ The British approach to the talks was to organise the venue and provide generous practical support to each party, but otherwise play no direct role.³⁷² This was because the Labour Government was aware of Britain's somewhat tenuous position as a neutral third party. The file relating to the London talks unfortunately has been mislaid within the National Archives and therefore the background and course of events can only, at present, be constructed by viewing other files tangential to the conference itself.³⁷³ It can be presumed that contacts with the PAIGC were made by Lord Gifford or other MPs who had its confidence. Throughout the talks there were regular meetings between Soares and Callaghan where the course of negotiations was discussed.

The London talks were largely a failure.³⁷⁴ Although contact was established between the Portuguese and the PAIGC and a discussion of the principles of negotiation begun, the distance between their positions proved too great. There was also a stumbling block over consulting the population of the Cape Verde Islands over whether they wanted independence or to be incorporated within Guinea-Bissau. The Portuguese were also concerned with "the wish to treat the settlement in Guinea as a model for the settlements in Mozambique and Angola."³⁷⁵ The PAIGC refused to attend further talks in London as was planned believing that their concerns would best be met in a state more considerate of their interests. Therefore the talks in London eventually broke down and were to continue in Algiers.³⁷⁶

The movement to Algiers of talks between Portugal and the PAIGC would suggest that the Labour Government's good offices had failed, but the British were able to exert even greater influence over the process. Soares openly discussed the progress of negotiations in Algiers with Callaghan and other ministers during transit through London's airports.³⁷⁷ The Portuguese delegation came to depend on the British for diplomatic support, visiting the British Embassy in Algiers during negotiations for advice and using its secure

³⁷¹ The course of the talks in London is discussed in António Duarte Silva, A Independência da Guiné-Bissau e a Descolonização Portuguesa (Porto : Edições Afrontamento, 1997), pp.189-195. See also Oliveira, Os Despojos da Aliança, pp. 417-423.

³⁷² Callaghan, 'Developments in Portugal and Portuguese Africa', 14 June 1974, FCO 36/1621.

³⁷³ The missing file is FCO 9/2052.

³⁷⁴ MacQueen, The Decolonisation of Portuguese Africa, pp. 102-103.

³⁷⁵ Trench to FCO, 'Portuguese Africa', 3 June 1974, FCO 36/1621.

³⁷⁶ Britain acted as an intermediary to pass on an offer by Nigeria to serve as a possible venue for talks. It was hoped that by doing so it would also improve its relations with the Commonwealth. Dawbarn to Foster, 'Nigeria and Portugal's African Territories', 3 May 1974, FCO 9/2063.

³⁷⁷ An example of one such meeting is, 'Record of Conversation between Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the Portuguese Foreign Minister in the Alcock and Brown Suite, London Airport', 4 June 1974, FCO 36/1621.

communications facilities. This assistance was invaluable for a state whose diplomatic service was inadequate for the mission in which it was now engaged. The British Ambassador in Lisbon retorted that “it was a bit hard to expect a machine which for years had been accustomed to amble quietly along in first gear to change suddenly into overdrive.”³⁷⁸ This role meant that the Labour Government had a clear understanding of the Portuguese negotiating strategy and, unlike its deliberately impartial position during the London talks, their advice to Soares became increasingly partisan. The PAIGC and the Portuguese also failed to reach agreement in Algiers.³⁷⁹ This led the former to pursue other diplomatic initiatives to reach independence.

The PAIGC sought to have the issue of its recognition put to the United Nations General Assembly. This meant the Labour Government was now in a difficult position; while its European partners were ready and willing to recognise the PAIGC as the legitimate government of Guinea Bissau, the British wanted to avoid the issue of recognition while talks were in progress and were concerned that doing so would place undue pressure on Soares. A FCO official argued that “above all the Portuguese internal situation is delicate, and we would not want to see any steps taken which would weaken Soares’s position.”³⁸⁰ The British also wanted to avoid having to veto any UN General Assembly resolution fearing the implications for its reputation amongst developing states. However, the FCO were aware from information given to them in New York and by the American Embassy in Lisbon that the United States was prepared to veto any premature recognition of the PAIGC.³⁸¹ This served British interests; an FCO official argued that “as seen from here, it would be to our advantage if the Americans took the lead.”³⁸² The sharing of information between the United States and Britain meant the Labour Government was able to ensure that the Portuguese would not face UN recognition of Guinea Bissau, whilst refraining from using its own veto and thereby avoid damaging their reputation amongst African states.

³⁷⁸ Trench to Goodison, ‘Portuguese Guinea’, 12 June 1974, FCO 9/2053.

³⁷⁹ MacQueen, *The Decolonisation of Portuguese Africa*, pp. 103-106.

³⁸⁰ Richard to FCO, ‘Guinea Bissau’, 28 June 1974, FCO 9/2058.

³⁸¹ Richardson to Everett, ‘Guinea Bissau’, 2 July 1974, FCO 9/2058.

³⁸² Moreton to FCO, ‘Guinea Bissau’, 3 July 1974, FCO 9/2058.

The Lusaka Talks on Mozambique

Soares' strategy towards Mozambique was to establish contact with the largest liberation group Frelimo and begin talks while those with the PAIGC were in progress. During the talks in London arrangements were made for a meeting in Lusaka which took place on the 5 and 6 June. These were successful in establishing working relations. However, in contrast to talks with the PAIGC which despite obstacles made some progress, negotiations with Frelimo immediately stalled. The same domestic political constraints set by Lisbon that hindered negotiations with the PAIGC did so with these talks but they were also complicated by the military situation in Mozambique where, unlike in Guinea-Bissau, fighting had yet to reach a decisive point. This made the necessity for talks less immediate for the Portuguese and weakened Frelimo's negotiating position. More fundamentally, however, Frelimo lacked legitimacy amongst Mozambique's ethnic groups and was not able to claim convincingly to be a government-in-waiting able to assert full sovereignty over the country.³⁸³ Despite the warmth of personal relations established between Soares and Frelimo leaders, no foundation yet existed for a resolution of Mozambique's status and even a military ceasefire, a prerequisite of Portugal's participation in any further talks, appeared unlikely.

The Labour Government was less willing to participate in negotiations on Mozambique's status than it had been over Guinea-Bissau. This was a consequence of Mozambique's greater geopolitical importance to Britain. There were substantial economic assets in Mozambique.³⁸⁴ British business feared rumours that during a Frelimo government industry would "be nationalised without compensation," and they lobbied the Labour Government accordingly.³⁸⁵ Although it was hoped that there would now be effective implementation of sanctions against Rhodesia, there was an awareness of Mozambique's economic dependence on the white racialist states of southern Africa. The British consul in Lourenço Marques noted that "if Mozambique severed its economic ties with South Africa (and Rhodesia) annual budgetary revenue would fall by at least 50%."³⁸⁶ The Labour Government's attitude toward Frelimo also differed from that towards the PAIGC because it did not meet the prerequisite of British recognition of a government - full sovereign control of territory. Therefore, although independence for Mozambique was considered crucial for

³⁸³ MacQueen, *The Decolonisation of Portuguese Africa*, pp.125-130.

³⁸⁴ An FCO official noted that "British exports to Mozambique increased from £15.5m in 1972 to £19.6m in 1973, about one-tenth of the market and the value of UK investment is over £21m." 'Background Note for Lord Goronwy-Roberts, Foreign Affairs Debate', 5 November 1974, FCO 9/2065.

³⁸⁵ Cornish to FCO, 4 June 1974, FCO 9/2053.

³⁸⁶ Duncan to Foster, 'Mozambique's Economic Dependence on South Africa', 3 June 1974, FCO 9/2053.

achieving British policy objectives in the region, because political circumstances differed and economic interests were directly at stake, the Labour Government's involvement in negotiations was more cautious than had been the case in Guinea Bissau.

The Labour Government was even reticent to establish relations with Frelimo, despite the existence of ties between left-wing Labour Party MPs and the national liberation movement.³⁸⁷ The Minister of Overseas Territories, Judith Hart, and the Foreign Office Minister, Joan Lestor, held talks with Frelimo during their visits to Zambia and Tanzania.³⁸⁸ The FCO argued against further contact, fearing that "A formal call by a British Minister at their headquarters might therefore be misinterpreted as implying a degree of support for Frelimo as the sole authentic voice of African opinion in Mozambique."³⁸⁹ The FCO received delegations from political movements emerging in Mozambique such as Coremo, who offered themselves as alternatives to Frelimo, and it gave consideration as to whether these should receive support.³⁹⁰ However, most importantly it was believed that recognition would make Soares' negotiating position more complicated; the FCO argued that Britain "would not wish to do anything which might make the task of the Portuguese Government more difficult."³⁹¹ This was the view with which Callaghan was most sympathetic, and after further internal debate instructions were given that Britain should not recognise Frelimo as the sole representative of the Mozambique peoples and must not establish any direct contact.

Instead it was decided that Britain would liaise with Frelimo through the states that sponsored them politically and financially, Zambia and Tanzania. The Labour Government's approach served several purposes. Tanzania, and particularly Zambia, were motivated in their relations with Portugal by a desire to bring a peaceful transition in southern Africa so as to avoid a disruption of the region's (and therefore their own) economies.³⁹² Encouraging Zambia and Tanzania to participate in negotiations on Mozambique and Rhodesia might safeguard British economic assets in the region. Supporting the initiative would also improve relations with these Commonwealth states which had been soured by the aftermath of Rhodesian UDI.³⁹³ The importance of improving relations with the black African states can

³⁸⁷ The Labour Party set up a private fund for humanitarian assistance to Frelimo. 'Frelimo Delegation', 17 July 1974, FCO 9/2057.

³⁸⁸ Judith Hart visited Tanzania on 17-22 June. Joan Lestor visited Kenya and Zambia on 27 May.

³⁸⁹ Foster to Aspin, 'Contact with Liberation Movements', 12 June 1974, FCO 9/2053.

³⁹⁰ MacQueen, *The Decolonisation of Portuguese Africa*, pp.43-48.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*

³⁹² The Zambian's dilemma is discussed in Thompson, *Challenge to Imperialism*, p.14.

³⁹³ In 1965 Tanzania had broken diplomatic relations with Britain because of its ineffectual response to Rhodesian UDI.

be seen by the visit of the Minister of Overseas Development to President Nyerere on 21 June, during which an offer of development aid was made for the first time in nine years, despite Britain's straitened economic circumstances.³⁹⁴ Close personal relations which developed during the 1950s existed between Nyerere, Kaunda and leading members of the Labour Party, including Wilson and Callaghan. The Labour Government was also aware that the Organisation of African Unity might consider the issue of the recognition of the new regime in Portugal if talks on the overseas territories made progress and that they might then pressure the liberation movements to moderate their demands.³⁹⁵

Therefore, unlike the London talks with the PAIGC, it was Soares rather than the Labour Government who instigated discussions with Frelimo. Britain was not directly involved in the meeting in Lusaka on 5-6 June and was only informed that these had taken place by the Portuguese after the event.³⁹⁶ The outcome of the talks was discouraging; it soon became evident that the differences between them made progress impossible and Soares was unable to overcome these obstacles through the momentum of discussions as had been hoped. Spinola's insistence on self-determination in the overseas territories was not an insurmountable obstacle in Guinea Bissau because of the popularity of the PAIGC; consultation in Mozambique would expose Frelimo's lack of support amongst all ethnic groups and would enable other political movements to emerge and threaten its political dominance. Although not in a military position to determine the outcome of events in Mozambique, continuing hostilities by Frelimo would exert pressure on the government in Lisbon and was therefore considered the best means to achieve their objectives. Frelimo were encouraged in this course by the OAU which maintained their refusal to recognise the new regime in Lisbon.

The Labour Government faced a dilemma in its approach to Mozambique after the failure of the Lusaka talks. The British became increasingly concerned at Soares' failure to achieve a diplomatic breakthrough in Mozambique and the political crisis in Lisbon during July made the Labour Government realise that ending the Portuguese African wars was crucial to a successful transition to democracy in Lisbon. The Labour Government was

³⁹⁴ The Labour Government also decided to ignore concerns that the Tanzanians were passing on plastic explosives bought from Britain to Frelimo. Ewans to FCO, 'Military Supplies for Tanzania', 8 March 1974, FCO 9/2063.

³⁹⁵ Baker to Elliot, 'Call on the Parliamentary Under-Secretary by Mr Nyaki, Principal Secretary, Tanzanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs', 30 May 1974, FCO 9/2064.

³⁹⁶ The course of the talks in Lusaka is discussed in MacQueen, The Decolonisation of Portuguese Africa, pp.132-133.

particularly concerned at the likely impact on Soares' domestic political position if independence in the overseas territories was delayed further. However, it remained convinced that a Frelimo government would compromise the long-term political stability of the region.³⁹⁷ An FCO official outlined the predicament as follows: "It is of paramount importance for the success of the new regime that it should bring the African wars to an end, yet the only way of achieving a ceasefire is to deal direct (sic) with these movements who are conducting the war but whose claim to represent African opinion as a whole is far from proved."³⁹⁸ The British were becoming increasingly alarmed at the deteriorating political situation in Mozambique. The British consulate in Mozambique came to believe that "the existence of Frelimo is the only element in the political situation which might make Mozambique different from the Belgian Congo immediately prior to independence."³⁹⁹ He also saw the need to "urge on the Portuguese leaders the realism of publicly accepting that independence is inevitable for their colonies in Africa."⁴⁰⁰

A process of consultation took place within the Labour Government on whether a British initiative could resolve the breakdown in negotiations. This required the use of British influence to persuade Spínola of the necessity of granting Mozambique the right to independence, and to pressure Frelimo to accept the right of the people to consultation prior to decolonisation. The British were in consultation with Zambia and Tanzania on the issue. However, although deciding that this was the best course for British diplomacy the Labour Government adjudged that it would at present be unsuccessful and should therefore await developments before taking any action. This outcome was also because these discussions coincided with the Cyprus crisis which consumed much of Callaghan's time.⁴⁰¹

The difficulties in achieving progress in talks on Mozambique made it more problematic to raise the issue of Rhodesia with the Portuguese. There had been initial optimism that steps would now be taken to pressure Rhodesia into making concessions that Black Nationalist groups could accept, thereby leading to an overall constitutional settlement. The government in Salisbury confronted the cumulative effect of sanctions, a serious guerrilla threat, a diminishing flow of European immigrants and the change in government in

³⁹⁷ The British consul in Mozambique reported rumours that South Africa was planning to intervene in Mozambique to prevent Frelimo achieving power. Duncan to Foster, 'South Africa/Mozambique Relations', 12 July 1974, FCO 9/2064.

³⁹⁸ Ure to Foster, 'Mozambique', 5 June 1974, FCO 9/2053.

³⁹⁹ Duncan to Foster, 'South Africa/Mozambique Relations', 12 July 1974, FCO 9/2064.

⁴⁰⁰ Duncan to FCO, 'Mr Arnold Smith', 9 July 1974, FCO 9/2057.

⁴⁰¹ Morgan, *Callaghan- A Life*, pp.444-450.

Portugal which “introduced a new element into the situation.”⁴⁰² Harold Wilson saw this as potentially the most significant outcome of the Portuguese coup d’état and closely followed developments. The Labour Government was aware that Black African states thought likewise. An FCO official observed that “in our talks with the former British Africans, we were continuously reminded how closely they all watched Rhodesian affairs.”⁴⁰³ The Labour Government sought to raise the issue of Rhodesia in Lisbon. An FCO briefing document argued that “as soon as the new Portuguese Government have found their feet, we should try to get them to use their influence on Mr Smith to make concessions to the Rhodesian Africans in order to achieve a just settlement.”⁴⁰⁴

However, it proved difficult to get the Portuguese to support measures against Rhodesia. The government in Salisbury sought to avoid confrontation and had been one of the first to recognise the new regime in Lisbon. A detailed memorandum was sent to Soares by Callaghan to remind him of “the general line” and “to list for him the various actions in the sanctions field which we hope the Portuguese will at least consider.”⁴⁰⁵ The overwhelming obstacle recognised by all parties was that measures to implement sanctions more effectively would have devastating consequences on the regional economy. The effect that raising the issue of Rhodesia with Lisbon might have on negotiations between the Portuguese and Frelimo was also a consideration. Soares confided to Callaghan that within his ministry there was “a group of former Ambassadors in South Africa and Charges d’Affaires in Rhodesia who constituted a reactionary bloc. He had not yet decided to break up this citadel.”⁴⁰⁶ On the issue of sanctions, as noted by an FCO official, Callaghan’s “concern for the health of the new Portuguese Government, on which future progress in the Territories depends, is the dominant argument in favour of restraint.”⁴⁰⁷ As the talks in Mozambique ran into difficulties, rather than pressuring the Portuguese to take action against Rhodesia, the sanctions issue was seen as a future aspiration to pursue once negotiations in Mozambique were successful.

The initiative for British diplomacy to resolve the impasse in negotiations was with its consul in Mozambique, Stanley Duncan. An official of rare energy and intelligence, his

⁴⁰² Callaghan to FCO, ‘MIPT: Rhodesia’, 3 June 1974, FCO 36/1621.

⁴⁰³ Ure to Goodison, ‘Portuguese Africa’, 12 June 1974, FCO 65/1519.

⁴⁰⁴ Byatt to Aspin, ‘Discussions with Dr Soares: Rhodesia’, 23 May 1974, FCO 36/1621.

⁴⁰⁵ Byatt to Acland, ‘Portugal and Rhodesia’, 31 May 1974, FCO 9/2064.

⁴⁰⁶ ‘Record of Conversation between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Portuguese Foreign Minister held at Number 1 Carlton Gardens’, 26 May 1974, FCO 36/1621.

⁴⁰⁷ Reith to Mound, 12 June 1974, FCO 9/2064.

zealous reporting from Mozambique and surrounding African states also demonstrated a sophisticated awareness of developments in Lisbon. The possibility of a UDI in Mozambique supported by the Rhodesian government, which had dominated headlines in the British press after the coup d'état, was soon dismissed in consulate reports.⁴⁰⁸ Duncan observed that the political movements which represented the settlers were likely to be isolated in the political process in Lisbon, which demonstrated a greater understanding of the nature of the Carnation Revolution than the British Embassy had shown.⁴⁰⁹ On a trip to the region of Vila Pery in Mozambique he noted that "After this trip, my first outside Lourenço Marques since the coup, I am more than ever convinced that time is running out for the Portuguese."⁴¹⁰ He sent a number of detailed reports which accurately predicted the course of events in the next two years. His discussions with Hastings Banda in Malawi, a leader not consulted by his superiors in Whitehall, led him to believe that the ability of Portugal to influence events in Mozambique had ended.

Unlike other British officials who were narrowly interested in the immediate concern of encouraging independence for the overseas territories, Stanley Duncan considered the likely long-term impact of this outcome on British interests. Initially he called for support for Spínola's overseas policies and for the British Government to avoid moves that would enhance Frelimo's status. He came to see the danger of a civil war and its likely impact on British interests and saw that engagement with Frelimo at the earliest opportunity (thus encouraging it to accept other political movements) was the best course of action.⁴¹¹ Callaghan responded to Duncan's reporting of the deteriorating situation in Mozambique by deciding to begin the diplomatic initiative planned with the Tanzanian and Zambian governments, whereby these states, with Zambia in the lead, would pressure Frelimo to moderate its demands and accept a ceasefire whilst Britain would persuade Portugal to compromise their stance on self-determination. This approach was not in itself different from Soares' strategy, but because it was instigated by trusted outside parties with influence rather than by one of the protagonists it was hoped that a settlement could be reached. By necessity, this would need to be a carefully coordinated diplomatic process gradually bringing together the negotiating positions of Portugal and Frelimo. It was believed that the influence the Labour Government had with all the participants might make this achievable.

⁴⁰⁸ Duncan to FCO, 'New Regime in Portugal', 27 April 1974, FCO 9/2050.

⁴⁰⁹ See previous chapter for an analysis of the relationship between Duncan (a former official in Lisbon) and Trench, (the British Ambassador to Portugal).

⁴¹⁰ Duncan to FCO, 'Mozambique Internal Situation', 5 July 1974, FCO 9/2057.

⁴¹¹ Duncan to Foster, 'Mozambique Internal', 28 May 1974, FCO 9/2053.

The British Foreign Secretary sent instructions to all embassies and consulates in countries which were of importance to the negotiations on Mozambique to explain the British initiative and ask for their support. There was an idea current in Lisbon which allowed independent supervision of a referendum by the UN in Mozambique. Consideration was given in London to a proposal by Duncan that this should be instigated by the British. Soares was informed of the forthcoming diplomatic initiative by the British Ambassador in Lisbon prior to his requesting an audience with President Spínola.⁴¹² The British Ambassador was given careful instructions that he must introduce the idea of Portuguese acceptance of the right to independence, an FCO briefing note argued: "But it is also clear that if we are to help we must do so discreetly. We may damage Soares' standing in Lisbon if we are too active."⁴¹³ These individual actions by British officials were coordinated by Callaghan, who after deciding to encourage a diplomatic breakthrough was fully engaged on the issue.

The Anglo- Zambian diplomatic initiative was superseded by Spínola's unexpected and sudden announcement of Portugal's readiness to accept the overseas territories' right to independence. Spínola had responded positively to the British proposals.⁴¹⁴ A further series of meetings in Lusaka between Soares and Frelimo were proposed. The British received a confidential statement from the Zambians, to deliver to Soares, that Frelimo "have agreed in principle to the idea of a Frelimo-dominated provisional government with an agreed timetable for holding elections."⁴¹⁵ These developments became the basis for the hasty negotiations that now took place between Portugal and Frelimo. The, Lusaka Agreement, signed on 7 September, brought a ceasefire and provided for a complete hand-over of power to Frelimo the following year, uncontested by elections. From this point it was the rapidity of negotiations with the overseas territories rather than their obstacles that would concern the Labour Government.

The British diplomatic initiative toward Mozambique was based on its own experience of decolonisation in Africa where self-rule had gradually led to independence at a pace determined by the colonial authorities.⁴¹⁶ However, it had failed to realise the critical distinction that political circumstances in the metropole were radically different. Spínola's

⁴¹² 'Record of a Call by His Excellency the British Ambassador on the President of Portugal', 8 July 1974, FCO 65/1519.

⁴¹³ Goodison to Hart, 'Mozambique', 5 July 1974, FCO 9/2057.

⁴¹⁴ Moore to Guest, 'Portuguese Territories', 18 July 1974, FCO 9/2064.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁶ D.G. Austin, 'The Transfer of Power: Why and How', W. H. Morris-Jones and Georges Fischer, ed., Decolonisation and After: The British French Experience (London : Cass, 1980), pp. 3-33.

political weakness made it impossible to delay decolonisation further, and after his resignation the AFM favoured immediate withdrawal. The British had played a useful role in overcoming animosity between Frelimo and Portugal after the coup d'état. The Labour Government enjoyed a unique position of trust with most of the protagonists based on partisan ties with the Portuguese Socialist Party, with many of the liberation movements and with the African leaders who sponsored them. There was also a style of government in Wilson's second term that allowed individual ministers with links to Frelimo a certain degree of autonomy to pursue their own initiatives on the issue.

Spinola's announcement

The declaration by Spinola on July 27, that the time had come "to reiterate solemnly the right of the peoples of the Portuguese overseas territories to self-determination, including the immediate recognition of the right of independence," ended the stasis which negotiations had reached.⁴¹⁷ The intention of the statement was reaffirmed in a joint UN/Portuguese communiqué of 3 August, following the visit of the UN Secretary-General to Lisbon. Spinola now regarded himself as personally responsible for the decolonisation process, entering talks with President Senghor of Senegal about Guinea-Bissau and with President Mobutu of Zaire, about Angola.⁴¹⁸

The Labour Government had received indications that Spinola was contemplating a change of policy. The recent OAU summit had given the regime in Lisbon an ultimatum that "Short of acceptance by Portugal of a firm commitment to independence the armed struggle by liberation movements must continue."⁴¹⁹ British analysis of political change in Lisbon concluded that "It would be reasonable to infer... that the process of decolonisation will be accelerated."⁴²⁰ The Labour Government was first informed of the contents of Spinola's announcement by Soares at the Socialist Party meeting at Chequers.⁴²¹ However, the significance of the speech and other rumours was not realised and it was decided to ignore these and continue with the diplomatic initiative on Mozambique.

⁴¹⁷ 'Full text of General Spinola's speech announcing the right to independence for Portuguese Africa', July 27 1974, FCO 9/2064.

⁴¹⁸ The meeting with Mobutu took place at Sal in the Cape Verde islands on September 14th. The course of these discussions is detailed in, Maxwell, *The Making of Portuguese Democracy*, p.100.

⁴¹⁹ Shaw to FCO, 'OAU Summit', 18 June 1974, FCO 9/2065.

⁴²⁰ Lewis to Aspin, 'The New Portuguese Government and Africa', 19 July 1974, FCO 9/2065.

⁴²¹ Callaghan to FCO, 'Portugal and the PAIGC', 4 July 1974, FCO 9/2054.

These signals of a possible change in policy were disregarded because the Labour Government assumed that Spínola would always be an implacable opponent of immediate decolonisation. Therefore, an FCO official in the Southern European Department, receiving a rumour that the Portuguese President might grant Guinea Bissau immediate independence, dismissed this on the grounds that “Since the Portuguese have hitherto taken the line that what happens in Guinea must inevitably be seen as a precedent for the other African territories, this is surprising news and I am inclined to treat it with caution.”⁴²² Within the Southern European Department of the FCO, there were some sympathetic to Spínola, who questioned this assumption. They argued that his views on self-determination were outlined prior to the coup d’état, since when the “framework of the situation has changed radically”, and that “Spínola’s past career suggest that he is a man honest enough to change his opinions if the facts do not support them.”⁴²³ However, the Labour Government continued to believe that successful negotiations with the liberation movements in the overseas territories would only be possible when Spínola was persuaded to compromise his commitment to self-determination; the possibility that he might abandon it altogether was not contemplated.

The Labour Government was almost wholly reliant on Soares to inform its policy making on Portugal during this period. The regular meetings held with the PSP leader meant they were only being informed of developments from his perspective. The British Embassy in Lisbon, as discussed in the previous chapter, did not have close relations with Spínola and had yet to establish any contact with the AFM. This meant that Mozambique was not only the Labour Government’s principal concern because of its significance for the British national interest, but because its relationship with Soares made his priorities vicariously its own. The Labour Government did not consistently follow developments in Portugal and the overseas territories, being distracted by its domestic concerns and the Cyprus crisis. Therefore, the Labour Government’s policy toward Lusophone Africa was made with an inadequate understanding of domestic politics in Lisbon. Although continuing stubbornly to insist on self-determination, Spínola’s political position was threatened by the radical left of the AFM, who supported decolonisation, and was fatally weakened by developments after the resignation of his Prime Minister, Palma Carlos. The Labour Government was aware that divisions within the government in Lisbon affected negotiations on the overseas territories

⁴²² Minute by Goodison on Acland to Goodison, 1 July 1974, FCO 9/2058.

⁴²³ Reith to Mound, 12 June 1974, FCO 9/2064.

but this led to unequivocal support for Soares rather than following developments in Portugal more closely and changing policy accordingly.

The Labour Government's reliance on Soares meant it was unable to assess the significance of diplomacy conducted by Spínola in Lusophone Africa, from which the Portuguese Foreign Minister was excluded. The British embassies and consulates in the region reported Spínola's visit to Guinea-Bissau to the FCO; but its significance was inadequately understood and, consequently, the Cabinet Office was not briefed.⁴²⁴ Talks held by Spínola with President Senghor of Senegal (which resolved the differences between the Portuguese and the PAIGC) were assessed at departmental level within the FCO but were not considered worthy of consideration by the Labour Government itself.⁴²⁵ This was also the case with the complicated and still rather murky episode which saw Mobutu negotiating with Spínola and all three leading factions in Angola in an attempt to engineer the detachment of the oil-rich enclave of Cabinda.⁴²⁶

The most important failure by the Labour Government concerned Angola. Although Britain had significant economic interests in Angola, including ownership of the Benguela railway, it did not affect the national interest in the same way as Mozambique.⁴²⁷ Dispatches from Luanda, unlike Duncan's reporting from Mozambique, concluded that "there had been no significant developments in Angola."⁴²⁸ A report by the Central and Southern African Department of the FCO written after the coup d'état concluded that Angolan independence was not likely to be achieved soon.⁴²⁹ However, as Maxwell argues, "Angola was always close to the centre of the struggle between General Spínola and the Armed Forces Movement during the first turbulent months following the Lisbon coup."⁴³⁰ Spínola's aim of self-determination was most likely to be realized in Angola which had the largest white settler population and the closest economic ties to Portugal. There was also no single liberation movement which could claim support across the whole country. This meant Spínola

⁴²⁴ Dunnett to Dawbarn, 'Guinea-Bissau', 26 July 1974.

⁴²⁵ Goodison to Wiggin, 'Portugal and Decolonisation', 9 July 1974, FCO 9/2055. MacQueen, The Decolonisation of Portuguese Africa, pp.69-70.

⁴²⁶ Callaghan to FCO, 7 February 1975, FCO 9/2269. MacQueen, The Decolonisation of Portuguese Africa, pp. 166- 168.

⁴²⁷ The Central and Southern African Department noted that: "UK citizens in Angola number fewer than 400. UK exports to Angola in 1972 were about £18m and imports were £4m:our investments there are now estimated to exceed £50m." 'Background Note for Lord Goronwy-Roberts, Foreign Affairs Debate', 5 November 1974, FCO 9/2065.

⁴²⁸ Foster, UK delegation, 'Anglo/US talk on Africa held at the Department of State', 14-15 February 1974, FCO 9/2063.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁰ Maxwell, The Making of Portuguese Democracy, p.100.

“attempted to retain personal control of the Angolan negotiations.”⁴³¹ In contrast many in the AFM shared ideological sympathy with the MPLA in Angola and were bent on achieving decolonisation. The Labour Government was unaware of the significance of these negotiations and that their failure would weaken Spínola’s political position in Lisbon and lead to his abandoning self-determination.

There was a surprising lack of concern from the Labour Government at the wider strategic implications of developments in Angola since it was aware of the potential for expansion of communist influence in the region. The building of the Soviet blue-water navy during the 1970s and the decline of US power after the Vietnam War meant that “if the MPLA were to become the government or a dominant voice in it, it would result in Russian influence extending over Africa’s Atlantic seaboard.”⁴³² This had become of increased strategic importance when oil supertankers began travelling around the Cape of Good Hope instead of through the Suez Canal. During 1975 the US, Soviet and Chinese clandestine intervention in Angola would end Britain’s position as the most influential power in the region. Whilst this threat was recognised by the MOD and intelligence services, the Labour Government itself did not give a great deal of attention to Angola, believing erroneously that Portugal would be able to maintain control in the territory for a number of years. Geraint Hughes notes that “Angola barely figured in Wilson and Callaghan’s discussions with Portugal’s new leaders, and there is no evidence to suggest any British partiality towards any of the warring Angolan factions.”⁴³³

The negotiations on Portuguese decolonisation that followed Spínola’s announcement did not involve the British Government.⁴³⁴ The resignation of Spínola on 30 September meant that the AFM effectively became the dominant power in Lisbon. The Labour Government consequently became more concerned with events in Portugal than in Lusophone Africa.⁴³⁵ The progress of negotiations in the overseas territories was now reported to the British through its embassies and consulates, rather than through discussions with Soares who was now increasingly isolated in Lisbon. The Labour Government also became distracted by the General Election in October and the deepening domestic economic crisis. It played no role in

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*

⁴³² Curtis to Crosland, 30 May 1974, FCO 9/2053.

⁴³³ Geraint Hughes, ‘Soldiers of Misfortune: the Angolan Civil War, The British Mercenary Intervention, and UK Policy towards Southern Africa, 1975–6’, *The International History Review* 36:3 (2014), pp.499.

⁴³⁴ The Alvor Agreement signed on 15 January set 11 November as the date for Angolan independence. These negotiations are discussed in Maxwell, *The Making of Portuguese Democracy*, pp.102-103.

⁴³⁵ Stratton (Kinshasa) to Lisbon, 11 December 1974, FCO 31/1694.

the crises in Angola and East Timor which prefigured independence, and only concern with evacuating British civilians from Angola, after its descent into anarchy and civil war, was considered by the Labour leadership during 1975.⁴³⁶

The Labour Government did not play a significant role in the issue of Portugal's overseas territories in Asia. The FCO reported on Macau and East Timor, but it worked to ensure that Britain maintained a low diplomatic profile. There was concern that developments in Macau might have repercussions for Hong Kong, thereby disturbing the fragile relationship with China that had only recently been restored after the Cultural Revolution. An FCO official concluded that "The Chinese will presumably ensure that there is no serious proposal of self-determination for Macau. (We too, with Hong Kong in mind, would prefer to discourage any such proposal – although not in public)."⁴³⁷ The Labour Government also sought to avoid becoming embroiled in the crisis that unfolded in East Timor after the coup d'état in Lisbon. An FCO official concluded that "There is no British interest in the region. There are no British subjects in Timor."⁴³⁸ The FCO, although briefed on Australian policy, did not discuss the issue with either the United States or Indonesia. It is illustrative that while Britain had no diplomatic representation in either Guinea Bissau or East Timor, in the case of the former, the British played an arguably greater role than any other state in diplomatic efforts to bring independence; in the latter, despite mounting evidence of Indonesia's impending annexation and the likely humanitarian catastrophe that would follow, British policy was publicly to deny any knowledge that what it knew was about to happen would happen.⁴³⁹

Britain and Portuguese Decolonisation

The resolve to encourage negotiations between the Portuguese and the national liberation movements in Lusophone Africa existed prior to the election of a Labour government in February 1974. This was seen as a means to put pressure on the Rhodesian government into making the compromises that might lead to a constitutional settlement, a

⁴³⁶ Wilson to Costa Gomes, 19 September 1975, PREM 16/1054.

⁴³⁷ Background Note for Lord Goronwy-Roberts, Foreign Affairs Debate, 5 November 1974, FCO 9/2065.

⁴³⁸ Squire to Male, 'Portuguese Timor, 22 August 1975, FCO 9/2284.

⁴³⁹ During Indonesia's brutal invasion of East Timor in October 1975 two British journalists were burnt to death. The FCO argued against any response (in a secret document for "UK eyes only"), noting "the fact that they cannot produce the bodies", and that "since we, in fact, know what happened to the newsmen it is pointless to go on demanding information from the Indonesians which they cannot or are unwilling to provide." Ford to FCO, 'Journalists Killed in Timor', 24 October 1975, FCO 9/2284.

development crucial to maintaining Britain's influence in the region. The election of a Labour government was essential because the close relationship between certain left-wing MPs and nationalists in southern Africa made its success more likely. The Lisbon coup d'état transformed the prospects of a change of status to Portugal's overseas territories. In London policy debate shifted in favour of those who wanted Britain to sponsor a diplomatic initiative in southern Africa and against those who had sought to maintain close ties with Portugal. However, rather than seizing the diplomatic initiative in southern Africa, the Labour Government remained cautious in its approach. It judged that the best means to achieve its objectives both in southern Africa and in Portugal was through unequivocal support for Mario Soares in his role as Foreign Minister and as leader of the Socialist Party.

Although this approach achieved some successes immediately after the coup d'état, it was an unimaginative response to changed circumstances and to the opportunities that now existed for advancing Britain's interests. The Labour Government could have insisted on Portugal's enforcement of sanctions against Rhodesia or given support to the nationalist movements in southern Africa, as its manifesto had promised. The decision to bind Britain so closely to the fortunes of one political movement in Lisbon also potentially endangered the national interest. The Labour Government's policy was not based on an analysis of the long-term significance of Portuguese decolonisation on southern Africa. While the regional departments of the FCO demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of how the coup d'état would affect politics in the region and how this could be used to Britain's advantage, the Labour Government pursued existing policy primarily concerned with achieving a constitutional settlement in Rhodesia, failing to realise the likely implications of Lusophone decolonisation on southern Africa. It was taken completely by surprise by Spínola's announcement that the colonies would be granted immediate independence and played no part in subsequent negotiations.

The Labour Government's approach to the status of the overseas territories was also based on a premise concerning domestic politics in Lisbon which proved incorrect. It assumed, as discussed in the previous chapter, that influential groups sought a return to authoritarian government and the retention of an empire. Inadequate analysis by the British Embassy in Lisbon and the influence on decision making by Soares through his close relationship with the Labour leadership meant that the reasons for Spínola's precarious political position and the nature and continued role of the AFM were not understood. The Labour Government concluded that Spínola's insistence on self-determination, which

prevented Soares' diplomacy making progress, would best be overcome by persuasion rather than an altercation, fearing Spinola's government might be replaced by another right-wing authoritarian regime. The Labour Government failed to realise that the precarious nature of Spinola's domestic political position and the profound changes brought by the Carnation Revolution meant that a rapid withdrawal from its colonies rather than resistance to decolonisation was the likeliest outcome.

The Labour Government's strategy of supporting Soares also meant that it did not establish relations with the national liberation movements in Portugal's overseas territories, despite its manifesto commitment to do so and the existence of close ties with some within the Labour Party. The Labour Government was sceptical that, with the exception of the PAIGC, each had sufficient legitimacy to establish a government without civil war. That the nationalist groups were Marxist did not appear to be a significant factor in British calculations. Instead the need to compel the national liberation movements to make concessions in order to facilitate Soares' diplomacy was the dominant factor. However, these groups would clearly dominate Angola and Mozambique once decolonisation had taken place; in order to uphold British interests, relations with these groups would be essential. The Labour Government failed to establish contact at a point when they could have had great influence and attained the trust of the movement's leadership; by failing to do so it now made relations more difficult in the future. It was not until after the Lusaka Accords that the Labour Government suddenly realised that in order to influence policy toward Rhodesia and protect its interests in Mozambique Britain's relations with Frelimo would be critical. Despite optimism immediately after the coup d'état in Lisbon that independence for Mozambique would lead to an enforcement of sanctions against the new regime, this was not to be the case.

The Labour Government's approach to relations with Frelimo also illustrates that it was principally concerned with the overseas territories as a collective entity, whose status would be resolved in Lisbon, rather than understanding the circumstances within each territory and their impact on British interests. This appears to demonstrate Norrie MacQueen's contention that the problem of ending Portugal's African Wars was seen by western states as one even when each conflict differed significantly.⁴⁴⁰ The Labour Government's policy was also influenced by the British experience where a common

⁴⁴⁰ MacQueen, The Decolonisation of Portuguese Africa, pp.52-53.

approach to decolonisation was applied to most of their sub-Saharan colonies in the late 1950s and early 1960s.⁴⁴¹ The circumstances in Portugal's case were very different with only a basic level of social and economic development in each colony and political convulsions in the metropole while negotiations took place. The British consulates, where present, often had an excellent appreciation of the nature of developments in their territory - more so than the British Embassy in Lisbon - but to a large extent their advice was overlooked in London. The Labour Government did not challenge the assumptions of the Portuguese approach to decolonisation and did not call for a different approach in each territory.

These failures in the Labour Government's approach to the overseas territories were in part a result of the process by which British foreign policy was made. To a large extent policy was developed by Callaghan after consultation with Soares with very little intervention either by Wilson or the Cabinet. This partly reflects partisan ties between Callaghan and Soares, but also demonstrates continued concern with Portuguese sensibilities. As Joan Lestor observed "The Government was very keen not to make the Portuguese position more difficult, or affect Dr Soares' own position in government."⁴⁴² However, Callaghan was not able to give his attention to the issue of the Portuguese overseas territories consistently, being distracted by the Cyprus crisis, the renegotiation of Britain's entry into Europe and the domestic political weakness of the Labour minority government. This allowed certain left-wing members of the Labour Party to play a significant role in policy making, promoting an approach (particularly towards the liberation movements) which was independent of the Labour leadership.

Two departments within the FCO, although at times sidelined and not directly involved in decision making, also sought to influence policy toward the Portuguese overseas territories. The African department of the FCO, through its embassies in the frontline Commonwealth states and the consulates in Angola and Mozambique, sought to promote policies in London that would advance British interests in its region. The Southern European Department, which had some influence over the consulates, particularly with regard to personnel, competed to influence policy promoting issues relating to Anglo-Portuguese relations. However, because Callaghan gave priority to relations with the Portuguese, despite

⁴⁴¹ Austin, 'The Transfer of Power', pp. 3-33.

⁴⁴² 'Record of Conversation between the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and a delegation from the Anti-Apartheid Movement held at the FCO', 23 July 1974, FCO 9/2064.

the knowledge and expertise of embassies in southern Africa, the Lisbon Embassy played the leading role in formulating British policy. There were no formal organisational arrangements, such as a specialist committee, in which the different participants in British policy-making could influence strategy and consider the longer-term implications of developments. Therefore, the Labour Government's policy-making toward the overseas territories was not an aggregate of competing interest groups but was dominated by the Foreign Secretary unless his diversion by other issues meant otherwise.

The Labour Government's approach to the issue of Portugal's overseas territories increases our understanding of the nature of Britain's relationship with Africa during the 1970s. Marxist historians posit that this relationship was primarily motivated by the need to protect British economic interests.⁴⁴³ However, while there was lobbying of government by businesses that had sizeable economic assets in Angola and Mozambique, the Labour Government was principally concerned with constitutional change in southern Africa.⁴⁴⁴ Historians influenced by dependency theory argue that the primary motive for the policy of ending racist regimes in southern Africa was not principle but the belief that they were no longer sustainable, and that promoting change would ensure that moderate Black Nationalist groups achieved power, allowing existing economic relations with Britain to continue. Carol Thompson argues that in southern Africa "the British came to understand that their interests could only be maintained if political hegemony were relinquished."⁴⁴⁵ This argument is difficult either to sustain or disregard using the official archives. There is no record of this policy but it would be unlikely to be recorded in official minutes. There are examples of policy being influenced by business interests but this is a principal aim of the diplomatic service of any capitalist state and cannot be seen as evidence of a neo-imperial project. The argument that British policy was primarily motivated by business interests requires an acceptance of dependency theory prior to the interpretation of the official record. It also appears unlikely that those on the left of the Labour Party engaged with policy toward southern Africa would have accepted a policy motivated primarily by economic interests.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴³ For a critique of Britain's role in southern Africa see David Birmingham, Frontline Nationalism in Angola and Mozambique (London: James Currey, 1992).

⁴⁴⁴ The board of the British-owned Benguela Railway lobbied the FCO to seek assurances from the new regime in Lisbon of their continued ownership. Ure to Baker, 'Benguela Railway', 21 May 1974, FCO 9/2053.

⁴⁴⁵ Thompson, Challenge to Imperialism, p. 144.

⁴⁴⁶ The Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, David Ennals (for example), argued passionately that trade with South Africa should cease immediately irrespective of Britain's economic difficulties. 'Record of Conversation between the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and

The relationship with the United States was not a significant factor in shaping British policy toward southern Africa during 1974.⁴⁴⁷ There was a sharing of information and general discussions between the FCO and the State Department on sub-Saharan Africa and consultations took place prior to the recognition of the former Portuguese overseas territories as independent countries.⁴⁴⁸ The African Departments of the US State Department acknowledged that Britain would take the lead in diplomacy toward Rhodesia and Mozambique, and also relations with the Commonwealth states in Africa.⁴⁴⁹ Britain informed the United States of its role in negotiations on southern Africa, but there was no coordination of policy with the United States during this period. The approach taken by the Labour Government toward southern Africa demonstrated an acceptance that particular political circumstances indigenous to each state had led to the liberation movement's success, rather than the involvement of the Soviet Union. Britain was more concerned with establishing stable sovereign states rather than the ideological allegiance of the liberation movements. It was aware through its defence and intelligence community that the United States was becoming increasingly concerned with the Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean and of the possibility that a competition for influence in southern Africa between the superpowers might occur once the Portuguese withdrew from Angola and Mozambique. However, the Labour Government was narrowly interested in how developments in each state affected British interests and was surprisingly unconcerned about the possibility of Cold War rivalry in the region. This reflects the fact that Britain had been the principal power in the region, whilst the United States' concern primarily related to its bipolar confrontation with the Soviet Union.⁴⁵⁰

The Labour Government's approach to the Portuguese overseas territories reveals the critical importance of international organisations in shaping British foreign policy. This was not merely because of their significance in conducting diplomacy; indeed in many ways the FCO was sceptical of the effectiveness of each organisation. Maintaining the reputation of Britain within the UN, EEC and Commonwealth was now considered a national interest.⁴⁵¹ This was even the case with those organisations of which Britain was not a member. Internal

Commonwealth Affairs and a delegation from the Anti-Apartheid Movement held at the FCO', 23 July 1974, FCO 9/2064.

⁴⁴⁷ Pedro Aires Oliveira argues that the distraction of Watergate prevented Anglo-American cooperation on Lusophone Africa during this period. Oliveira, *Os Despojos da Alianca*, p. 415.

⁴⁴⁸ Foster to Campbell, 'Ambassador Eason, US Assistant Secretary for Africa', 3 June 1974, FCO 9/2053.

⁴⁴⁹ Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, p.191.

⁴⁵⁰ Foster to Campbell, 'Ambassador Eason, US Assistant Secretary for Africa', 3 June 1974, FCO 9/2053.

⁴⁵¹ Young, *Britain and the World*, pp. 143-161.

documents in the FCO were dismissive of the Organisation of African Unity but it still went to some lengths to influence the conference in Tanzania. Britain no longer had the power to directly shape developments in southern Africa, but the appearance of doing so in international organisations was a way of maintaining perceptions of its role as an independent power. Within the Commonwealth, the Labour Government had to give the appearance of seeking a settlement of the Rhodesian question and a failure to do so would lead to its isolation.

The British role in encouraging decolonisation was a turning point in its influence on the continent. In order to maintain its lead role in Africa, the Labour Government encouraged political change in Portugal's overseas territories, but once achieved it undermined British influence in the region. The United States and Commonwealth States, particularly Zambia and Tanzania, were now to pursue policy in the region independently of Britain. This was the dilemma of a declining power when faced with irreversible political change. The United States, in contrast, demonstrated an ability to pursue its interests whatever the consequences for its reputation in the region, even if this meant supporting tribal movements in Angola and Mozambique, and cooperating with the South African regime.⁴⁵²

⁴⁵² Jussi Hanhimäki, The Rise and Fall of Détente: American Foreign Policy and the Transformation of the Cold War (Washington: Potomac Books, 2013), p.92.

Chapter IV –

The First Crisis: Portugal's lurch to the left (September 30th, 1974 – April 25th, 1975)

The granting of independence to Portugal's overseas territories meant the principal aim of the Labour Government in its relations with Lisbon had been achieved. Until the spring of 1975, Portugal became a less prominent issue for the Labour Government and it was not considered at cabinet level during this period; Britain remained committed to encouraging a successful transition to democracy in Portugal but the impetus for this policy now came from within the FCO. However, this was to change during the following year. The prominent position the radical left had achieved in Lisbon after President Spínola's resignation emboldened the Portuguese Communist Party and Marxist military officers to assert their influence. This led to a series of political crises culminating in an attempted right-wing coup d'état in March. Its failure allowed the radical left to further strengthen its position in government, and with rumours that proposed elections in April were to be cancelled, a left-wing revolution now appeared likely in Portugal. The political instability precipitated outside intervention triggering an international crisis between East and West which was to continue until the formation of a moderate government in the autumn. These developments meant that once again Portugal had become a significant foreign policy issue for the Labour Government, which was now concerned at the implications for détente with the Soviet Union and Britain's relations with the United States. This chapter will consider the British response to developments in Portugal from the resignation of President Spínola on the 30th September, 1974 until the constituent assembly elections of 25th April, 1975.

The main argument of this chapter concerns the response of Britain and the United States to events in Portugal. Whilst the Ford Administration argued that the leftward direction of politics was principally a result of a strategy by the Soviet Union to undermine NATO's southern flank, the Labour Government insisted that indigenous factors explained developments, and this suggests that their understanding of the Cold War differed during this

period.⁴⁵³ However, close cooperation between officials within their diplomatic and security services on Portugal demonstrate that a close relationship between Washington and London continued nonetheless. The shared conviction of the Labour Government and its Western European partners that parliamentary democracy would succeed in Portugal also suggests that a nascent concept of ‘Europe’ as a region with common political ideals now influenced foreign policy making.⁴⁵⁴ The chapter also demonstrates that although it continued to play a leading diplomatic role in Portugal, Britain’s decline as a power and the economic and political crises the Labour Government faced after the October 1974 election meant it lacked the means to shape events in Lisbon.

There was no significant change in the relationship between Britain and Portugal in the immediate aftermath of Spínola’s resignation. The Labour Government’s strategy since the coup d’état had been to maintain a formal rather than close relationship with President Spínola, whilst pursuing its objectives through its relationship with the Portuguese Foreign Minister, Soares, with whom it shared partisan affiliation. Because Soares retained his position in government and remained a leading political figure in Lisbon after Spínola’s resignation, there was no immediate need for the Labour Government to change its approach to Portugal. Although there was concern in London at the appointment of a radical left-wing government, the conclusion was reached that any attempt to reverse the situation was likely to be counterproductive and that the best course was to await the proposed elections in April which would bring a successful transition to parliamentary democracy. The exception was the decision to raise concern at the PCP’s activity in Lisbon with the Soviet leadership during the Moscow visit. Meanwhile an internal enquiry (conducted by the Southern European Department) into the failure of the British Embassy in Lisbon to predict any of the political crises in Portugal that year concluded that it must establish contacts across the political spectrum. The Embassy began a dialogue with the Armed Forces Movement and sought to establish correct relations with the new President. James Callaghan’s visit to Lisbon in February 1975 aimed to strengthen relations with the Portuguese government.

The considered response of the Labour Government to the appointment of a radical left-wing government in Lisbon contrasted with that of the United States, which expressed dismay at recent events. The United States’ previous policy of close relations with President

⁴⁵³ For an account of the Southern Flank Crisis see Ennio Di Nolfo ‘The Cold War and the transformation of the Mediterranean’, Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, ed., *Cambridge History of the Cold War - Volume II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp.238-257.

⁴⁵⁴ Stewart, *Life and Labour*, p.215

Spinola was now obsolete, and without influence amongst any of the leading emerging political movements in Lisbon it feared that developments were leading inexorably to the establishment of a communist government in Portugal.⁴⁵⁵ Kissinger predicted that Soviet intervention would mean that “the PCP will have massive funds available and that the campaigns for Communist candidates... will be highly sophisticated and well-financed.”⁴⁵⁶ The administration’s response was to establish a new diplomatic mission to Lisbon with a mandate to reverse the course of recent events. The release of recent US archival record also shows that planning for a covert operation in Lisbon now began, which was designed to “maintain a stable government in Portugal, which will permit continued US use of the Azores Base, and honor Portugal’s membership in NATO.”⁴⁵⁷ However, whilst there was a clear difference of analysis between Washington and the Labour Government in Britain, in practice their approach to diplomatic relations with Lisbon did not diverge greatly. The new US Ambassador in Lisbon, Frank C. Carlucci III, whose appointment was meant to signal a shift in US strategy, was a maverick figure who, alongside supporters in the State Department and Congress, reached the independent conclusion that support for Soares and engagement with the new government in Lisbon was the best means to achieve US objectives.⁴⁵⁸ He later recalled: “I gradually became convinced that there were strong forces pushing against the trend ... Portugal was not adjacent to the communist bloc. The ties to the West and NATO were strong. The Church was influential... The people were by and large conservative and they were interested in protecting their economic interests. I thought the electoral process could serve to undermine the communist control of the country.”⁴⁵⁹ However, despite the confusion in US policy, it was to have a far greater influence in Lisbon than other western states principally as a result of its ability to support diplomatic initiatives with sizeable economic aid.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁵ Memorandum from Kissinger to President Ford, ‘Assessment of Events in Portugal’, 30 September 1974, Ford Library, National Security Adviser, Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 10, Portugal. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 137).

⁴⁵⁶ Memorandum Prepared for the 40 Committee, ‘Plans for Political Operations in Portugal’, Washington, 27 September, 1974, National Security Council Files, Ford Intelligence Files, Portugal. The 40 Committee was the National Security covert action approval group. See, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, pp. XXXV-XL. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 136).

⁴⁵⁷ Memorandum Prepared for the 40 Committee, ‘Plans for Political Operations in Portugal’, Washington, 27 September, 1974, National Security Council Files, Ford Intelligence Files, Portugal. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 136).

⁴⁵⁸ Schneidman, Engaging Africa, pp.159-162.

⁴⁵⁹ Interview with Frank C. Carlucci III. The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, p.3.

⁴⁶⁰ Gomes & Moreira de Sa, Carlucci vs Kissinger, pp. 121-122. Mario Del Pero, ‘Which Chile, Allende?’, p.632.

The most radical phase of the Portuguese Revolution began in February 1975 and was to continue until the following autumn. The remaining moderate figures in the hierarchy of the Portuguese armed forces were sidelined by their Marxist colleagues, who then adopted a programme of economic nationalisation. This culminated in the political crisis of the following March when the failure of an attempted right-wing coup d'état allowed an entrenchment in the position of the radical left in Lisbon; further legislation on a more radical economic programme was proposed and rumours circulated that communist ministers were to be appointed to senior positions. This confirmed the concern of Kissinger about the direction of events in Portugal. He sought once again to assume direct control over US policy, and to make clear to the Portuguese government in Lisbon that recent developments were considered unacceptable by Washington. The NATO allies, including the Labour Government, began to coordinate their diplomatic response in Lisbon. However, the somewhat surprising decision by the provisional government to allow proposed elections to take place in April largely assuaged their concern and instilled confidence that the radical left-wing direction of events in Lisbon could be reversed and a stable parliamentary democracy established in Portugal.

Supporting the 'Portuguese Kerensky'

The resignation of President Spínola on October 31st brought not only the removal of his followers but the isolation of political moderates throughout Portugal. The military, through the revolutionary council of the Armed Forces Movement (referred to as the AFM Council), now played an active role in political affairs, whilst civilian politicians became increasingly marginalised, with the notable exception of the PCP with whom the AFM shared an ideological affinity. This remained the case even after the elections in April 1975 which brought the Portuguese Socialist Party to prominence. The AFM was divided between different factions whose exact nature and strength confused contemporary observers and has since been the subject of debate amongst historians.⁴⁶¹ Paul Christopher Manuel refers to these differences as "ideological cleavages" and distinguishes between "AFM-radicals," led by the Prime Minister Vasco Gonçalves, Costa Martins and Rosa Coutinho, who believed themselves to be a revolutionary vanguard for socialism in Portugal, "AFM-populists," headed by Otelo, Varela Gomes and Dinis Almeida, who shared the same aims as the above

⁴⁶¹ Manuel, The Uncertain Outcome, p.71.

but distrusted the influence of the communist party, and the “AFM-moderates,” led by Melo Antunes and Vitor Alves, who sought to establish democratic institutions in Portugal.⁴⁶² Within the military council the “AFM-radicals,” emboldened by their successful resistance to President Spínola’s ‘silent majority’, rose to prominence and dominated the next phase of the Portuguese Revolution until their demise in the autumn of 1975.

The sudden resignation of President Spínola and the shift towards the left that followed in Lisbon came as profound shock to the Ford administration. The cohesion of the western alliance appeared under threat now that “For the first time since 1949 communists were participating in the government of a NATO country.”⁴⁶³ It made redundant the US policy pursued by successive administrations after Kennedy to maintain close personal relations with the Portuguese President so as to protect its strategic interests.⁴⁶⁴ The administration’s alarm at President Spínola’s resignation was also a result of the sense of crisis that permeated Washington during the Watergate scandal, with an increasingly strained Kissinger now taking the lead on foreign affairs. The policy response towards Portugal was immediate. It was at this point Kissinger (believing “Our Portuguese Embassy is a disaster”⁴⁶⁵) removed Ambassador Nash Scott from his position and appointed a new team of Portuguese experts and experienced State Department operatives, led by the capable Carlucci. Their mission, as Kenneth Maxwell notes, was unambiguous: “It was to get the communists out of the government and keep them out.”⁴⁶⁶ This objective was articulated forcefully to a Portuguese delegation led by President Costa Gomes and Soares in an infamous meeting with Kissinger in Washington, when the US Secretary of State accused the Portuguese Foreign Minister of being a ‘Kerensky’ figure whose actions would presage a communist revolution.⁴⁶⁷

The Labour Government also shared the US administration’s concern at developments in Portugal. A Joint Intelligence Committee report on recent events was entitled “Portugal:

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, p.72.

⁴⁶³ Maxwell, *The Making of Portuguese Democracy*, p.95.

⁴⁶⁴ Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, pp. 59-172.

⁴⁶⁵ Memorandum of Conversation between Kissinger and Ford, 18 October, 1974, Ford Library, National Security Adviser, Memoranda of Conversation, Box 6. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 139).

⁴⁶⁶ Maxwell, *The Making of Portuguese Democracy*, p.95.

⁴⁶⁷ Interview with Frank C. Carlucci III. The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, p.3.

Will it go Communist?”⁴⁶⁸ The British Embassy in Lisbon, which had viewed positively Spinola’s attempt to restore social discipline in Portugal and assert his political authority, was taken aback by developments and alarmed at the spread of violence and disorder. The British Ambassador observed that “Portugal came close to civil war,” and that “there is a large question mark over the future, and the outlook is pessimistic.”⁴⁶⁹ The British Embassy for the first time expressed real concern at the possible effect of developments in Portugal on UK interests. The Ambassador observed a noticeable “thinning out of the wealthier and more mobile expatriate community here.”⁴⁷⁰

However, although concerned at the direction of events in Lisbon, in contrast to the Ford administration the Labour Government did not immediately alter its approach to relations with Portugal. Because the Labour Government had maintained formal rather than close ties with the Portuguese President whilst pursuing its objectives through partisan links with Soares, the departure of Spinola did not require the strategic volte-face forced on the United States. Moreover, Portugal’s importance to Britain as a NATO ally was not essential to its immediate national interest as it was to the United States, whose bases on the Azores Islands were critical to its role in the alliance. The Labour Government’s concern was the impact of Portugal on the overall cohesion of the NATO alliance and it consequently feared a US overreaction to developments in Lisbon as much as the events themselves. The lack of a decisive response by the Labour Government to events in Portugal can also be explained by the distraction of the campaign for the British General Election between the 30th September and the election of the 9th October, and thereafter governing a country with serious economic difficulties whilst only having a Commons majority of three.⁴⁷¹ Thus while the Cabinet Secretary Sir John Killick (in a handwritten memo on Trench’s despatch concerning the new government in Lisbon) warned that “The clear objective in Portugal is to make ‘socialism’ irreversible”, there is no evidence that Wilson or Callaghan either addressed these concerns or were even aware of them during their first week in government after the General Election.⁴⁷²

⁴⁶⁸ Thomas to FCO, ‘Portugal: Discussions with Messrs Sonnenfeld and Hartmann’, 29 October 1974, FCO 9/2060.

⁴⁶⁹ Trench to FCO, ‘The Fall of Spinola’, 2 October 1974, FCO 9/2059.

⁴⁷⁰ Ure to Thomas, ‘Restoring Confidence since 28th September’, 23 October 1974, FCO 9/2059.

⁴⁷¹ Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, p.623.

⁴⁷² Handwritten minute by Sir John Killick on Trench to FCO, ‘The Fall of Spinola’, 9 October 1974, FCO 9/2059.

The Labour Government certainly did not share Kissinger's view that there was a danger of Soares playing a 'Kerensky' role in the Portuguese Revolution, and continued to see his success and that of the Portuguese Socialist Party as crucial to any democratic outcome in Portugal. Whilst Soares received public admonishment in Washington after Spinola's resignation, the British Embassy in contrast immediately sought his counsel. However, the nature of the relationship between the Labour Government and Soares did change. A shared interest in ending Portugal's diplomatic isolation after the coup d'état and establishing contact with the national liberation movements in Africa brought regular and close cooperation. Yet, while there continued to be a strong relationship based on shared political values and personal respect between Callaghan, Wilson and Soares, this was no longer based on the immediate national interest as it had been before. Indeed, each party was now increasingly burdened by domestic crises. Soares was focused on the challenges to his party rather than on his role as Portuguese Foreign Minister. Consequently Soares' visits to London, which had been a regular occurrence during the months immediately after the coup d'état, became less frequent particularly now that talks on the future of Portugal's overseas territories, which had reached an advanced stage, were conducted by the AFM rather than by civilian politicians. One consequence of the changing relationship was that Callaghan did not raise Portugal as an issue with Kissinger during the months after Spinola's resignation and therefore did not act as an advocate for Soares in Washington, as was the case immediately after the coup d'état.

The review conducted by the Southern European Department into the *modus operandi* of the British Embassy in Lisbon brought changes to its working practices which were to have an important effect on the conduct of British diplomacy in Portugal. The Foreign Office sought to establish why the Embassy had so signally failed to predict the course of political developments in Lisbon during the previous year. An FCO official stated that "I should be particularly interested to know what sort of contacts you have with politicians and pressmen and across what political spectrum."⁴⁷³ The report concluded that the Embassy had too narrow a range of contacts which meant that it misread the balance of political forces in Lisbon and predicted that a counter-revolution rather than a strengthening of the radical Left was the most likely threat to British interests. In the coming months the British Embassy in Lisbon demonstrated greater professionalism in its conduct of diplomacy in Portugal and was more effective in understanding political developments. The Embassy had notable successes

⁴⁷³ Chatterjie to Clark, 'Request Information AFM/other Paramilitary Groups'. 7 October 1974, FCO 9/2047.

in establishing working relations with the new Portuguese President Costa Gomes and the Armed Forces Movement. The extent to which the British Embassy had changed its approach is demonstrated by the visit of the political attaché to the PCP Conference in Lisbon.⁴⁷⁴ The new approach of the British Embassy led to a surprising degree of access, given their ideological differences, to leading politicians in the newly formed provisional government. The improved accuracy of the British Embassy's reporting to the Southern European Department, alongside the infrequency of bilateral contact between the Labour Government and Soares, also increased the influence of the FCO on the development of British policy toward Portugal.

The approach that the British intended to follow for encouraging a successful transition to democracy in Portugal was outlined in a position paper written by the Cabinet Secretary, Sir John Killick, before Spínola's resignation. It underlined the point that "There are a number of areas in which both HMG and appropriate non-governmental organisations can offer advice and assistance to Portugal."⁴⁷⁵ It was not, however, discussed by Cabinet until the resumption of government business in October after the General Election. Spínola's resignation did not lead to changes to the proposals made by Sir John Killick, except to make their success all the more imperative. This was made clear in a detailed report written by the FCO entitled "How can we help make Portugal safe for democracy?"⁴⁷⁶ However, the political climate in Lisbon now made the implementation of its recommendations more difficult and it also had to balance initiatives to encourage democracy whilst maintaining constructive relations with the newly formed government in Lisbon. Sir John Killick, whilst recommending British policy, had warned, "But this has to be approached carefully: the Portuguese resent any hint that they are being patronised."⁴⁷⁷ The consequence of this concern was that the implementation of British policy was left to the Foreign Office and non-governmental actors.

The Foreign Office pursued initiatives immediately after Spínola's resignation. An invitation was sent to Lisbon for a delegation of Portuguese civil servants to observe the planning and organisation of a General Election; this was arranged by Whitehall without the knowledge of the Labour Government. It was seen to be a success, "British methods seemed especially suitable for use in Portugal because they were simple and did not require advanced

⁴⁷⁴ Ralph to Chatterjee, 'Portuguese Communist Party (PCP)', 9 October 1974, FCO 9/2047.

⁴⁷⁵ Thomas to Killick, 'Position Paper', 24 September 1974, FCO 9/2047.

⁴⁷⁶ Thomas to Ure, 'How can we make Portugal safe for Democracy?' 21 October 1974, FCO 9/2078.

⁴⁷⁷ Thomas to Killick, 'Position Paper', 24 September 1974, FCO 9/2047.

or expensive machinery,” and played a role in the formulation of the Portuguese Electoral Law.⁴⁷⁸ This legislation gave the British greater confidence in a democratic outcome in Portugal. An FCO official noted, “The publication of the provisions of the Electoral Law has promoted the idea that the elections will take place next spring and that the ship of state remains on course.”⁴⁷⁹ The Foreign Office also decided the difficult issue of whether covert SAS training of the Portuguese presidential guard should continue after Spínola’s resignation.⁴⁸⁰ There was concern that “The presence of British army personnel in Portugal on a mission of this nature could be misinterpreted.”⁴⁸¹ It was eventually decided that this would usefully signal Britain’s desire to establish constructive relations with the new government in Lisbon, and that ending the programme would have signalled the opposite and thereby “have damaging consequences for Anglo-Portuguese relations.”⁴⁸²

The FCO also gave support to the development of independent political parties in Lisbon. The British Embassy gave immediate help to the Partido do Centro Democrático Social (CDS) after Spínola’s resignation, responding to threats that it might be disbanded.⁴⁸³ The FCO encouraged Conservative Party support for the CDS, believing that such recognition was crucial to the party’s survival. An FCO official argued, “This demonstration of international recognition would help give the left at least some pause if they were considering crushing the CDS out of existence.”⁴⁸⁴ The British Embassy in Lisbon also sought to raise the profile of the party by briefing the British press.⁴⁸⁵ However, the FCO stopped short of giving the impression to the CDS that they were acting on behalf of the Labour government. The British Ambassador in Lisbon after organising a visit to London by the party noted that “We have been careful to avoid encouraging them to think that they could be an official guest.”⁴⁸⁶ The close support by the FCO to a party denied assistance by the Labour Government suggests that the Foreign Office also sought partisan impartiality in the

⁴⁷⁸ Chatterjee to Ralph, ‘Portuguese Electoral Visitors’, 14 October 1974, FCO 9/2078.

⁴⁷⁹ Ure to Thomas, ‘Restoring Confidence since 28th September’, 23 October 1974, FCO 9/2059.

⁴⁸⁰ The decision to continue ‘Operation Park’ was complicated by the covert nature of the programme; informing the new Portuguese President that it would continue would also expose its previous existence. Callaghan to FCO, ‘Training of Presidential Bodyguards’, 8 October 1974, FCO 9/2078.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸² Thomas to FCO, ‘Portugal: Training of Presidential Bodyguards’, 17 October 1974, FCO 9/2078.

⁴⁸³ Trench to FCO, ‘CDS Congress’, 28 January 1975, FCO 9/2276.

⁴⁸⁴ Baker to Clark, ‘The Partido do Centro Democrático Social’, 14 October 1974, FCO 9/2047.

⁴⁸⁵ Ure to Thomas, ‘Embassy Report on CDS’, 29 October 1974, FCO 9/2075.

⁴⁸⁶ Trench to Baker, ‘Visit of CDS Leaders to the UK’, 3 December 1974, FCO 9/2075.

support of democratic movements in other states.⁴⁸⁷ The FCO also tried to establish contact between moderate Portuguese parties and the British Liberal Party (without success).⁴⁸⁸

The Labour Government after Spínola's resignation considered more drastic steps to influence the political process in Lisbon. The first was to establish ties with sympathetic officers within the Portuguese armed forces. The British Embassy had reached the conclusion, during discussions with the JIC based on the wider range of contacts it now had in Lisbon, that "the officer corps were two-thirds middle-of-the -road or Conservative bourgeoisie and one-third more or less left-wing radicals; the latter group inevitably contained most of the thrusting younger and middle-grade officers from whom the direction of the Armed Forces Movement is largely drawn."⁴⁸⁹ The opportunity for the British to establish contact with moderate Portuguese army officers appeared as a consequence of the provisional government's intention to restructure the Portuguese armed forces once its deployment in Africa ceased. The Portuguese government sought to fulfil its commitments to NATO, particularly the replacement of obsolete military equipment which the UN arms embargo had prevented. Britain had the opportunity with its historically close relationship with the Portuguese military to be its principal supplier of equipment and training. The Ministry of Defence began planning how to convince the provisional government to purchase British equipment immediately after the coup d'état, but any approach to Lisbon could not legally be made until the arms embargo had ceased.⁴⁹⁰ The debate in the UN General Assembly on ending the embargo coincided with Spínola's resignation. This not only allowed negotiations on the supply of military equipment to begin but in the course of doing so contact would be established with moderate officers within the Portuguese armed forces possibly leading to political influence in Lisbon. However, although discussed in the FCO, this approach was not pursued by the Labour Government. Indeed the MOD was to play no direct role in the formulation of British policy towards Portugal.⁴⁹¹ The Labour Government appeared uncomfortable with involving the MOD in the political affairs of another state and

⁴⁸⁷ The FCO also tried to establish contact between moderate Portuguese parties and the British Liberal Party (without success). Callaghan to Ure, 'Links between the PPD and the Liberal Party', 26 February 1975, FCO 9/2276.

⁴⁸⁸ Callaghan to Ure, 'Links between the PPD and the Liberal Party', 26 February 1975, FCO 9/2276.

⁴⁸⁹ Morgan to UK Delegation NATO, 'Portugal', 20 February 1975, FCO 9/2288.

⁴⁹⁰ The Labour Government after its election in February also applied a general moratorium on defence equipment sales to certain countries pending a review of its attitude to military exports. Clark to Baker, 'Arms Sales to Portugal', 6 November 1974, FCO 9/2080.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*

the British armed forces themselves were reluctant to become involved in anything besides the sale of arms.

The second means of influencing the political process in Lisbon was for the Labour Government to provide financial assistance. The political crisis in Portugal that followed the coup d'état and the economic disruption which followed decolonisation led to a rapidly growing deficit, eventually leading to intervention by the IMF in 1976. Although the fiscal conservatism of the Caetano regime prevented an immediate crisis after Spínola's resignation it became clear that Portugal would require financial assistance to prevent economic chaos. The fear amongst western states was that the Soviet Union might increase its influence in Lisbon by providing financial aid. A Foreign Office official noted that "The Communists in Portugal are unlikely to have any difficulty in arranging for the Russians to be ready with offers of help"⁴⁹² In the United States, Edward Kennedy was able to mobilise Congressional support for an economic aid package for Portugal during the autumn of 1974.⁴⁹³ The Federal Republic of Germany, Sweden and Norway also gave financial help.⁴⁹⁴ However, although this was the clearest way to exert influence on events in Lisbon, the parlous state of the British economy meant the Labour Government was in no position to offer substantial aid during 1975.

However, the Labour Government did give consideration to how it could provide some financial aid. The FCO asserted that "It would be noticeable, strange and harmful if we, Portugal's oldest ally, were seen to be unwilling to help, more particularly in the light of the links between the Labour Party and the PSP."⁴⁹⁵ However, a bureaucratic struggle between the Overseas Development Ministry and the Treasury resulted. The ODM argued that Portugal did not meet its criteria for assistance, as the OECD did not recognise it as a developing country. The Minister, Judith Hart, although personally sympathetic to the cause, was adamant that the Labour Party's manifesto commitment that overseas aid would go to the poorest states, rather than those that strengthened British interests, excluded Portugal from receiving aid.⁴⁹⁶ Instead she argued that aid should come from joint ventures, or investment, by the British public sector, an approach that had doctrinal appeal to the left of the Labour

⁴⁹² Morgan to Deane, 'Portugal – Technical Assistance', 20 December 1974, FCO 9/2078.

⁴⁹³ Gomes & Moreira de Sa, *Carlucci vs Kissinger*, pp. 109-121.

⁴⁹⁴ Barrett to FCO, 'Technical Assistance for Portugal', 27 January 1975, FCO 9/2035.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

Party.⁴⁹⁷ The Treasury was equally insistent that any economic assistance must not be allocated from its overstretched budget, warning the FCO that ‘it would be premature to regard your line as settled policy.’⁴⁹⁸

The FCO sought to mediate a solution between the two departments before Callaghan’s visit to Lisbon in February 1975. The Secretary of State, on all other occasions dominant on decision making towards Portugal was unable to convince either the Treasury or ODM to compromise, despite pleading “I can’t go to Portugal empty handed.”⁴⁹⁹ British aid promised was therefore limited to technical assistance for Portuguese democracy, such as the training of journalists allocated by the FCO from the budget for the British Council. Although the provisional government agreed to receive such aid there was little enthusiasm in Lisbon for the initiative and in practice it proved ineffectual.⁵⁰⁰ It was only the involvement of the Labour Government in discussions within the European Council on the provision of EEC economic assistance to Portugal at the end of 1975, considered in chapter VI, which enabled it to have the influence in Lisbon that the United States had had as a result of providing aid since 1974.

The initiative for British policy towards Portugal during the period immediately after Spinola’s resignation came from within the Foreign Office and non-governmental actors rather than the Labour Government. The Southern European Department executed a cautious but purposeful approach in encouraging democracy in Portugal; the emphasis was on practical support for institutions where possible rather than high-profile public diplomacy. However, considering the political climate, an FCO official admitted, “it is all pretty small beer and the effects pretty marginal.”⁵⁰¹ There was recognition of the limited importance of outside support during democratic transitions and that internal factors would be the ultimate determinant of the outcome. There was also concern rather than alarm at recent developments and continued confidence that a democratic outcome was the most likely scenario despite evidence to the contrary. This position was consistently held despite the difficulties it made for the Labour Government. The exception to this consensus in the Labour Government was that of the UK Delegation at NATO where strategic concern at the wider effect of events on

⁴⁹⁷ Barrett to FCO, ‘Aid for Portugal’, 31 January 1975, FCO 9/2305.

⁴⁹⁸ Barnett to Hart, ‘Assistance to Portugal’, 10 February 1975, FCO 9/2305.

⁴⁹⁹ Weston to Barrett, ‘Technical Assistance for Portugal’, 28 January 1975, FCO 9/2305.

⁵⁰⁰ Morgan to Deane, ‘Portugal – Technical Assistance’, 20 December 1974, FCO 9/2078.

⁵⁰¹ Thomas to Ure, ‘How can we help to make Portugal safe for Democracy?’, 21 October 1974, FCO 9/2078.

western interests predominated.⁵⁰² Thus, Sir Peter Ramsbotham, the British Ambassador in Washington, was in communication with Kissinger concerning the implications of the appointment of communists to the government in Lisbon for NATO nuclear planning.⁵⁰³

The differing analysis of events in Lisbon by Britain and the United States and their approaches to policy would appear likely to strain the relationship between the two allies, but it was not to prove the case. This was primarily due to the unexpected course set by the new US diplomatic mission in Lisbon which, despite its briefing from Washington, reached the conclusion that Soares and the Portuguese Socialist Party was the only viable option to promote US interests. Thereafter, until Kissinger once again restored his primacy over the formulation of US policy towards Portugal (after the attempted coup d'état on March 11th), the US Embassy in Lisbon was to act with increasing independence of Washington. Thus the diplomatic mission was able to elicit tacit support from elements of the State Department and Congress for its approach, despite the hostility of Kissinger and his advisers.⁵⁰⁴ This meant that US policy in Lisbon was in practice surprisingly close to that of Britain: since neither Embassy was closely supervised by its superiors in London nor Washington they were able to continue close cooperation to promote shared interests.⁵⁰⁵ An FCO official noted that "It is satisfactory that we and the Americans appear now to be viewing prospects for Portugal in much the same way. With the period of over-reaction on the American side receding, it will be easier to handle the bilateral and multi-lateral problems which the Portuguese cause for us and the Americans."⁵⁰⁶ The fact that Callaghan did not take the lead on British policy toward Portugal during this period also prevented their differences from causing any difficulty in relations between Britain and the United States.

The moderation of the US policy towards Portugal during the final months of 1974 was seen by some contemporary observers, and historians since, as a deliberate strategy to allow radical left-wing elements in Lisbon to succeed; the resulting chaos would be an example to other west European states if a similar situation occurred. The so-called 'Vaccination theory' was put forward to explain the relatively tolerant attitude of the US administration to developments in Portugal despite their concerns elsewhere, particularly across the southern Mediterranean, where political instability and the rise of Euro-

⁵⁰² Beaumont to Heyhoe, 'Defence Review Committee', 12 November 1974, FCO 9/2066.

⁵⁰³ Ramsbotham to FCO, 'NPG and Portugal', 5 November 1974, FCO 9/2066.

⁵⁰⁴ Interview with Frank C. Carlucci III. The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, p.4.

⁵⁰⁵ Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, pp.159-162.

⁵⁰⁶ Barrett to FCO, 'US Relations with Portugal', 3 January 1975, FCO 9/2291.

Communism threatened NATO's 'southern flank.'⁵⁰⁷ Carlucci later recalled that many within the administration thought that "it was probably best to write Lisbon off and teach them a lesson in order to protect the rest of the countries in Europe."⁵⁰⁸ The theory posits that the United States' relationship with Western Europe during this period was hegemonic and that it sought to use détente to assert control over what it saw as its sphere of influence in Western Europe. The contrast between Kissinger's defiant interview with Costa Gomes and Soares with the US's subsequent moderate policy in Lisbon is used as supporting evidence for this argument. However, there is no evidence that the Labour Government either supported such a theory, or even that it was aware of its existence, despite both the close personal ties between Callaghan and Kissinger and the relationship between the security and diplomatic communities in London and Washington. The analysis of events in Portugal within the Labour Government did not make links with other cases across the southern Mediterranean. Crucially there was an understanding that Cunhal and the PCP were close allies of the Soviet Union rather than a part of the Eurocommunist movement.⁵⁰⁹

"Democracy, Democracy, Democracy"⁵¹⁰

Whilst alarm amongst the US and West European governments after Spínola's resignation had largely been replaced by optimism that a democratic outcome remained the most likely scenario, a series of events during the first months of 1975 made Portugal's prospects appear bleak. The political crises in Lisbon began with a dispute between the PCP and the PSP over the nature of proposed trade union reform in Portugal. The PSP insisted that the new labour law should allow for the creation of new trade unions, fearing that the previous regime's single union, Unicidade, had become dominated by the Portuguese Communist Party. The PCP argued that the retention of a single union allowed effective collective bargaining for workers' interests. The division between political movements signified a wider struggle between the two movements over the allegiance of the Portuguese working-class.

⁵⁰⁷ Gomes and Moreira de Sa, *Carlucci vs Kissinger*, p. 189-191. Manuel, *The Uncertain Outcome*, pp.78-79. Del Pero, "Which Chile, Allende?", pp. 638-639.

⁵⁰⁸ Interview with Frank C. Carlucci III. The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, p.3.

⁵⁰⁹ Garvey to Killick, 'Portugal and NATO', 29 April 1975, FCO 41/1693.

⁵¹⁰ This supposedly was the "one word" of advice given by the Portuguese Ambassador in London to James Callaghan prior to his visit to Lisbon in February. From a 'confidential interview' to Schneidman given during his research. Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, p.174.

Since the coup d'état the Labour Government had argued that the emergence of independent trade unions was essential for any transition to democracy in Lisbon. The circumstances in Portugal were compared with Eastern Europe after World War Two when the domination of trade unions by the communists was the prelude to a seizure of power.⁵¹¹ A *Financial Times* article argued that "Liberty is really at stake. From a single trade union to a single party the distance could be small."⁵¹² Therefore the Labour Government followed the debate in Lisbon on trade union reform closely; there was regular communication between the Labour attaché in the British Embassy, the overseas labour advisers within the FCO, Tom McNally in the Cabinet and Jack Jones, chair of the International Committee of the TUC.⁵¹³ However, despite its perceived significance it was difficult for the Labour Government to have any influence on the debate in Lisbon; any direct intervention was likely to be condemned as interference by a power which had been willing to trade with the Caetano regime despite its record on workers' rights and might therefore strengthen proponents of a single trade union.⁵¹⁴ The United States also sought to support independent trade unions in Portugal, but its impact was impaired by the widespread perception that a covert CIA programme was in progress similar to that conducted in Chile during 1973.⁵¹⁵

The Labour Government decided to encourage the TUC to use its position within the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.⁵¹⁶ A delegation would be sent to Lisbon to remind the provisional government of the implications for Portugal if its proposed legislation was not compatible with the provisions of the International Labour Organisation.⁵¹⁷ The British government particularly drew attention to the right of labour organisations to affiliate freely with trade unions elsewhere and the fact that it would be impossible for Portugal to ratify key human rights conventions if this were not the case.⁵¹⁸ An ICFTU delegation would also strengthen the PSP, because its contacts in Portugal, an FCO official noted, "have in the

⁵¹¹ Ure to Thomas, 'How can we help to make Portugal safe for democracy?' 23 October 1974, FCO 9/2078.

⁵¹² Jane Bergeral, 'The Crisis facing Portugal's Coalition', *The Financial Times*, January 24th 1974.

⁵¹³ The TUC had provided assistance for independent trade unions in Portugal prior to 1974. TUC Collection, Warwick University archives, MSS.292/946.1.

⁵¹⁴ Ure to DTI, 'Demonstrations following redundancies', 28 November 1974, FCO 9/2077.

⁵¹⁵ An example appeared in a Porto newspaper, headlined "What is Uncle Sam up to? – Americans much interested in Portuguese Trade Unions." Spence to FCO, 'American Interest in Portuguese Trade Unions', 2 December 1974.

⁵¹⁶ Peter Lamb and James Docherty, *Historical Dictionary of Socialism* (Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2006), pp. 170-171.

⁵¹⁷ Foggon to McNally, 'Portugal: Draft Trade Union Law', 6 December 1974, FCO 9/2077.

⁵¹⁸ Foggon to Spence, 'Portugal: Trade Union Law', 26 November 1974, FCO 9/2077.

main been through the Portuguese Socialist Party and Mario Soares in particular.”⁵¹⁹ The Labour Government also encouraged Washington to follow the same approach; the FCO was instructed, “it would seem very worthwhile to discuss all this with your American colleague.”⁵²⁰ Therefore, the Labour Government used non-governmental actors affiliated to international organisations, using international law to legitimise their actions, as a means by which to achieve its foreign policy goals without appearing to intervene in the internal affairs of Portugal.

The PCP was eventually successful in using its influence within the AFM so that the provisional government was instructed to legislate for a single trade union on the 14th January. The dispute had a number of outcomes for politics in Lisbon. The appearance of unity between the PCP and PSP which had been maintained since the coup d'état ended. The AFM was emboldened to see its role as a vanguard for a radical revolution in Lisbon and produced an economic plan calling for the nationalisation of sectors of the Portuguese economy. The PCP encouraged the AFM to go further, urging that the elections scheduled for April, which they feared would expose lack of popular support, be delayed or postponed. After the setback of the trade union question the PSP was determined that these elections would be held. It became increasingly prepared to confront the AFM on the issue and was willing if necessary to withdraw from the provisional government.⁵²¹ During the following months, Soares concentrated much of his time on preparing for the forthcoming elections rather than on his role within the provisional government.

The failure of the PSP to prevent the trade union legislation and the rumours that scheduled elections would be delayed led to increasing concern within the Labour Government. Trench noted, “In the light of this conjuncture of events, and of communist propaganda against the holding of early elections (on the grounds that the electorate is insufficiently aware of the issues yet), right-wing observers in Lisbon are speaking of the possibility of an early communist attempt at a coup.”⁵²² The British Embassy in Lisbon observed the manoeuvrings that would lead to the 11th March coup d'état attempt. Trench further reported that “Recent moves by Spínola towards the Socialists are represented as

⁵¹⁹ ‘TUC/DGB Meeting - Portugal’, 10 December 1974, TUC Collection, Warwick University (MSS.292D/946.1/1).

⁵²⁰ Foggon to Spence, Portugal: Trade Union Law’, 26 November 1974, FCO 9/2077.

⁵²¹ Douglas Porch, *The Portuguese Armed Forces and the Revolution* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), pp. 134-135.

⁵²² Trench to FCO, ‘Portuguese Government Crisis’, 14 January 1975, FCO 9/2269.

being partly a move to guard against this eventuality.”⁵²³ In the United States Kissinger became increasingly concerned that Carlucci’s moderate approach in Portugal was failing to prevent the radical left from achieving power.⁵²⁴ Kissinger publicly made the derogatory comment, “whoever told me Carlucci was a tough guy.”⁵²⁵ The Labour Government now had to respond to the AFM’s economic plan that proposed the nationalisation of sectors of the Portuguese economy. The Lisbon Embassy was lobbied by British industrialists and landowners concerned with developments, including a CBI mission that was “received attentively at a high level.”⁵²⁶ The Lisbon Embassy also had to react to numerous rumours of threats against British citizens; in one such case the ambassador reported that “Reuters are carrying a story about two British managers who are locked into their factory by their employees and subjected to threats in connection with an industrial dispute.”⁵²⁷ These developments led to a review in the FCO of evacuation plans for British citizens in Portugal in the case of a further deterioration.⁵²⁸

The political crisis in Lisbon made it more difficult for the Labour Government to pursue its strategy of maintaining constructive relations with the Portuguese government whilst meanwhile supporting Soares. It was essential that Britain, under pressure to defend economic interests in Portugal, retain its influence within the AFM, but maintaining a dialogue was difficult as there was a climate of paranoia about outside powers interfering in Portugal’s affairs. The British Ambassador observed that “the Provisional Government and important sections of the Armed Forces Movement (AFM) are pathologically frightened of the CIA and any other form of manipulation by the ‘forces of capitalism and reaction.’”⁵²⁹ Therefore, although the Labour Government supported the PSP’s efforts to ensure that elections were held, it became more difficult to raise the issue with the provisional government.

The Labour Government responded to this dilemma by changing the means by which it gave support to the PSP. It made fewer public statements of support for the PSP and bilateral meetings between Callaghan and Soares were held less frequently. This was in part

⁵²³ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁴ Gomes & Moreira de Sa, *Carlucci vs Kissinger*, pp. 110-115.

⁵²⁵ Interview with Frank C. Carlucci III. The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, p.3.

⁵²⁶ Trench to FCO, ‘Portuguese Government Crisis’, 30 January 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁵²⁷ Ure to FCO, ‘Timex’, 22 February 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁵²⁸ Barrett to FCO, ‘Evacuation from Portugal’, 11 February 1975, FCO 9/2298.

⁵²⁹ Ure to Thomas, ‘How can we help to make Portugal safe for democracy?’ 23 October 1974, FCO 9/2078.

because Britain could not match the level of support for the PSP given by other countries, particularly the United States and West Germany. Instead delegations were sent by the Labour Party, through its International Department, to lobby the Portuguese government and to establish direct contact between the memberships of each party. Thus the FCO used Tom McNally to pass on a note to a Labour Party delegation led by Ron Hayward to communicate its views on trade union reform to the government in Lisbon.⁵³⁰ The Labour Party provided financial assistance by fundraising at constituency party meetings, and visiting delegations gave practical advice on election campaigning and moral encouragement.⁵³¹ The extent of its support is difficult to ascertain from the Labour Party archives, but there are records of a series of small donations, most of a few thousand pounds (for example £32,316 was raised through collections at local party associations; these appear to have been delivered in person by visiting Labour MPs).⁵³² The priorities of the Labour Government towards Portugal had not changed; Callaghan and Wilson remained committed to a successful democratic transition and both participated in Socialist International meetings concerned with Portugal during 1975, despite their increasing distraction by domestic issues. Instead a more active role for the Labour Party became an effective way for the Labour Government to achieve its foreign policy objectives.

The Labour Government's relationship with the provisional government was also complicated by the role of the BBC in Portugal. The media institutions which had served the previous regime were taken over by their workers who owed their allegiance to the extreme left. Consequently the Portuguese public came to see the BBC as a crucial source of objective and impartial reporting, making the editorial line of the BBC a factor in Portuguese domestic politics. The provisional government complained to the British Embassy that BBC reporting was biased against the political left in Lisbon. The British Ambassador, whilst explaining to the provisional government's representatives that the British government could not be held responsible for BBC reporting, also encouraged the FCO to approach individual editors and journalists in London to inform them of the impact that their reporting was having in Lisbon. When rumours circulated that it was planning to broadcast a statement from General Galvao De Melo, a representative of President Spínola, an FCO official approached the BBC to inform them "I am sure the BBC will be aware of the political implications of this. But if not,

⁵³⁰ Foggon to Spence, 'Portugal Trade Union Law', 10 December 1974, FCO 9/2077.

⁵³¹ Ron Hayward, 'Appeal for Donations to Help the Portuguese Socialist Party', January 1975, Labour Party Archive, International Department – Box 25.

⁵³² 'Portuguese Fund – Miscellaneous', 15 March 1975, Labour Party Archive, International Department – Box 25.

you might consider pointing this out.”⁵³³ Therefore although no controls were placed on BBC reporting (indeed there were no mechanisms for doing so), its importance in Lisbon as a source of independent information complicated Britain’s relations with the provisional government even if it increased its influence with the public as a whole.

The success of the AFM led to a deterioration of the political climate in which moderate parties in Portugal operated. This raised the issue of whether the Labour Government should support a range of moderate parties in Lisbon, in order to encourage multi-party democracy, or remain committed to the success of the PSP alone as the best means of guaranteeing a transition to democracy in Portugal. The CDS, the most right-wing of the centre parties, had sought the Labour Government’s support after the coup d’état but had been rebuffed. However, it had received financial support and advice from the British Conservative Party at the instigation of leading members who had an interest in Portugal. The CDS was involved in an incident that tested the Labour Government’s strategy of maintaining constructive relations with the AFM and provisional government whilst working to ensure that elections were held. The activities of the CDS had become increasingly disrupted by radical left-wing groups and during a visit by a Conservative delegation to a CDS conference in Porto on the 26th January protesters surrounded and blockaded the building overnight. The incident made front page news in the British press and was raised during a meeting between the Conservative MP, Geoffrey Rippon, and the Portuguese President and Foreign Minister.⁵³⁴ The Conservative Party became so concerned at the treatment of CDS members that Lord Carrington raised the issue privately during a meeting with Callaghan.⁵³⁵ There was no direct reaction from the Labour Government; although encouraging the Liberal and Conservative Parties to support the centre, it continued its strategy of providing direct assistance to the PSP through the Labour Party.

The difficulties the Labour Government had in conducting a coherent foreign policy towards Portugal during the first months of 1975 culminated in the visit of Callaghan to Lisbon during February 1975. The invitation for a state visit by Callaghan to Portugal had been made immediately after the coup d’état in April 1974. The Labour Government was eager for this to happen, believing that it would change perceptions of Britain which had been damaged by its relations with the previous regime, and that it would be a means to bolster the

⁵³³ Ralph to Chatterjie, ‘General Galvao De Melo’, 13 January 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁵³⁴ The MP Geoffrey Rippon narrowly avoided being blockaded in the hall by escaping through a rear exit. Trench to FCO, ‘CDS Congress Oporto’, 26 January 1975, FCO 9/2276.

⁵³⁵ Acland to Goodison, ‘The CDS in Portugal’, 20 March 1975, FCO 9/2276.

position of the PSP. However, it had proved difficult to arrange a suitable date; the Cyprus crisis and General Election had delayed a visit that was due to take place at the end of 1974.⁵³⁶ This meant that Callaghan reached Lisbon when tensions were rising between the provisional government and the western alliance, and when a range of issues complicated bilateral relations. As a result the visit was largely formal and focused on trade and state relations rather than on the partisan ties between the Labour Government and the PSP as had been planned for the postponed visit in 1974.⁵³⁷

The moderate response of the Labour Government contrasted with that of the United States. The outcome of the trade union debate and the proposed national economic plan challenged Carlucci's assertion that Portugal would not become socialist. His despatches were increasingly at variance with Kissinger's gloomy prognosis about the course of developments in Lisbon.⁵³⁸ On January 20th, Kissinger told President Ford that "Portugal is going as predicted. Soares is massively incompetent. The fight now is over the unified labor law. If he leaves the government, the Communists will be the only organized force and either they will take over or the army will. We should have a covert action plan, but it could leak."⁵³⁹ The United States began once again to put diplomatic pressure on the AFM and provisional government and insisted that a NATO naval exercise in the mouth of the Tagus River, Exercise Lock Gate, go ahead. This was seen in Washington as a 'litmus test' of Portugal's commitment to the alliance.⁵⁴⁰ As a result Carlucci's delegation, which continued to share a similar analysis to that of the British Embassy in Lisbon, became increasingly marginalised in US decision-making.⁵⁴¹ The Lisbon Embassy still worked closely with its American counterparts, and the FCO with its counterparts in the State Department, but the issue of Portugal was not discussed in bilateral contact between the Labour Government and the Ford administration apart from during Wilson and Callaghan's visit to Washington in January 1975.

During the first months of 1975 the Labour Government responded to threats to British business interests by attempting to retain influence in the AFM council and the provisional government, but this made it difficult to assertively defend its national interest on

⁵³⁶ Trench to FCO, 'Secretary of State's visit to Portugal', 12 February 1975, FCO 9/2296.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁸ Gomes & Moreira de Sa, *Carlucci vs Kissinger*, p. 146. Mario Del Pero, 'Which Chile, Allende?', p. 633.

⁵³⁹ 'Memorandum of Conversation', 20 January 1975, Ford Library, National Security Adviser, Memoranda of Conversation, Box 8.

⁵⁴⁰ Gomes & Moreira de Sa, *Carlucci vs Kissinger*, p. 147-148.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 148-150. Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, pp. 105-132

other issues.⁵⁴² The widespread climate of paranoia that outside powers were interfering in Portuguese affairs made strong protest impracticable and made it more difficult for the Labour Government to support the institutions and parties necessary for a successful election to take place in April. Increasingly assistance for democratic institutions in Portugal was instigated through non-governmental actors in Britain, such as the Labour Party and TUC. However, the importance of these elections taking place was consistently maintained by the Labour Government and was seen as crucial for a successful transition to democracy in Portugal.

The Moscow Visit

The Labour Government's concern at the increasing activity of the PCP in Lisbon led Callaghan to raise the issue with the Soviet leadership during a visit to Moscow in February 1975. The Labour delegation's visit was considered a significant foreign policy success. It was the first official visit to the Soviet Union by a British Prime Minister since January 1968, following the Prague Spring and the mass expulsion of KGB agents from London which made Anglo-Soviet relations the worst amongst the western alliance.⁵⁴³ This meant that opportunities existing during détente for trade agreements or the resolution of long-standing differences were missed.⁵⁴⁴ Wilson, who always expressed his pride in an ability to mediate between east and west, later recalled that these talks "were the most comprehensive a British Prime Minister had had for many years", and that they "covered more ground than any since Winston Churchill's historic visits in the Second World War."⁵⁴⁵ The Moscow visit also had international significance as the first meeting between Brezhnev and a western leader since ill-health had forced his withdrawal from public life, leading to speculation that he had been replaced.⁵⁴⁶

Before the Moscow visit, Wilson and Callaghan held talks in Washington. Although a largely functional occasion (centring on east-west relations and the intended line to be taken by the British delegation in Moscow), as the first meeting between Wilson, Callaghan and President

⁵⁴² Trench to FCO, 'Portugal: Annual Review for 1975, 21 January 1975, FCO 9/2275.

⁵⁴³ For a recent account see Chapter V, "Challenging the KGB: Operation FOOT, September 1971", Gill Bennett, *Six Moments of Crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp.123-146.

⁵⁴⁴ There was regular bilateral contact between Moscow and Washington, Bonn and Paris during the early 1970s.

⁵⁴⁵ Wilson, *Final Term*, p.154.

⁵⁴⁶ Following his seizure in November 1974, "Brezhnev was then said to be working only a three-day week", which meant that "He met Wilson only because of 'a whole wave of rumours of various kinds' in the Western press." Haslam, *Russia's Cold War*, p.299.

Ford it was also an important opportunity to “establish a personal understanding”, thereby strengthening relations which had become strained during Nixon and Heath’s time in office.⁵⁴⁷ There was also concern that the meeting should have a constructive outcome to counter perceptions that Britain’s importance as an ally had been reduced following its recent withdrawal from military commitments and continuing economic problems. Between the Washington and Moscow visits, Callaghan also went on his official state visit to Lisbon.

The memoirs of Wilson and Callaghan both recall events in Portugal being raised during the Moscow visit. Wilson only briefly refers to a discussion taking place between Callaghan and Kosygin,⁵⁴⁸ whilst Callaghan includes a lengthy description of the meeting. He recalls that “I had no hesitation in tackling Prime Minister Kosygin” and that “I made a strong request to him to use his undoubted influence to ‘call off’ the Portuguese Communist Party.” Callaghan observed that “I understood that détente was the first priority of the Soviet Union” and threatened that they “would surely understand that these prospects would be blighted if a communist coup in Portugal took place against the wishes of its people.”⁵⁴⁹ Callaghan recalls that Kosygin discounted this assertion, insisting instead that the PCP supported Portuguese democracy. His memoir recollects that “From these and his other comments, together with his calm response, his lack of resentment at our remarks and the tone of his replies, we concluded that the Kremlin was not seeking a new adventure in Portugal and regarded the success of their détente policy as more important than the success of the Portuguese Communist Party.”⁵⁵⁰ This account closely matches that given in a telegram sent by the FCO after the meeting, suggesting that Callaghan either retained a copy or was able to recall its content.⁵⁵¹

Callaghan’s account suggests that Soviet involvement in Portugal was seen as a significant Cold War issue. This has led historians studying the international dimension of the Carnation Revolution, basing their understanding of Britain’s role on Callaghan’s memoirs, to conclude that Portuguese democracy was supported through British diplomacy with the Soviet Union.⁵⁵² However, the British archival record supports neither argument. The Labour Government was

⁵⁴⁷ ‘Visit of the Prime Minister to Washington 29-31 January 1975 – Steering Brief’, FCO 82/566.

⁵⁴⁸ Wilson recalled that “For his part Jim took up with Kosygin the problem of Portugal and the need to safeguard the independence of Mario Soares.” Wilson, *Final Term*, p.157.

⁵⁴⁹ Callaghan, *Time and Chance*, p.362.

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 362-63.

⁵⁵¹ Garvey to FCO, ‘Communism in Portugal’, 14th February 1975, PREM 16/687.

⁵⁵² António Simões do Paço ‘Friends in High Places - o Partido Socialista e a ‘Europa Connosco’’, Raquel Varela, ed., *Revolução ou Transição? : História e Memória da Revolução dos Cravos*, (Lisboa : Bertrand, 2012), pp.126-7. Fernando Rosas, ed., *Portugal e a Transição*, p.305. Moreira de Sá, *Os Americanos na Revolução Portuguesa*, pp.33-39.

fully committed to the success of the Moscow visit. During months of planning (delayed by Brezhnev's ill-health), FCO officials sought to remove every possible diplomatic obstacle. The Soviet interpretation of détente was assessed and careful consideration given as to how this might be included within the final communiqué. Killick warned that "On East-West relations generally, they will seek to present a definition of détente and peaceful coexistence – which they regard as compatible with continuance of the ideological struggle."⁵⁵³ However, despite the FCO's scepticism at Soviet motives during détente, no mention of events in Portugal was made during planning for Moscow. Instead, its objective was "to turn to the maximum advantage the opportunities presented by this, the most important British contact with the Soviet Union for 7 years."⁵⁵⁴ In view of this careful planning, for a British delegation to be willing to jeopardize its wider objectives by intervening on Portugal's behalf appears somewhat surprising.⁵⁵⁵

Callaghan's warning to the Soviet Union of negative consequences for détente suggests that events in Portugal were being considered within the context of wider east-west relations. However, this had not been the case during the Labour Government's immediate response to the April Revolution. Chapter II demonstrates that despite concern at communist influence, it did not believe the PCP were in a position to seize power. There is no evidence that events in Portugal were seen as being part of a wider crisis on NATO's southern flank; of greater concern was an overreaction by the US to events. Likewise, as Chapter III demonstrates, the Labour Government's principal concern in sub-Saharan Africa remained the reaching of a settlement of the Rhodesian Question. The Marxist national liberation movements of Lusophone Africa were accepted as legitimate representatives of their peoples, rather than being evidence of the expansion of Soviet influence. The only Cold War concern expressed by the Labour Government was the strategic implications for NATO in the southern Atlantic were Soviet bases to be built in Cape Verde or Guinea Bissau, following independence.⁵⁵⁶ It was only after the PCP thwarted attempts to establish independent trade unions, and rumours began that scheduled elections might be cancelled that the Labour Government first expressed alarm at communist influence in Lisbon.

Therefore, concern at events in Portugal only emerged during the final stages of planning for the Washington and Moscow visits. It was first mentioned within a draft of the steering brief for the US visit. This document aimed "to set out the British view of détente and other important

⁵⁵³ Killick to Smith, 'Prime Minister's visit to the Soviet Union', 23 December 1974, PREM 16/684.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁶ The Labour Government terminated the Simonstown Agreement with South Africa on 16th June 1975.

international questions.”⁵⁵⁷ The principal issues were Wilson’s proposal for nuclear arms-control with the Soviet Union, alongside Cyprus, the Middle East, and the energy crisis. There was no mention of Portugal in early drafts, which demonstrates that it was not considered a leading issue to be included within a discussion of east-west relations. A short summary of recent events in Lisbon was included in the steering brief on the 21st January, but the first reference to the seriousness of the situation was an addendum on the 27th January which warned that “the communists are simultaneously holding their own on the streets and increasing their control over political developments.”⁵⁵⁸ However, the Labour Government did not raise these concerns with the Ford Administration, which, given that the intention in Washington was to obtain approval for their approach in Moscow, makes Callaghan’s subsequent exchange with Kosygin also appear surprising.

This all suggests that Callaghan’s decision to raise the subject of Portugal with Soviet leaders was the result of developments in Lisbon immediately before the Moscow visit. The addendum on Portugal within the Washington steering brief explained that it had been included “After the return to open intimidation in Oporto last week.”⁵⁵⁹ In the weeks that followed, the British Embassy sent alarming reports warning that “recent developments have perhaps increased the chances that a left wing military regime with communist support will push the fledgling democracy out of the nest.”⁵⁶⁰ Callaghan’s official state visit to Lisbon heightened concerns. He later recalled that “Soares and I discussed how to avoid the danger of the Communist Party taking sole control of the election procedures and machinery.”⁵⁶¹ However, Soares did not request that communist activity be raised with the Soviet Union; rather, he noted that “the failure of détente would have serious internal repercussions in Portugal.”⁵⁶² He argued that “A lowering of tensions between the blocs would make Portuguese internal problems easier to solve and facilitate the implantation of democracy in Portugal.”⁵⁶³ Therefore, although Soares influenced Callaghan’s decision to raise events in Lisbon with the Soviet Union (also demonstrating his influence on the Labour Government),

⁵⁵⁷ ‘Visit of the Prime Minister to Washington 29-31 January 1975 – Steering Brief’, FCO 82/566.

⁵⁵⁸ ‘Visit of the Prime Minister to Washington, 19-31 January 1975, Special European Problems: Spain and Portugal’, 21 January 1975, FCO 82/566.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁰ Barrett to FCO, ‘The Situation in Portugal’, 11 March 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁵⁶¹ Callaghan, *Time and Chance*, pg 362.

⁵⁶² Barrett to Wilberforce, ‘Secretary of State’s visit to Lisbon’, 11 February 1975, FCO 9/2296.

⁵⁶³ ‘Record of a Meeting between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Portuguese Foreign Minister’, 6 February 1975, FCO 9/2296.

he did not request an intervention, and explicitly rejected negative consequences for détente.⁵⁶⁴

There is no record of the FCO planning Callaghan's exchange with Kosygin on Portugal, unlike all other policy areas discussed during the Moscow visit. This suggests that there was no intention of raising Portugal prior to the visit. Callaghan also appears to have reached his eventual decision without wider consultation. This might result from policy towards Portugal being made outside the formal structures of Whitehall decision-making (involving the Joint Intelligence Committee and the Labour Research Organisation) as the situation in Lisbon deteriorated. The difference between the significance given to the meeting with Kosygin within Callaghan's memoirs and the archival record may result from events in Portugal being raised more forcefully with the Soviet Union than Whitehall officials were aware. The discrepancies in Callaghan's account might also be because he confused this exchange with Kosygin with later, more forceful, interventions during the Hot Summer.

It is significant that Callaghan decided to raise events in Portugal with Kosygin. An FCO briefing on the Politburo advised that whilst Kosygin "may also appear from time to time", "broad themes" would "best be reserved for the meetings with Brezhnev", and "specialist subjects (e.g. CSCE, Cyprus)" were "better discussed in detail with Gromyko."⁵⁶⁵ It appears that Kosygin's position within the Politburo allowed Callaghan to raise Portugal forcefully (and report this to Soares) without affecting negotiations on more significant issues and therefore the overall success of the Moscow visit.⁵⁶⁶ It is illustrative that within the extensive bound FCO departmental series on the visit, only a single telegram reports the exchange with Kosygin, which consequently appears to be at variance with the overall account of the visit.⁵⁶⁷ Therefore, although events in Portugal were considered a significant foreign policy issue, and the Soviet Union an important influence on their likely outcome, it was considered to be an issue separate from wider east-west relations.

⁵⁶⁴ It is illustrative that the FCO telegram sent from Moscow reporting Callaghan's exchange with Kosygin, whilst not widely disseminated across Whitehall, included explicit instructions to share its content with Soares.

⁵⁶⁵ Killick to Smith, 'Prime Minister's visit to the Soviet Union', 23 December 1974, PREM 16/684.

⁵⁶⁶ This was also the case with the issue of Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union which the Labour Government believed was best raised discreetly outside formal proceedings. See Callaghan, *Time and Chance*, p.362.

⁵⁶⁷ 'PS/75/1 Departmental Series – No. 1/ Visit of the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State to the Soviet Union, 13-17 February, 1975', PREM 16/688.

The warning by Callaghan that support for the PSP in Lisbon might lead to consequences for east-west relations did not result from concern that Soviet interpretation of détente allowed communist activity in Western Europe. During a meeting with Kissinger immediately after the Moscow visit, Wilson and Callaghan discounted the possibility of a communist takeover in Portugal; when asked whether the USSR remained committed to a policy of détente, an FCO official noted, “The Prime Minister said very definitely yes.”⁵⁶⁸ Instead Callaghan’s warning was an attempt to pressure the Soviet leadership into exerting its influence over the PCP to address specific concerns, particularly the survival of independent trade unions and the moderate political parties.

The effect of intervention in Moscow was more limited than the memoirs of Wilson and Callaghan suggest. The Labour Government did not consider events in Portugal to have wider implications for east-west relations. The leftward direction of the Portuguese Revolution was seen to result from indigenous factors, principally the sudden removal of a right-wing authoritarian government, rather than outside intervention. Callaghan warned of negative consequences for détente in an attempt to make the Soviet leadership urge restraint on the PCP (although it was not seen as being controlled by Moscow). Ironically, the political crisis in Lisbon that immediately followed the Moscow visit did lead to genuine concern within the Labour Government at Moscow’s intentions in Portugal.

The 11th March attempted coup d’état and its aftermath

The opposition to the AFM’s programme of nationalisation and the frustration and despair of Portuguese nationals returning from the overseas colonies brought a volatile political climate to Lisbon during February, in which rumours circulated that the former president Spínola was planning to seize power. On the 11th March Portuguese paratrooper and air force units seized key buildings in Lisbon in what appeared to be an attempted coup d’état although the exact nature of events was unclear to contemporary observers.⁵⁶⁹ Historians since have debated whether this was a genuine coup attempt planned by Spínola, or a spontaneous uprising within the military, deliberately provoked by the AFM as an

⁵⁶⁸ ‘Record of conversation at Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary’s dinner for Dr Kissinger’, 17 February 1975, FCO 9/2291.

⁵⁶⁹ Trench to FCO, ‘The Events of 11 March and their Consequences’, 9 April 1975, FCO 9/2269.

opportunity to decisively crush their right-wing political opponents.⁵⁷⁰ The uprising by pro-Spinola military units was certainly disorganised and poorly planned, failing to seize crucial strategic buildings in Lisbon, whilst the response of COPCON, the AFM's military command in Lisbon, was immediate and decisive, defeating the attempted coup with minimal casualties.

The aftermath of the failed rising led to further radicalisation of the Portuguese revolution. The constitutional arrangements of the provisional government that had existed since April 25th 1974 were eroded by the establishment of a 'Revolutionary Council' which institutionalised the leading role of the AFM in Portugal. Immediate plans were released for further nationalisation within the Portuguese economy. The arrest of right-wing politicians implicated in the 11th March attempted coup made it difficult for moderate politicians in Lisbon to operate effectively in opposition to the provisional government and there were rumours that the forthcoming election would be postponed. There was also a reorientation of Portuguese foreign policy towards a non-aligned position in international politics. These developments led to concern amongst the western allies that the AFM intended to establish a left-wing military dictatorship in Portugal.

The British Embassy, despite the FCO review into its modus operandi, had once again failed to predict a significant political development in Lisbon. It appears that although it had successfully established relations with the radical left after Spinola's resignation, the Embassy did not maintain contact with his supporters. The FCO had monitored with mounting alarm British press reports during February that suggested "the beginnings of a Spinolist revival at grass roots level in the AFM."⁵⁷¹ The British Ambassador in Lisbon reacted dismissively, believing "the atmosphere is volatile and full of rumours."⁵⁷² On the 11th March he was on a trip to Porto and duty staff in Lisbon had to deal with the immediate consequences of the attempted coup.⁵⁷³ The British Embassy's initial reaction to the dramatic events in Lisbon was one of great concern, with reports that "we are approaching a situation of anarchy, to all intents and purposes."⁵⁷⁴ The British Ambassador, however, was less inclined than colleagues from other western states in Lisbon to believe that the prospects for

⁵⁷⁰ Manuel, *The Uncertain Outcome*, pp.81-83.

⁵⁷¹ Barrett to FCO, 'The Situation in Portugal', 11 March 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*

⁵⁷³ Trench to Killick, 19 March 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

democracy had ceased.⁵⁷⁵ He noted reports that “the voting for the promotion boards in the various armed services suggests a movement of opinion at lower levels away from the more extreme leaders.”⁵⁷⁶ Therefore, once the initial surprise at events in Lisbon subsided the British Embassy continued to predict with confidence “For the present, I see no reason to revise the view that progress towards the elections will continue.”⁵⁷⁷

The Labour Government made no immediate public response to the attempted coup d'état but a review of British policy towards Portugal was begun which reached its conclusion several weeks later. As a result there were no clear ministerial instructions as to how the British Embassy should respond to the political crises that followed the attempted coup. There was alarm within the Labour Government as the radical left strengthened its position in Lisbon. The sudden announcement by the provisional government that banks would be nationalised was seen as an ominous development. An FCO official observed that “its introduction at this stage, just a few weeks after the publication of economic plans that excluded it, signifies a strong shift of economic policy towards the left.”⁵⁷⁸ The Labour Government's apprehension at developments was also affected by reports that the usually ebullient Soares was in a “mood of resigned pessimism.”⁵⁷⁹ Speculation followed within the Labour government that Portugal would follow the “Peruvian solution” of authoritarian rule by Marxist military officers.⁵⁸⁰

Despite its concerns at the direction of events in Lisbon the Labour Government also had to give consideration to how it could protect British interests in Portugal. There were a number of bilateral issues with Portugal that the Labour Government had to address, particularly with the impact of developments on British businesses and the expatriate community. Although organised violence against British citizens was not expected, an embassy official speculated, “I can envisage a situation in which some chance encounter, involving civilian or military casualties, could lead to an angry mob plundering any premises

⁵⁷⁵ Wiggin to FCO, ‘Attempted Counter Coup in Portugal’, 12 March 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁵⁷⁶ Trench to FCO, ‘Political Developments in Portugal’, 11 March 1975, PREM 16/603.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁸ Barrett to Morgan, ‘The Situation in Portugal’, 17 March 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁵⁷⁹ Trench to FCO, ‘Political Developments’, 14 March 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁵⁸⁰ Morgan to FCO, 19 March 1975, FCO 9/2269. FCO officials were referring to the contemporary Peruvian regime which although a military government pursued a radical left-wing agenda of nationalisation, land expropriation and close relations with the socialist bloc and non-aligned movement. Leslie Bethell, ed., The Cambridge History of Latin America: Volume VIII - Latin America since 1930 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 464-466.

which they think look prosperous.”⁵⁸¹ Such was the concern that, an FCO official recorded, “Sir John Killick has suggested that we should look urgently into the question of a Services assisted evacuation plan from Portugal.”⁵⁸² Despite the seriousness of British concerns there was uncertainty as to the best course of action; the view was widely shared that “We do not want to help to bring about the ‘worst case’ by acting (or, still worse, speaking) as though it has already happened.”⁵⁸³ Therefore it was decided that the existing invitation for a visit by the Portuguese President Costa Gomes to London should be allowed to continue despite the change in circumstances.

The measured response of the Labour Government was in contrast to that of the Ford Administration. The strengthening of the radical left after the failed coup d'état confirmed Kissinger's conviction that Portugal was gravitating towards the Soviet bloc.⁵⁸⁴ The United States expressed alarm to the British at reports that the Soviet Union was being offered facilities for its merchant ships in Portuguese ports by the government in Lisbon.⁵⁸⁵ The failure of Carlucci (previously a moderating influence on US policy) to predict either the coup d'état or its aftermath, led to his increasing isolation from policy-making in Washington.⁵⁸⁶ However, because the United States was widely seen to have given support to those who had planned to seize power, apparently confirming those rumours that a covert CIA programme was in operation in Portugal, there was an upsurge in anti-American feeling.⁵⁸⁷ The British Embassy had been able to maintain a low profile after the attempted coup (the FCO reporting to Cabinet that “There have been no reports of British nationals being endangered. No hostility has been shown to our Embassy”), but the US Ambassador's residence in Lisbon was physically attacked by protesters, leading the military commander in Lisbon to suggest that they leave the country, and a visceral newspaper campaign in the

⁵⁸¹ Trench to Killick, 19 March 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁵⁸² Barrett to Jackson, 'Portugal: Evacuation Plans, 12 March 1975, FCO 9/2298. The British consul more prosaically observed that “I suspect that the wisest advice in the event of a breakdown in public order will be to keep a low profile and a stock of sardines (tinned).” Battle to Hampton, 'Contingency Planning', 26 February 1975, FCO 9/2298.

⁵⁸³ Killick to Trench, 9 April 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁵⁸⁴ National Security Study Memorandum 2221, 'US and Allied Security Policy in Southern Europe', April 22, 1975. Ford Library, National Security Adviser, National Security Decision Memoranda and National Security Study Memoranda, NSSMs File, Box 2. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 67).

⁵⁸⁵ Ramsbotham to FCO, 'Portugal', 15 March 1975, PREM 16/603.

⁵⁸⁶ Del Pero, 'Which Chile, Allende?', p. 638.

⁵⁸⁷ Even a leading PSP member, in conversation with the British Ambassador, said that “He was convinced that the Azores were of such significance to the Americans that they would simply appropriate them.” Ure to Chatterjie, 'A Socialist View of Events', 17 March 1975, FCO 9/2079.

communist-dominated press exposed the supposed intervention of the United States in Portuguese politics.⁵⁸⁸

Although the Ford Administration was determined that Portuguese politics must not be allowed to move further to the left, it judged that any public statement to this effect would probably be counterproductive. The lack of diplomatic options for the US led it to approach its European allies, believing they were in a better position to influence the government in Portugal; it was particularly interested in a possible diplomatic role for the EEC and encouraged the Labour Government to raise Portugal as an issue within meetings of the European Council (which was emerging as a nascent foreign policy-making entity). The Ford administration pursued a similar approach in response to events in Greece during the same period.⁵⁸⁹ Thus the State Department contacted the British Ambassador in Washington to express “the hope that the Nine would consider these latest developments in Portugal and see whether from the European side there was any way in which they might exert a beneficial influence.”⁵⁹⁰

The mounting concern amongst Portugal’s NATO allies at the direction of events in Lisbon culminated in a diplomatic crisis triggered by rumours that several communist ministers were to be appointed to leading positions in the provisional government. A secret emissary, from the PSP to an official within the SPD, led the West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt to conclude that Portugal was in danger of slipping outside the western sphere of influence.⁵⁹¹ The Chancellor immediately contacted his allies to share his concern and called for a vigorous and coordinated diplomatic response. Schmidt requested that the Secretary General of NATO call an “informal meeting of the Fourteen (less Portugal),” and that Garrett Fitzgerald, the Irish Foreign Minister, should “utter a warning to the Portuguese leadership on behalf of the Nine.”⁵⁹² Schmidt’s analysis of developments in Portugal now shared the wider geopolitical considerations that Kissinger had always advocated; this

⁵⁸⁸ Barrett to FCO, ‘Cabinet on 13 March: Portugal’, 12 March 1975, FCO 9/2269. Gomes and Moreira, Carlucci vs Kissinger, pp. 160-163.

⁵⁸⁹ Eirini Karamouzi, ‘Telling the Whole Story, America, the EEC and Greece, 1974-1976’, Antonio Varsori and Guia Migano, ed., Europe in the International Arena during the 1970s: Entering a Different World (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2011), pp. 368-369.

⁵⁹⁰ Ramsbotham to FCO, ‘Portugal’, 15 March 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁵⁹¹ Trench to FCO, ‘Portuguese Internal Development’, 24 March 1975, FCO 9/2288.

⁵⁹² Henderson to FCO, ‘Portuguese Situation’, 22 March 1975, FCO 9/2288. Ireland held the Presidency of the European Council in 1975.

enabled Washington to encourage a common response by the NATO alliance which it believed would be more effective than unilateral action.⁵⁹³

The Labour Government reached a more sanguine conclusion than did Schmidt or Kissinger about the significance of further communist ministers being appointed to the provisional government. The British Embassy had been aware of this possibility since the failed coup, but focused its concerns on whether elections proposed for April would be held and the climate in which campaigning would take place. Schmidt telephoned Harold Wilson on the 20th March to discuss developments in Portugal. The conversation took place on an unsecured line and despite its significance issues were discussed through confused allusions and euphemisms.⁵⁹⁴ The possibility of further appointments of communists to the government had not reached Cabinet level. This was the first time Wilson had given consideration to this possible eventuality and he gave a positive response to Schmidt's suggestion. It was also the first time since the April 25th coup d'état (when Wilson urged consideration of the implications of change in Portugal on Rhodesia) that the prime minister was the focal point of policy-making towards Portugal.

However, there was scepticism within the FCO about both the veracity of Schmidt's information and whether any representation made to the provisional government would achieve its purpose. The British Ambassador in Lisbon counselled, "All these rumours are little more than intelligent speculation on the basis of interviews carried out by the Portuguese Prime Minister in the course of his efforts to reconstruct his government,"⁵⁹⁵ and "attempts here to influence the composition of the Government would be not only unproductive, but harmful."⁵⁹⁶ Although Callaghan shared this view he also held talks with Kissinger during his brief stopover in London on 23rd March.⁵⁹⁷ The statement prepared by Callaghan for Cabinet on the 25th March argued that although the situation was "unpredictable," he did not accept Schmidt's principal concern that the appointment of communist ministers "would represent a step towards the establishment of a totalitarian

⁵⁹³ Schmidt's phone call on Portugal was discussed with Willy Brandt during a visit to Washington. 'Memorandum of Conversation (Ford, Kissinger and Brandt)', Washington, March 27, 1975, US National Archives, RG 59, Records of the Office of the Counsellor, Helmut C. Sonnenfeldt, 1955–1977, Entry 5339, Box 5, Germany 1975. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 149).

⁵⁹⁴ Record of a Telephone Conversation between the Prime Minister and Chancellor Schmidt', 21 March 1975, PREM 16/603.

⁵⁹⁵ Trench to FCO, 'Portuguese Internal Developments', 22 March 1975, FCO 9/2288.

⁵⁹⁶ Trench to FCO, 'Political Developments, 23 March 1975, FCO 9/2298.

⁵⁹⁷ Callaghan to FCO, 'UK Del NATO: Portugal', 23 March 1975, FCO 9/2288.

regime.”⁵⁹⁸ The Labour Government opposed Kissinger and Schmidt’s proposal that the Soviet ambassador in each NATO member-state be summoned and warned of the consequences for East-West relations if further gains were made by the PCP in Lisbon. It remained sceptical that any representation to the provisional government in Lisbon would succeed, believing it would be seen as interference in Portugal’s internal affairs. The Labour Government argued that the only effective course was to put pressure on Lisbon to ensure that free and fair elections were held. Despite these differences the British remained committed to multilateral diplomacy towards Portugal; Callaghan concluded, “We attach considerable importance to acting with our allies.”⁵⁹⁹ The Labour Government reached the decision that if the United States proposed that the western allies coordinate their diplomatic response in Lisbon then Britain would have to participate.⁶⁰⁰ Therefore Callaghan recommended that “On possible action we shall wish to decide what to do in light of what the Americans do and the recommendations of the NATO council.”⁶⁰¹ The response shows that the Labour Government viewed its relations with Washington as more significant than the pursuit of Britain’s national interest in Lisbon.

The United States and West Germany were determined that a clear *démarche* be given to the Portuguese government. The western allies decided that each would send their ambassador in Lisbon to deliver a statement outlining their alarm at recent events with both the timings and content of each message coordinated. By doing so, the apprehension of the western allies would be raised more robustly with Lisbon whilst charges that they were intervening in the internal affairs of a sovereign state were less likely to be made against any one ally. The forum where this approach was discussed was the NATO Council in Brussels. Despite the Labour Government’s scepticism at the likely effectiveness of the proposed action, Britain played a leading role in achieving agreement amongst the allies.⁶⁰² This was partly because the UK representative on the Council saw the appointment of communist ministers in Lisbon primarily in terms of its impact on the cohesion of the NATO alliance rather than its implications for Portugal. The UK representative argued that “A Communist Minister without Portfolio has already led to Portugal being excluded from certain alliance

⁵⁹⁸ ‘Statement by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to Cabinet,’ 25 March 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁵⁹⁹ Callaghan to FCO, ‘Portuguese Internal Developments’, 22 March 1975, FCO 9/2288.

⁶⁰⁰ Kissinger was absent from Washington at the time, attempting to restore the initiative to his Middle East strategy. Telegram 607/Secto 437, From the Consulate in Jerusalem to the Department of State, 21 March 1975, 1516Z, Ford Library, National Security Adviser, NSC Europe, Canada, and Ocean Affairs Staff Files, Box 17, Portugal 1975 (4). <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 148).

⁶⁰¹ Callaghan to FCO, ‘Portuguese Internal Developments’, 22 March 1975, FCO 9/2288.

⁶⁰² Logan to FCO, ‘Portuguese Internal Developments’, 22 March 1975, FCO 9/2288.

activities. Should Communists receive important portfolios such as the interior the consequences would inevitable be considerably more serious.”⁶⁰³ The UK delegation also clearly understood that its role in the Council was to facilitate US diplomacy in Europe and maintain the cohesion of the alliance and that this was to be done irrespective of its judgment of the national interest on a particular issue. It demonstrated a professionalism and resourcefulness which meant it often took the lead on issues, and its understanding of internal politics in Washington enabled it to interpret the likely direction of US policy. Therefore, although the UK representative in the Council noted that “In the absence of Kissinger from Washington and in the light of the confused instructions which the US delegation appear to be receiving it seems doubtful whether a US lead will be forthcoming over the weekend,” because Callaghan had held discussions with Kissinger on the 23rd March the UK delegation was able to take the initiative within the Council, confident that it understood the policy that Washington would follow.⁶⁰⁴

The NATO allies therefore organised their ambassadors in Lisbon to call on President Costa Gomes in a series of coordinated visits to put pressure on the provisional government not to appoint more communist ministers. However, there was some nuance in their approach. The US representation was most vociferous in its criticism of recent developments in Portugal, particularly the incidents of anti-Americanism, but because Carlucci was able to discuss the possibility of further financial aid to Portugal the reaction of Costa Gomes was more subdued than with the other delegations.⁶⁰⁵ The British Embassy made representations to the Portuguese President on the 24th March. In contrast to the US demarche, it was instructed to “concentrate on the importance of consolidating democracy in Portugal” but to “stop short of representations directed to the composition of the Portuguese government.”⁶⁰⁶ The information given to the western alliance that a number of communist ministers were to be appointed to the provisional government proved to be exaggerated. In the event although a more left-wing government was constituted, the PCP did not make significant gains. During the following month it was clear that political moderates continued to have influence in Lisbon and on the 25th April 1975 democratic elections were held as planned. It appears that West Germany and the United States had interpreted rumours that communists would be appointed to the provisional government as being significant because of their concern with

⁶⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁵ Trench to FCO, ‘Political Developments’, 26 March 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁶⁰⁶ Callaghan to FCO, ‘Portugal’, 24 March 1974, FCO 9/2288.

the wider context of events on East-West relations rather than as a development within the fluid political situation with Portugal.⁶⁰⁷

The West German Government also attempted to solicit action by the European Council. The Labour Government showed no enthusiasm for this approach despite the likelihood that the European Council would have greater influence on the provisional government in Lisbon. Callaghan noted that “Portugal is likely to attach considerable importance to its links with the EEC.”⁶⁰⁸ Britain believed that West Germany’s motivation for encouraging a response by the Nine was also a desire to see the nascent institutions of the European Community take a common approach to a foreign policy issue. A West German official admitted to the British Ambassador in Bonn that “he attached importance to the idea of an initiative by the Nine more because he thought it would be good for the Community to act together in a matter such as this than for any particular impact it might have had on the Lisbon scene.”⁶⁰⁹ In contrast the Labour government showed no enthusiasm for expanding the political role of the EEC, instead remaining committed to the NATO alliance and the prominent role it gave the US in Europe.

The review of British policy towards Portugal conducted by the Labour Government after the attempted coup d’état was published as an internal FCO document on 17th March.⁶¹⁰ It was the most detailed analysis of British policy since April 25th, 1974. For the first time it considered the wider strategic implications of developments in Lisbon, including the possibility of Portugal’s withdrawal from NATO and the likely impact of events on regime change in Spain.⁶¹¹ The review wrestled with the central dilemma of British policy towards Portugal, whether to engage with the provisional government so as to maintain influence and protect its interests, or to encourage political change by supporting its political opponents. The review concluded that British policy toward the provisional government required a continued Faustian pact whereby “our best guideline will still be to continue to befriend and seek to influence the Portuguese leadership as long as some prospect for democracy remains.”⁶¹² The Labour Government decided to continue with a proposed visit by the British

⁶⁰⁷ Ana Mónica Fonseca, ‘The Federal Republic of Germany and the Portuguese Transition to Democracy,’ *Journal of European Integration History* 15:1 (2009), pp. 46–47. Mario Del Pero, ‘Which Chile, Allende?’ Henry Kissinger and the Portuguese revolution.’ *Cold War History* 11:4 (November 2011), pp.637.

⁶⁰⁸ Callaghan to FCO, ‘Portuguese Internal Developments’, 22 March 1975, FCO 9/2288.

⁶⁰⁹ Henderson to FCO, ‘Portugal’, 27 March 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁶¹⁰ Barrett to FCO, ‘The Situation in Portugal’, 17 March 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁶¹¹ Rear-Admiral Morton to FCO, ‘Preliminary Assessment of the Military Consequences if Portugal withdraws from NATO’, 21 March 1975, FCO 9/2288.

⁶¹² *Ibid.*

army chief of staff to Lisbon and by President Costa Gomes to London, believing that doing so was a chance to develop relations with the provisional government and “influence their way of thinking and outlook.”⁶¹³ It also committed Britain to providing technical aid to Portugal but refrained from providing financial aid. It continued to encourage a multilateral approach to Portugal whereby “We should continue to exchange views with our allies in NATO and within the EEC and encourage Western governments to follow our approach.”⁶¹⁴ Although there was no dramatic change in British policy the review was less optimistic at the prospects for democracy in Portugal, and gave serious consideration to the possibility of further radical left wing change in Lisbon that might result in its withdrawal from NATO and also the necessity of evacuating British subjects.

The FCO report concluded that the direction of events in Lisbon “would depend greatly on the Soviet Union’s own desires”, and led to Sir John Killick’s response, “I shall be interested to see any assessment of these produced in Moscow or London.”⁶¹⁵ The British Ambassador in Moscow, for the first time since the April Revolution, was consulted on Soviet intentions in Portugal. His opinion was contradictory, believing that the Soviet Union “would eventually see their best interests served by a NATO initiative to exclude Portugal from the Alliance” because “such an exclusion would lead to a process of unravelling which would enhance the tendency towards disintegration of the southern flank.”⁶¹⁶ However, he expected that “They do not wish anything to happen in Portugal, in the short-term, which would provoke a sharp reaction in Western Europe against what would be represented as a Soviet-assisted take-over by the Communists. This might cause problems for Soviet détente policy as a whole and would certainly make life more difficult for Communist Parties in Western Europe.”⁶¹⁷ This led the Labour Government to expect that, although an imminent communist takeover in Portugal was unlikely, once the Helsinki Summit ended, an attempt would be made to seize power.⁶¹⁸ His advice became the most significant influence on Labour Government policy towards Portugal during the Hot Summer.

⁶¹³ Ralph to Baker, ‘Talk with PPD leaders’, 2 April 1975, FCO 9/2276.

⁶¹⁴ Barrett to FCO, ‘The Situation in Portugal’, 17 March 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁶¹⁵ ‘Future Policy towards Portugal’, 1 April 1975, FCO 41/1693.

⁶¹⁶ Garvey to Killick, ‘Portugal and NATO’, 29 April 1975, FCO 41/1693.

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁸ An interesting handwritten note added to the FCO document reports that “We are lucky all this is happening in this period of détente. We have a convincing report from the Portuguese Ambassador in Romania that the communists did actually contemplate a coup before the elections, but found no support in Moscow or E. Europe for it and so desisted.” ‘Portugal: contacts with Dr Soares’, 6 June 1975, FCO 9/2296.

The Labour Government considered the holding of free and fair elections to be absolutely critical for preventing another authoritarian regime being established in Portugal. The premise of its policy since the April 25th coup had been that the PSP was the most popular political movement in Portugal and would emerge after elections as the largest political party, enabling it to form a government with a mandate to establish parliamentary democracy. Therefore rumours after the 11th March attempted coup d'état that elections would be postponed were a cause of greater concern to the Labour Government than the crisis over the appointment of communist ministers. It was also apprehensive at mounting evidence that, even if elections were held, campaigning would not happen in a political climate in which parties could operate freely.⁶¹⁹ The British Embassy was particularly alarmed at the arrest of opponents and their detention without trial.⁶²⁰ Soares's resignation as foreign minister on 27th March made the successful holding of elections even more imperative for Britain. The Labour government's close personal and partisan relationship with Soares had enabled it to have a degree of influence within the provisional government and a reliable source of information concerning political developments in Portugal. His departure was akin to the United States' loss of influence after President Spínola's resignation. Therefore the success of the PSP in the forthcoming elections became absolutely essential for Britain's future relations with Portugal.

The provisional government confirmed on March 20th that elections would be held on April 25th, 1975. Despite the significance of these elections for Britain, it was difficult for the Labour Government to have any influence once campaigning began. The PSP's electoral strategy was to establish noticeable distance from its overseas supporters so that it could campaign "on the themes of freedom and national independence," which would contrast "with the Communist Party who were stooges of the Soviet Union."⁶²¹ Therefore the Labour government was only able to participate in Socialist International support for the PSP during the elections.⁶²² By contrast the Conservative Party gave active support to the CDS including the presence of the MP Michael Young in Lisbon to "hold their hand" during campaigning.⁶²³ The Conservative Party also called for an all-party delegation to visit Lisbon during the

⁶¹⁹ The moderate-right Christian Democrat Party was prohibited from contesting the forthcoming elections. The British Embassy argued that similar measures were not taken against the CDS because of its connections with the British Conservative Party. Trench to FCO, 'Political Developments in Portugal', 19 March 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁶²⁰ Trench to FCO, 'Political Developments', 26 March 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁶²¹ Callaghan to FCO, 'Elections: Possibility of all Party Delegation from Britain', 15 April 1975, FCO 9/2297.

⁶²² Manuel, *The Uncertain Outcome*, p.100.

⁶²³ Callaghan to FCO, 'Elections', 15 April 1975, FCO 9/2297.

elections but the proposal was rejected by the Labour Government. The Conservative Party was also denied its request that Callaghan “gave the nod” as required by its contacts in the City of London before any funding for democratic parties in Portugal would be available.⁶²⁴ This decision was reached despite the fact that, as an FCO official noted, “there is little doubt that the Portuguese Communist Party is receiving covert financial and other support from the Soviet Bloc.”⁶²⁵ Therefore, the Labour Government’s policy of actively encouraging democracy (which it had pursued since the April 25th coup d’état) changed, once election campaigning began, to one of non-interference in Portugal’s internal affairs.

Britain and the ‘lurch to the left’

Immediately after the April 25th coup d’état the Labour Government believed that a return to right-wing authoritarian government was the most likely threat to any democratic outcome in Portugal, but the increasing strength of the radical left that followed Spínola’s resignation presented a new challenge for policy towards Portugal. Plans to nationalise Portuguese industry endangered British business interests, whilst the NATO alliance’s stability was threatened by the presence of Marxists in government, and these developments led “Ministers to look afresh at their attitude towards Portugal.”⁶²⁶ However, there were few viable options to prevent the radical left from expanding its influence in Lisbon. Resentment at past interference by outside powers in Portugal was a source of popular legitimacy for the radical left, and any intervention was therefore adjudged likely to be counterproductive. The Labour Government decided to pursue a policy of engagement rather than confrontation with the provisional government, believing that any other course would merely confirm the dictum “les absents ont toujours tort.”⁶²⁷

The response of the Ford Administration to Spínola’s resignation differed significantly from that of the Labour Government. Kissinger interpreted events in Portugal through the prism of the Cold War, believing that the Soviet Union had instigated events in Lisbon to undermine the stability of the NATO alliance.⁶²⁸ The Labour Government, although aware of the wider implications for the western alliance of the developments in

⁶²⁴ Barrett to FCO, ‘Financial Support for Democratic Parties in Portugal’, 24 February 1975, FCO 9/2276.

⁶²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶²⁶ Killick to Trench, 9 April 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶²⁸ Robert D. Schulzinger, *Henry Kissinger: Doctor of Diplomacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 222. Mario Del Pero, ‘Which Chile, Allende?’, p. 638.

Portugal, believed that they were caused by indigenous factors and was dismissive of any significance being given to Soviet involvement.⁶²⁹ As a result it remained confident that a parliamentary democracy would be established in Portugal and the radical left isolated as a result. In a similar manner, unlike the Ford administration, the Labour Government did not make any connection between the ideological disputes in Lisbon and those in Angola and Mozambique which on independence led to brutal proxy cold war conflicts.⁶³⁰

However, the differences between Britain and the United States on Portugal did not affect their wider relations. The FCO and State Department and their respective embassies in Lisbon continued to share information and analyses, demonstrating the strength of institutional ties. During the crises that followed the attempted coup d'état in March, the Labour Government accepted and encouraged US leadership of the western alliance's diplomatic response. The absence of regular meetings between Kissinger and Callaghan during the period after Spínola's resignation meant that policy differences on Portugal did not have a detrimental impact on their close personal friendship. However, the relationship between Britain and the United States on Portugal was clearly asymmetrical; Britain could play a useful diplomatic role in Lisbon but it was the US which had disproportionate influence. The Labour Government sought to be Washington's most loyal ally within the western alliance and was prepared to subsume the pursuit of its national interest in Portugal to the wider goal of maintaining close relations with the United States.

During the period after Spínola's resignation the Labour Government remained confident that despite the strength of the radical left the majority of Portuguese favoured a transition to parliamentary democracy. Regardless of the fluid political situation in Lisbon the Labour Government was unwavering in its prognosis that if elections were held no more than 20-30% of the electorate would vote for the Communist Party, and that regional differences within Portugal meant areas such as Porto would always remain strongly conservative.⁶³¹ Influential Labour ministers, such as Joan Lester and Tom McNally, were convinced that the majority of the Portuguese public perceived themselves to be 'European', entitled to the same rights and political freedoms as those in neighbouring states. Immediately after the April 25th coup d'état this view was not shared by all officials within the FCO, some of whom expressed scepticism as to whether democracy could successfully be established in Portugal,

⁶²⁹ Garvey to Killick, 'Portugal and NATO', 29 April 1975, FCO 41/1693.

⁶³⁰ Mario Del Pero, 'Which Chile, Allende?', p. 627.

⁶³¹ Thomas to Killick, 'Position Paper', 24 September 1974, FCO 9/2047.

but during the period that followed Spínola's resignation there is no evidence that those within the FCO expected anything other than a democratic outcome. It appears that the failure of the British Embassy to accurately predict events in Lisbon led to a re-evaluation of previously held assumptions. It may also have been that with Lisbon moving towards the radical left rather than authoritarian right, British business interests were now directly threatened by nationalisation, and the FCO became enthusiastic proponents of parliamentary democracy to prevent such an eventuality.

Although the Labour Government understood that the Portuguese electorate favoured democracy there was an inadequate understanding of the importance that the Portuguese military would have on such an outcome. Institutional change within Portugal's armed forces is now accepted by most historians of the Carnation Revolution as the most significant factor in explaining developments after the April 25th coup d'état.⁶³² The British Embassy was aware that the Portuguese military was not a monolithic entity and allegiances were shaped by hierarchy and generational differences. The British Ambassador dismissed the notion that the AFM was representative of the military as a whole, arguing "one is tempted in present circumstances to regard it as no more than the foam at the top of a Cappuccino."⁶³³ However, although the MOD and FCO explored the option, there was no serious attempt to influence personnel within the Portuguese military (as the United States had done in Latin America to thwart communist subversion after the Cuban Revolution); the preference instead was to support organised political movements in Portugal.⁶³⁴ It appears that the convention in Britain, that there should be a clear division between its armed forces and civilian politicians, prevented serious consideration being given to such an approach. The diplomatic isolation of Portugal during the Lusophone African wars also meant that there had been no meaningful contact between the Portuguese and British armed forces for two decades.

Britain's economic weakness during this period affected its relations with Portugal. The inability of the Labour Government to offer financial aid to the provisional government significantly reduced its influence in Lisbon. Its domestic difficulties also meant it was unable to give sustained attention to events in Portugal, as it had immediately after the April 25th coup. The Labour Government's failure to provide substantial financial assistance to the

⁶³² For a recent analysis of the role of the Portuguese military during the revolution, see 'Political Purges and State Crisis in Portugal's Transition to Democracy, 1975-76', by Antonio Costa Pinto, *Journal of Contemporary History* 43:2 (April, 2008), pp. 305-332.

⁶³³ Trench to Killick, 19 March 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁶³⁴ Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* (New York: WW Norton, 1993), pp.153-155.

PSP also made its friendship of less importance to Soares. But the opportunity still existed for Britain to have influence on the political process in Lisbon; in particular the FCO's professionalism enabled it to play a role coordinating the western allies' diplomatic response, particularly within the NATO alliance.⁶³⁵ However, the absence of clear leadership from the executive on Portugal (necessary for any coherent foreign policy in Britain), and the inability to support diplomacy with economic and military power, meant that there was a surprising degree of fatalism in the British response to the crises following Spínola's resignation, compared with its vigorous response after the April 25th coup d'état. Despite its historical, diplomatic and cultural ties with Portugal, Britain had less influence over developments after Spínola's resignation than did the United States and other Western European states.

The Labour Government's declining influence means its policy towards Portugal cannot be used to support the argument of political scientists that outside powers played a crucial role in the outcome of the Carnation Revolution.⁶³⁶ The Labour Government played no direct role in establishing the political institutions or encouraging the framework of civil society necessary for a successful transition to democracy in Portugal. This is most clearly seen during election campaigning in April 1975 where Britain had no significant role. However the 'soft power' of Britain, alongside that of other Western European societies, was crucial to the emergence of democracy, and historians have revealed that their example was crucial in shaping Portuguese public opinion.⁶³⁷ In particular the BBC remained central to public discourse, though this was not fully understood by the Labour Government, which instead agonised over the decline in the traditional instruments of its foreign policy making.⁶³⁸

The period between the resignation of Spínola and the elections in April saw significant changes in how Britain's foreign policy towards Portugal was made. Prior to the announcement that her overseas territories would be granted their independence, both Wilson and Callaghan took a close interest in Portugal because of its significance to the Rhodesian question. They had regular contact with Soares, which meant that they were aware of developments within the provisional government. However, the successful outcome of negotiations on Lusophone Africa, and Soares' political isolation in Lisbon that followed Spínola's resignation (alongside the distraction of campaigning for a General Election and

⁶³⁵ Ramsbotham to FCO, 'Portugal', 20 June 1975, FCO 9/2032.

⁶³⁶ Geoffrey Pridham, ed., *Securing Democracy*, p.1.

⁶³⁷ Manuel, *The Uncertain Outcome*, p.100.

⁶³⁸ Seaton and Pimlott, 'Political Power and the Portuguese Media', p.52.

Britain's economic difficulties), meant that although a close personal relationship between Soares and Wilson and Callaghan remained, it was now of less significance.

The declining interest of Downing Street in events in Portugal meant that the initiative for British policy now came from the FCO. The decision by the provisional government in Lisbon to concede the principle of self-determination to its overseas territories shifted authority on Portuguese policy within the FCO from the African departments to the Southern European Department and the Western Organisations Department. These differed in their analysis of events in Portugal, with the former being principally concerned with developments within Lisbon and the latter with their wider implications for international politics. The British Embassy, after its failure to predict the removal of Spínola, now actively sought to engage with the AFM in Lisbon and despite clear ideological differences showed a greater willingness to discuss developments with leading radical figures. In contrast those within the British foreign policy-making establishment most concerned with relations with the US, particularly defence and intelligence, sought to promote policies conducive to maintaining a close relationship with Washington. The decreasing ability of Britain to have influence over events in Lisbon also led it to take a more multilateral approach with its west European allies. Therefore, although policy towards Portugal did not alter dramatically after Spínola's resignation, there were significant changes in the way it was pursued.

Throughout the period after Spínola's resignation the Labour Government believed that were an election to be held it would give a clear popular mandate to moderate politicians in Lisbon. However, the Labour Government had little understanding that the weakness of civil society, the absence of a free media and of a plurality of political parties meant that, despite the election of April 25th, those in Portugal who sought an alternative path to parliamentary democracy were still in a position to challenge for power during the summer of 1975.

Chapter V – The Second Crisis: The Hot Summer

(April 25th to September 9th, 1975)

The holding of constituent assembly elections, rather than leading to the establishment of parliamentary democracy, precipitated a political crisis in Lisbon which threatened civil war. This was the most crucial point of the Portuguese Revolution. The radical left, dismissing the outcome of the elections, sought to entrench its position within the provisional government; the moderate parties, emboldened by their electoral mandate, sought its reversal. A power struggle ensued through political intrigue, mass public demonstrations and shifting allegiances within the armed forces. As a result the economy spiralled out of control; inflation and strikes (exacerbated by the return of Portuguese nationals from the overseas territories) brought the collapse of industrial output and the withdrawal of international capital. During the summer of 1975 there was widespread social breakdown throughout Portugal. In the regions of the south, agricultural labourers seized control of land, whilst conservative smallholders in the north, encouraged by the Catholic clergy, openly defied the provisional government's authority. The political vacuum prevented Portuguese administrators from overseeing a peaceful transition to independence in the overseas territories, and events moved inexorably towards the brutal proxy cold war conflicts that would follow. This chapter will consider the response of the Labour Government to these dramatic events, from the constituent assembly elections of 25th April to the establishment of a moderate regime on the 9th September.

The political crisis in Portugal during the summer of 1975 coincided with a period of significant international diplomacy, with the superpowers attempting to restore the momentum of détente after the setbacks of the previous year. In preparation for the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the NATO alliance held a series of meetings to maintain cohesion amongst its member states. There were ongoing discussions between representatives of the leading western states to coordinate their response to the energy crisis and deepening global recession. The Labour Government attended all these gatherings, as well as instigating a Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting to encourage a negotiated settlement on the Rhodesian question. Although events in Lisbon

were rarely the principal subject of discussion, they were integral to any attempt to reach diplomatic agreement on other issues, particularly as developments in Portugal were not only considered to be a direct threat to western interests, but also a litmus test of Soviet intentions elsewhere.⁶³⁹

The main argument of this chapter considers the Labour Government's conviction that events in Portugal now threatened the integrity of the NATO alliance. The possibility that a regime sympathetic to communism might be established had potentially disastrous implications for the western alliance, and made Britain more assertive in its approach towards Portugal. Despite unease that intervention might be perceived as interference in Portugal's sovereign affairs, and that wider east-west relations might be negatively affected, the rapid deterioration of the political situation in Lisbon led to the decision that the subject of Portugal should be raised with the Soviet Union. The Labour Government's analysis of events was now similar to that of the Ford Administration, but its approach to policy continued to differ; whilst the US was concerned with the political consequence of these events on Western Europe and their effects on wider global strategy, Britain was more narrowly concerned with their impact on the military effectiveness of the western alliance. This suggests that Britain and the United States had a different concept of the nature of the NATO alliance. The chapter will also argue that Britain's economic weakness prevented it from having a significant influence on events in Lisbon. It received repeated requests for economic aid which it was unable to meet and it failed to prevent the damage to its business interests. Therefore, the Labour Government pursued its aims through diplomacy within NATO, the EEC and (as a party) within the Socialist International, rather than through bilateral relations with Portugal, as before. This meant that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's capacity for encouraging consensus within multilateral institutions became crucial for the pursuit of the British national interest in Portugal.

The Labour Government's approach to Portugal began to change even before the holding of constituent assembly elections. The conviction that the majority of Portuguese would support moderate parties once elections were held, leading to the establishment of parliamentary democracy, was superseded by the realisation that the radical left in Lisbon would attempt to consolidate their power irrespective of the results of any election. The

⁶³⁹ The fall of Saigon to North Vietnamese forces on the 30th April 1975 was seen by many contemporary analysts as evidence that the US was a declining power. This was only partly assuaged the following month by the Mayaguez incident, a US rescue mission in Cambodian waters, which restored some confidence in its military prowess.

gravity of the situation meant developments in Portugal were considered at Cabinet level during this period.⁶⁴⁰ Leading figures within the Labour Government who had not previously taken an interest in these events began to play a significant role. During the Helsinki Summit in August 1975, Wilson and Callaghan raised PCP activity in Portugal with the Soviet delegation at their bilateral meeting. However, the Government's commitment to preventing radical socialism in Lisbon exacerbated ideological tensions within the Labour Party; many democratic socialists on the left of the party, sympathetic to radicals in Lisbon, expressed their dissatisfaction with Anglo-American policy. Those departments within the FCO concerned with relations with the United States and the NATO alliance became more prominent in policy making, whilst the influence of the Southern European Department and the Lisbon Embassy declined. The Labour Government was also influenced by the lobbying of the British business community in Portugal, particularly after they were successful in persuading the Conservative opposition to raise a series of questions in parliament on the issue.

During the summer of 1975 the United States became committed to the removal of the radical left from the government in Lisbon, but it remained difficult for Washington to act decisively in Portugal without having a detrimental impact on Portuguese public opinion. Kissinger was informed by an NSC official that "because the abortive coup attempt has led to a serious weakening of moderate forces and a resulting lurch to the political left, its effect has been to further weaken our already limited ability to influence events in Portugal."⁶⁴¹ There was suspicion inside Portugal that the United States was seeking to destabilise its politics and society (as it had recently done in Chile), which limited Washington's policy options.⁶⁴² Although sharing its concerns the Labour Government sought to prevent the US from pursuing actions which it believed would be counterproductive in Portugal. However, by giving substantial economic aid to the Portuguese Government and financial assistance to the Socialist Party, the US had greater influence on developments. Britain's inability to provide substantial economic assistance to Lisbon also undermined its usefulness to Washington on

⁶⁴⁰ Accounts of events in Portugal during the Hot Summer figure prominently in the autobiographies of James Callaghan and Harold Wilson. See, Callaghan, *Time and Chance*, pp.359-364; and Wilson, *Final Term*, pp.166-173.

⁶⁴¹ 'Telegram 61177/Tosec 726', March 19, 1975, Ford Library, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box 35, NSSM 221 (An action memorandum by the State Department on Portugal forwarded to Kissinger in Jerusalem). <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 147).

⁶⁴² A recent article explores the impact of the 1973 coup d'état in Chile on events in Portugal during the Carnation Revolution. Mario Del Pero, 'Which Chile, Allende?' Henry Kissinger and the Portuguese revolution.' *Cold War History* 11:4 (November 2011).

Portugal. Less clear is the covert role of the United States in Portugal. Indeed some contemporary observers believed that Washington was pursuing a strategy of intervention in Portuguese political affairs during this period and recent historical research in Portugal stresses this role.⁶⁴³ Whether such a policy involved the Labour Government is unclear and will be explored. There was certainly closer cooperation than had been the case in previous months, principally because there was a series of bilateral meetings between the highest levels of government during the period which gave the opportunity for policy towards Portugal to be discussed. The two allies certainly shared the same broad assumptions about the correct course of western policy towards Lisbon.

The events in Portugal referred to as the ‘Hot Summer’ began soon after the elections for the constituent assembly. The takeover of the independent media by the radical left triggered the withdrawal of the PSP from government, leaving the communists as the most influential party; non-communist members of the AFM, supported by the moderate parties, responded by challenging their authority. A second crisis in August saw the armed supporters of different factions within the AFM confront each other on the streets of Lisbon. The collapse of governmental authority brought Portugal close to civil war and economic disaster during the autumn of 1975. The restoration of military discipline by moderate elements within the AFM led to a return of social order, and after a final attempted coup by the radical left, a government was established which was committed to parliamentary democracy in Portugal.

“Two cheers for democracy”⁶⁴⁴

The results of the constituent assembly elections surprised even the most optimistic western observers. Despite calls by the AFM for voters to boycott the election, the turnout of 92% was higher than in many established democracies at the time. The moderate parties together achieved a plurality of the Portuguese electorate, with the PSP being the most successful (obtaining 37.5%, across a wide range of constituencies), but even smaller moderate parties, despite intimidation from the media and left-wing militants, achieved a sizeable proportion of the vote. By contrast the PCP received only 12.5% of the vote, drawn

⁶⁴³ Gomes & Moreira de Sa, *Carlucci vs Kissinger*, pp. 236-254.

⁶⁴⁴ ‘Initial Assessment Portuguese elections: Two Cheers for Democracy’, Embassy in Portugal to the Department of State, 26 April 1975, National Archives, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1975. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 152).

largely from certain districts of Lisbon and regions in the south.⁶⁴⁵ International media coverage which had been previously centred on events in Lisbon, during the campaign reported the violence against the PCP in the north, thus showing that communist support was mainly confined to urban areas.

However, the radical left remained determined to maintain its dominant political position in Lisbon. The outcome of the election was dismissed as the result of an electorate conditioned by fifty years of authoritarian rule. Instead the acceleration of social and economic reform was seen as essential before a revolutionary socialist democracy (as mandated by the April Revolution) could be established. Therefore, immediately after the constituent assembly elections a power struggle between the radical left and moderate centre began.⁶⁴⁶ The political crisis in Lisbon, combined with worsening labour discipline, land seizures and the economic dislocations of decolonisation, led to a rapid deterioration in the Portuguese economy. Although the withdrawal of international capital following the nationalisation of its industry brought accusations that Portugal was being undermined by western powers, the resulting hardships led to calls for greater social discipline and an urgent requirement for international capital, giving the west political leverage.

The British Embassy in Lisbon enthusiastically greeted the outcome of the election, a noticeably different attitude toward the prospects for democracy in Portugal than was shown immediately after the April Revolution. The outcome of the election was considered to be hugely significant; the Ambassador reported, “The scale of the Socialist victory in the elections was the first setback of any real importance to the Communists in Portugal during the year since the coup.”⁶⁴⁷ However, further difficulties were foreseen as a result of the election, leading to his observation that “The Socialists’ victory has strengthened their position as the main champion of a pluralist democracy in Portugal, but has increased the dangers to them from further confrontation from the radicals.”⁶⁴⁸ The Ambassador strongly urged that greater assistance be given to Portugal, arguing that “the election provides a signal opportunity for Her Majesty’s Government, and the West in general, to underpin the

⁶⁴⁵ Manuel, *The Uncertain Outcome*, p.99.

⁶⁴⁶ Whether this was instigated by the moderate parties, with support from the United States, or the radical left so as to establish an authoritarian regime remains a point of contention amongst historians. *Ibid.*, pp.102-104.

⁶⁴⁷ Trench to FCO, ‘Portugal: Elections for a Constituent Assembly,’ 6 May 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Portuguese forces working for representative democracy both by appropriate expressions of support as well as tangible gestures of assistance.”⁶⁴⁹

However, after the radical left became dominant in Lisbon following the events of the 11th March, the Labour Government had no longer believed holding elections for a constituent assembly would be a decisive step towards parliamentary democracy. The assembly elections were considered significant as a means to confer legitimacy on the moderate parties, countering the claim of the radical left to a popular mandate from the April Revolution, but any electoral success by the moderate democratic parties would merely lead to an inevitable power struggle. The Labour Government remained optimistic that Portugal would eventually become a parliamentary democracy, but the possibility that a left wing authoritarian regime might emerge instead caused a fundamental reassessment of relations with Portugal. The potential threat to the cohesion of NATO of developments in Portugal became the Labour Government’s principal concern. It sought to maintain constructive relations with the provisional government in order to have sufficient influence to prevent such an outcome. This meant that often during this period it was difficult for the Labour Government to publicly support the PSP (for fear of antagonising the provisional government) or to protect British business interests in Portugal.

This policy change resulted from informal correspondence between government ministers. This exchange culminated in a pressing question put by Roy Hattersley to James Callaghan: “If the worst happens and the Russians get bases in Portugal what do we do?”⁶⁵⁰ The response is recorded in scrawled handwriting on the letter, “I don’t know the answer.”⁶⁵¹ As a result, there was an urgent policy review, conducted by the Cabinet Secretary, Sir John Killick. This was clearly influenced by his briefing document written at the time for a forthcoming House of Lords debate on relations with the Soviet Union.⁶⁵² The review concluded that “we think we can best help further progress towards a greater degree of democracy in Portugal by continuing our policy of building up a constructive relationship with the new forces in Portuguese society.”⁶⁵³ In order to achieve this strategy, he stressed that “We shall pursue this both by bilateral contacts and by using our influence where

⁶⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵⁰ Roy Hattersley to James Callaghan, ‘Future Policy toward Portugal,’ 7 April 1975, FCO 9/2293.

⁶⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵² ‘JIC Study (2), ‘An assessment of possible developments in Portugal’s relations with the Western Alliance and their implications for NATO’, Security Policy and Methods Committee, 28 April 1975, FCO 9/2289.

⁶⁵³ Callaghan to Trench, ‘PSP and AFM’, 15 May 1975, FCO 9/2269.

appropriate in western organisations.”⁶⁵⁴ The opportunity to do so was presented by a “forthcoming crescendo of meetings” between the western allies.⁶⁵⁵ This was the first time since the April Revolution that policy towards Portugal was decided at Cabinet level.⁶⁵⁶ The correspondence between ministers demonstrates that events in Lisbon were being followed closely, even by those for whom foreign policy was not an immediate concern.

The Labour Government’s strategy of maintaining influence within the provisional government made it difficult to publically support the PSP. The power struggle between radical left and moderates following the constituent assembly elections meant that any contact by the Labour Government with the PSP might disrupt relations with the Portuguese Government. Therefore on occasions, despite its recent electoral success, the Labour Government publicly maintained distance from the PSP. Killick informed the FCO that Callaghan “does not repeat not want us to get into a position of advising Dr Soares on how he should play his hand.”⁶⁵⁷ As a result the USA and West Germany replaced the Labour Government as the PSP’s principal supporters, which encouraged them to work together on Portugal, and reduced Britain’s influence further.⁶⁵⁸

The Labour Government’s policy of engagement with the provisional government also meant that measures suggested to reduce Portugal’s access to sensitive information within NATO were opposed. The United States had argued since the April Revolution that the presence of PCP ministers in government compromised the Alliance’s security and that the forthcoming Helsinki Summit meant a resolution of the issue became critical, because “Portuguese membership of the MBFR Ad Hoc Group could, if NATO’s intentions were passed by the Portuguese to the Soviet Union, prejudice the Alliance’s objectives in these negotiations.”⁶⁵⁹ The Labour Government, however, believed that placing restrictions on the Portuguese delegation could antagonise Lisbon and Portuguese public opinion to such an extent that it might withdraw from the NATO alliance. To avoid this scenario, the FCO argued, the western alliance “would have to balance the losses arising from the possibility of

⁶⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵⁵ ‘Record of a Meeting between the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the US Ambassador at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office,’ 19 May 1975, FC 9/2291.

⁶⁵⁶ CAB 128/57/7, 24 July 1975.

⁶⁵⁷ Callaghan to Trench, ‘PSP and AFM’, 15 May 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁶⁵⁸ ‘Memorandum of Conversation (Ford, Kissinger and Brandt)’, Washington, March 27, 1975, US National Archives, RG 59, Records of the Office of the Counsellor, Helmut C. Sonnenfeldt, 1955–1977, Entry 5339, Box 5, Germany 1975. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 149).

⁶⁵⁹ The Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) negotiations aimed to achieve a balance of conventional forces in Europe. Macdonald to MOD, ‘Military Implications for NATO of the Security Situation in Portugal,’ 26 May 1975, FCO 9/2289.

continued (but at a slightly lower) leakage of information to the Soviets against the political and military value of continued Portuguese participation in the Alliance.”⁶⁶⁰ This led the Labour Government to conclude that “whatever doubts we might have privately about the future of Portugal,” in public, “we should behave to the Portuguese as if we had confidence in them.”⁶⁶¹

The first opportunity for the Labour Government to raise events in Portugal with the government in Lisbon was at a NATO Summit in Brussels. The aim of the gathering was to improve relations between the allies prior to negotiations with the Soviet Union at the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.⁶⁶² The Labour Government worked assiduously to ensure that its strategy of constructive relations with the provisional government would succeed. During a meeting in Washington to establish a common approach to the Brussels Summit, Wilson and Callaghan presented their plan to influence the new government in Lisbon.⁶⁶³ Although receiving a sympathetic response from Kissinger, a State Department minute, passed to the FCO by the US Ambassador, revealed his scepticism: “He himself did not believe that the way to help the moderates was to support the radicals, but he would let the British have a run at their policy and he had no alternative to offer.”⁶⁶⁴ However, the British Ambassador in Washington stressed that the “pessimistic view of the future of Portugal is not shared at all levels of the State Department, nor by the US Ambassador in Lisbon.”⁶⁶⁵ This demonstrates that close institutional ties enabled an awareness of US bureaucratic politics, but this was only used to facilitate British diplomacy and not to influence the Washington policy debate.

There was a realisation amongst British officials that a successful outcome to their meeting with the Portuguese delegation in Brussels would depend on the offer of economic aid. The FCO pressured the Treasury to consider this, arguing that “We should give the Portuguese what help we can bilaterally in the way of financial and technical assistance, and encourage international agencies to give as positive a response to their requests as

⁶⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶¹ Goodison to FCO, ‘Greece and Portugal,’ 21 May 1975, FCO 9/2289.

⁶⁶² The CSCE negotiations which began in November 1972 culminated in the Helsinki Summit in August 1975. Jussi Hanhimaki, ‘Détente in Europe, 1962-1975’, Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, ed., Cambridge History of the Cold War - Volume II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp.198-218.

⁶⁶³ Ramsbotham to FCO, ‘Talks in Washington: Portugal,’ 9 May 1975, FCO 9/2291.

⁶⁶⁴ Goodison to Clark, ‘CENTO Council of Ministers Meeting,’ 23 May 1975, FCO 9/2302.

⁶⁶⁵ Ramsbotham to FCO, ‘Talks in Washington: Portugal,’ 9 May 1975, FCO 9/2291.

possible.”⁶⁶⁶ However, the Treasury opposed the provision of bilateral aid, maintaining that Britain’s economic problems made this impossible. The Labour Government accordingly went to the Brussels Summit without having an offer of substantial economic assistance and the British delegation was therefore denied the most effective means, given Portugal’s economic circumstances, of influencing the political process in Lisbon. The failure to support political strategy with economic diplomacy contrasted with the provision by the United States and by West Germany of substantial bilateral aid throughout this period.⁶⁶⁷

By the time the NATO allies gathered in Brussels summit proceedings were overshadowed by the seriousness of the situation in Lisbon. An *Economist* editorial argued, “The fear that Portugal might slide irrevocably into being a left-wing dictatorship, and the possibility that similar things might happen in other European countries, require a new definition of what the alliance is trying to do in Europe.”⁶⁶⁸ A desperate Soares pressured western allies to confront the Portuguese delegation, demanding that the west “fight a bit for Portuguese democracy.”⁶⁶⁹ The British decided to raise their concerns with the Portuguese delegation during a private bilateral meeting rather than at the open forums within the summit, as did other NATO members. However, despite this sensitivity towards the Portuguese delegation, there remained insuperable obstacles to establishing constructive relations with the provisional government. The Portuguese raised the issue of British press coverage of events in Lisbon, leading the British delegation to defend the BBC’s editorial independence. The Portuguese also requested that the withdrawal of British capital, seen as an “economic boycott,” or, “economic sabotage,” should be countered through the provision of bilateral aid. Killick later concluded that the bilateral meeting “probably leaves us better placed with the Portuguese than anybody else”, but warned that “our capacity to deliver the kind of outside assistance they are liable to ask us for is unlikely to measure up to their expectations.”⁶⁷⁰

After the Brussels Summit the Labour Government considered whether to continue working closely with the United States on Portugal. The British were concerned at the

⁶⁶⁶ ‘Visit of Prime Minister to Washington,’ 7 May 1975, FCO 9/2291.

⁶⁶⁷ The US pledged \$25 million and West Germany 70 million marks (\$27 million) during this period. ‘Memorandum of Conversation’, Bonn, May 20, 1975, US National Archives, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, P820125–0430. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 153).

⁶⁶⁸ *The Economist*, 24 May 1975, p. 9.

⁶⁶⁹ ‘Secretary of State,’ 27 May 1975, FCO 9/2294.

⁶⁷⁰ At a Quadripartite dinner of NATO powers in Paris prior to the Brussels Summit, the US shared their willingness to approach the Portuguese delegation. *Ibid.*

willingness of the US to contemplate Portugal's withdrawal from NATO.⁶⁷¹ The existence of "considerable suspicion of the US in Portugal" meant that Britain's policy of engagement with the provisional government was hindered by close Anglo-American relations.⁶⁷² There was also concern at Washington's inconsistent approach, the FCO noting that it "has shown a tendency to adopt a wait and see attitude, interrupted by occasional sudden rushes forward."⁶⁷³ The Labour Government therefore made the decision to withhold sensitive information from the US on Portugal (which did not happen at any other stage of the revolution); an FCO official noted that "Reservations about some recent developments, and doubts about the future, are best kept to ourselves. We do not wish gloomy prophecies to become self-fulfilling."⁶⁷⁴ However, because wider relations with Washington were of greater concern than events in Portugal, the FCO continued to facilitate US diplomacy in Lisbon. Kissinger's later acceptance that support for the PSP was the only means to promote US interests in Portugal gave west European social democratic movements (including the Labour Party) a prominent role in US policy.⁶⁷⁵

The Labour Government welcomed the results of the April elections believing these validated its confidence that despite recent political instability in Lisbon an eventual democratic outcome in Portugal was likely. However, after the elections the direction of events in Lisbon alarmed the Labour Government, not least because they directly threatened British business interests. This made it essential to maintain constructive relations with the provisional government, but the approach was undermined by Britain's failure to provide substantial economic assistance. The integrity of the NATO alliance after the appointment of communist ministers into the provisional government meant the Cold War now became the principal concern of the Labour leadership in Portugal. Although this meant Britain and the USA now shared the same concerns with events in Lisbon, their approach to Portugal continued to differ.

⁶⁷¹ Killick to FCO, 'Portugal,' 29 May 1975, FCO 9/2294.

⁶⁷² *Ibid.*

⁶⁷³ Briefing Note - NATO Summit: Brussels,' 29 May 1975, FCO 9/2289.

⁶⁷⁴ 'Visit of Prime Minister to Washington,' 7 May 1975, FCO 9/2291.

⁶⁷⁵ 'Memorandum of Conversation (Ford, Kissinger and Brandt)', Washington, March 27, 1975, US National Archives, RG 59, Records of the Office of the Counsellor, Helmut C. Sonnenfeldt, 1955-1977, Entry 5339, Box 5, Germany 1975. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 149).

The *República* Affair

The power struggle between the PCP and PSP began after violent clashes took place between armed supporters during May Day celebrations in Lisbon. Serious unrest ensued, the economy spiralled out of control, government services largely ceased functioning and the overseas territories were close to civil war. The worst and most symbolic confrontation occurred at the offices of the socialist aligned *República* newspaper, the last significant media organisation outside the control of the PCP; communist sympathisers occupied its premises, leading to an armed standoff with PSP supporters throughout the following weeks.⁶⁷⁶ The *República* affair demonstrated the strength of each movement and came to symbolise competing visions for Portugal's future. Although the power struggle led to Soares' resignation from the provisional government on the 17th July, he was able to skilfully exploit the crisis to attract Western European support.⁶⁷⁷ The PCP had been politically weakened the most, being blamed for the violence and anarchy in Lisbon, while moderate elements within the armed forces council bolstered their claims to be the guardians of public order against the PCP and other elements of the radical left.

The Labour Government's policy of engaging with the provisional government was now increasingly at variance with the direction of events. As the situation deteriorated Soares contacted London to request a "strong statement in support of the party and genuine democracy."⁶⁷⁸ However, the need to maintain constructive relations with the provisional government, an FCO official explained, meant that "the hyper-sensitivity shown by Portuguese leaders" required the Labour Government "to show sympathy and understanding for their problems," leading inexorably to a position where "we may have to befriend them more than their treatment of the democratic parties deserves."⁶⁷⁹ During this critical period, contact with Soares was made through the British Embassy in Lisbon rather than by Labour ministers directly, as had been the case during all previous political crises since the April Revolution. Soares' resignation as Foreign Minister meant that there was no longer the opportunity for regular contact during official business. Callaghan was distracted by the referendum campaign on EEC membership, with normal government business disrupted by the suspension of Cabinet collective ministerial responsibility.⁶⁸⁰ Within the FCO there was

⁶⁷⁶ For an account of the *República* crisis see, Manuel, *The Uncertain Outcome*, pp 101-103.

⁶⁷⁷ Gomes and Moreira, *Carlucci vs Kissinger*, pp. 212-220. Mario Del Pero, "Which Chile, Allende?", pp.642.

⁶⁷⁸ Trench to FCO, 'NATO Summit,' 6 June 1975, FCO 9/2290.

⁶⁷⁹ 'Briefing Note - NATO Summit: Brussels,' 29 May 1975, FCO 9/2289.

⁶⁸⁰ Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, pp. 658-9.

once again concern about the effectiveness of the Lisbon Embassy. Their reporting of events was considered insufficiently regular, accurate or comprehensive; an FCO official pleaded that “What we need, and need it badly, is brief reporting to let us know apparently what is going on.”⁶⁸¹ There was concern amongst officials that during crucial episodes, “we had to rely on reports in the Times.”⁶⁸²

Although close institutional ties continued between the United States and the Labour Government they differed significantly in their approach to Portugal. The US was increasingly concerned with the wider international implications of events in Portugal. During a visit to Washington, a State Department official shared with Foreign Office minister Roy Hattersley “more general Administration concern about the evidence of a left-ward trend in European politics which might be in the direction of neutralism.”⁶⁸³ This led to the somewhat ominous conclusion that “If NATO’s defensive resolve was to be maintained, a line might have to be drawn to show the limits beyond which developments on the Portuguese model would not be tolerated in the Alliance.”⁶⁸⁴ By contrast, the Labour Government continued to maintain that Portugal’s membership of NATO was more important than any wider political implications for the western alliance. The US was also concerned with the impact of the power struggle in Lisbon on the outcome of events in Angola, but there is no archival evidence that similar concerns shaped British policy.⁶⁸⁵

The Labour Government became aware of the attitude of the Ford administration towards British policy through the release of a ‘missing message’ by the US Embassy. The message had been sent by Kissinger to Callaghan on the 22nd May, but concerned officials in London, dismayed by its undiplomatic tone, delayed its despatch until after the Brussels Summit. In the message Kissinger informed Callaghan that he had supported British policy “hardly out of conviction,” but because “we are unable to wean our European friends from their illusions.” He speculated, “I wonder, if Soares is finally put down, if the Europeans will try to find another ‘moderate’ dark horse until finally the left-wing, Communist supported neutralist dictatorship is there in place as an example for others to follow in Western Europe.”⁶⁸⁶ The analysis of the British Ambassador in Washington suggested that “The short-temperedness of his message no doubt reflected a momentary fit of exasperation over the way

⁶⁸¹ Goodison to Clark, 9 June 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*

⁶⁸³ Ramsbotham to FCO, ‘Portugal’, 20 June 1975, FCO 9/2302.

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁵ Mario Del Pero, ‘Which Chile, Allende?’, pp.627. Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, pp. 202-204.

⁶⁸⁶ Kissinger to Callaghan, ‘Message from the Secretary to Foreign Secretary,’ 22 May 1975, FCO 9/2302.

in which we were combining with his officials to urge on him a course of action in which he did not believe.”⁶⁸⁷ He strongly advised that “It might be politic, however, to avoid keeping on at him too much on the subject through personal messages.”⁶⁸⁸ Throughout the critical period that followed, Callaghan contacted Kissinger to discuss Portugal on fewer occasions.

During the *República* affair, the conflict between Kissinger and the State Department on policy towards the Portuguese Revolution was resolved, leading to a programme of support for political moderates in Lisbon.⁶⁸⁹ The return of Ambassador Carlucci to Lisbon after a period of ill-health reinvigorated US diplomacy.⁶⁹⁰ He established contact with a group of officers within the AFM, led by Melo Antunes, who wanted a government established with an electoral mandate. There was a new strategy of energetically building relations with the moderate parties in Portugal including, despite its previous aversion, the PSP.⁶⁹¹ The tarnished reputation of the US in Portugal, following previous interventions, meant assistance for political moderates was channelled through west European social democratic parties and trade unions, including the Socialist International; this approach restored the close ties between the US and the moderate left in Western Europe, established during the first phase of the Cold War.⁶⁹² Despite Britain’s excellent contacts in Portugal and close partisan ties with the PSP, the US decided to operate through other West European states, principally West Germany, Netherlands and Sweden.⁶⁹³ Therefore the evolution of US policy towards Portugal marked a turning point in the Labour Government’s role in Lisbon. Since the April Revolution the Labour Government had often taken the lead in diplomacy with the Portuguese and this had been actively encouraged by the United States. However, the seriousness of the political situation in Portugal over the summer of 1975 meant that the US and other western states now sought to become directly involved in the active support of political moderates. The participation of other western powers meant that the Labour Government became less significant as an ally of the PSP and the policy of continuing to

⁶⁸⁷ Wilberforce to Morgan, ‘Portugal’, 5 June 1975, FCO 9/2302.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁹ Gomes and Moreira, *Carlucci vs Kissinger*, pp. 262-355.

⁶⁹⁰ Ure to Baker, ‘US Ambassador in Portugal,’ 4 July 1975, FCO 9/2291.

⁶⁹¹ Lisbon Embassy to Department of State, ‘Foreign Minister on Current Political Crisis’, 22 July 1975, Ford Library, National Security Adviser, Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 11, Portugal. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 156).

⁶⁹² Telegram 61177/Tosec 726’, March 19, 1975, Ford Library, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box 35, NSSM 221 (an action memorandum by the State Department on Portugal forwarded to Kissinger in Jerusalem). <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 147). For the reestablishment of ties between the US and the moderate left in Western Europe, see Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, p. 179.

⁶⁹³ Telegram 61177/Tosec 726’, March 19, 1975, Ford Library, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box 35, NSSM 221. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 147).

maintain constructive relations with the provisional government further accelerated this process.

The making of British policy towards Portugal was affected by the ideological factionalism within the Labour Party during Wilson's final term. The attempt to support moderate parties and protect British businesses, whilst ensuring the integrity of the NATO alliance, was fiercely criticised by those who favoured a democratic socialist outcome in Portugal.⁶⁹⁴ These criticisms were made most forcefully by members of the International Department of the National Executive Committee. This body challenged the government to uphold the internationalist aspirations of the recent Labour Party manifesto, rather than revert to an agenda set by a foreign policy establishment of Whitehall mandarins, Fleet Street and business corporations. The International Department requested access to all recent communications with Lisbon, and submitted a report critical of government policy. This recorded that bias within the British press meant that events in Portugal were "set against a background of hysteria in Western Europe and the United States."⁶⁹⁵ The International Committee concluded that Judith Hart should visit Lisbon during the summer recess and report her findings on her return.⁶⁹⁶ Therefore, as the power struggle in Lisbon intensified, an alternative view of events was held by several members of the Labour Government.

The threat to British interests increased as the situation in Portugal deteriorated. A greater number of British citizens raised their concerns with the Lisbon Embassy, leading the Ambassador to report that "I do fear that the point is approaching at which real trouble may break out. Hence my preoccupation with the British community on which I am spending a disproportionate time at present."⁶⁹⁷ As a result there was increased lobbying by private citizens, businesses and their interest groups in Westminster. In particular, a series of parliamentary questions was raised by Conservative Party MPs. However, although leading government time to be spent on resolving specific concerns, such lobbying did not directly influence overall policy on Portugal which remained focused on promoting democracy and maintaining the integrity of the NATO alliance. The British Ambassador, responding to the FCO's request for more regular and accurate despatches, now reported not only on the power struggle in Lisbon but also on the unfolding crisis elsewhere. In marked contrast to the

⁶⁹⁴ Castle, *The Castle diaries*, pp. 494-495.

⁶⁹⁵ 'Portugal – One Year after the Revolution', 6 May 1975, Labour Party Archive, International Department – NEC Minutes.

⁶⁹⁶ Judith Hart, 'Report on Portugal', ID/1974-75/116 - Labour Party Archive, International Department.

⁶⁹⁷ Trench to FCO, 'The Political Situation', 18 June 1975, FCO 9/2289.

optimistic tone of the Ambassador's reporting immediately after the constituent assembly election, his despatches became increasingly pessimistic, including the bleak conclusion "I discounted the likelihood of a civil war, because I could not see who would be fighting whom; now a division does seem to be taking shape."⁶⁹⁸

The relationship with the provisional government was also affected by the importance of the British media's coverage of events in Portugal. As the most trustworthy source of news, particularly after the radical left monopolised state media, it once again played a crucial role in shaping public discourse.⁶⁹⁹ Inevitably individual reports and articles by British journalists caused offence to leading Portuguese politicians. The controller of European Services at the BBC, Alexander Lieven, reported that when comments on Portugal were broadcast from "'*The Times*,' '*The Daily Telegraph*,' '*The Guardian*,' '*The Economist*,' etc, this material is more often than not critical of present trends in Portugal, and, as such, unwelcome to those in power there."⁷⁰⁰ The BBC World Service, the most trusted and reliable source of information in Portugal, caused the greatest difficulty for the Labour Government. The British Ambassador reported that Soares emphasised "the importance of maintaining the impartiality of the BBC Portuguese Language Service, to which the population were turning again, as in the days of fascism, for an objective account of what is happening here."⁷⁰¹ The criticism the BBC received from across the political spectrum initially reassured Bush House that reporting was politically neutral. But ensuring this was maintained proved difficult because of a reliance on a small number of native speakers whose ideological views and level of political engagement was largely unknown. Lieven confessed that "our Portuguese staff are themselves far from immune from the fiery enthusiasms and ferocious fractious factional disputes which grip their fellow intellectuals at home."⁷⁰² This was a problem exacerbated by spending cuts which prevented further recruitment of Portuguese language specialists and made maintaining discipline amongst existing workers more difficult.

There were a number of incidents when the impartiality of the BBC World Service coverage was criticised, but an occasion when delivery of a broadcast was disrupted by

⁶⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁹ An exasperated British Ambassador complained that "The television is so Communist dominated that I have the greatest difficulty in forcing myself to watch anything except the occasional French film or American detective serial." Trench to FCO, 'The Political Situation', 18 June 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁷⁰⁰ Lieven to FCO, 22 April 1975, FCO 9/1704.

⁷⁰¹ Trench to FCO, 'Political Situation', 31 May 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁷⁰² Lieven to FCO, 22 April 1975, FCO 9/1704.

audible laughter within the studio (during an interview with a moderate politician, whilst the interviewer wore a symbol of a far-left party in Portugal⁷⁰³) brought the issue of impartiality to the fore, triggering criticism in broadsheet editorials and a Westminster parliamentary debate.⁷⁰⁴ Therefore the significant role of the BBC in Portuguese public discourse did not translate into tangible influence; indeed there were occasions when British diplomacy was instead undermined by reporting. Because editorial impartiality was its essential appeal to the Portuguese public, the Labour Government could not, despite some internal discussion to the contrary, influence its output. Thus the BBC was not the immediate asset for British foreign policy which its importance in the Carnation Revolution suggests. The editorial independence of the BBC meant that it could not be used as an instrument of British foreign policy through direct appeals to Portuguese public opinion, although there was debate within the FCO over whether control of World Service funding enabled this. As a result the Labour Government, despite having the opportunity, did not go beyond the traditional instruments of state diplomacy to influence events in Portugal.⁷⁰⁵

The Labour Government's policy of engagement with the provisional government following the coup d'état attempt was based on the view that there had been a backlash against the moderate parties in favour of the radical left amongst the Portuguese populace. It sought to explain to the provisional government at the Brussels Summit the implications of any action which might compromise its membership of NATO, but tried at the same time to avoid needlessly antagonising the provisional government by raising issues relating to British interests or support for the moderate parties. The Labour Government's approach had only the tacit support of the Ford Administration, which doubted its likely effectiveness and consequently, alongside its inability to support its diplomacy with bilateral economic aid, Britain was unable to pursue an effective policy during the period that followed the constituent assembly elections. The Labour Government's analysis meant that it failed to fully understand the implications of the elections, despite the British Embassy's realisation "that backlash has itself generated a further reaction in the direction of moderation, among

⁷⁰³ Somewhat surprisingly, an internal BBC investigation actually revealed that the interviewer, rather than being politically motivated, did so because "she was a distant relative of his, disliked him and wore the badge to annoy him." Warburton to Kendall, 'BBC External Services, 25 July, FCO 9/1704.

⁷⁰⁴ See parliamentary exchange between Callaghan and Churchill, 6 August 1975 (Oral answers 477).

⁷⁰⁵ There was at the time a wider debate within the Labour Government about the role of the BBC World Service whilst Britain declined economically. Tom McNally argued that "There is still obviously a great deal of pride in the concept of the BBC speaking the truth to the world regardless of British interests. But I think there is also a growing awareness that this may not cut the ice it once did with the hard-faced men from the Treasury." McNally to Callaghan, 16 July 1975, 2222:I/PSP:74-75 -Callaghan Papers, Box 136.

the populace.”⁷⁰⁶ The Labour Government remained committed to Soares and the PSP as it had been since the April Revolution, but policy after the constituent assembly elections weakened this relationship, and did so as the US and other west European states offered unambiguous diplomatic and financial support. However, Portugal’s future was not yet decided; as the British Ambassador observed, “Nevertheless, there was still a long way to go before the effervescence prevailing throughout the country could be neutralised”.⁷⁰⁷

The ‘Hot Summer’

The power struggle between the PSP and PCP culminated in Soares’ decision to withdraw from the provisional government on the 15th July in protest at proposals to institutionalise the role of the armed services in government, which the PSP considered “a frontal attack on the democratic institutions and preparing the way for an eventual communist dictatorship.”⁷⁰⁸ The PCP made a final attempt to seize power in Lisbon, rallying their supporters among the political parties and AFM, but were fiercely resisted by an unwieldy coalition of moderate and Maoist political parties and their opponents within the armed forces; each side organised a series of strikes and demonstrations throughout Portugal, while the PCP organised land seizures in the Alentejo region in the south.⁷⁰⁹ This crisis culminated in a dramatic live television debate between Cunhal, the PCP leader, and Soares.⁷¹⁰ The communists’ attempt to seize power ended with the release of an AFM communiqué on the 21st June, which signalled that they would remain committed to political pluralism for Portugal. A second political crisis followed within the AFM between those with alternative visions for Portugal’s future: direct democracy or pluralistic democracy.⁷¹¹ By the autumn, armed groups confronted each other on the streets of Lisbon, as divisions within the AFM threatened a civil war throughout Portugal. The political chaos in Lisbon brought near anarchy throughout Portugal (coined the ‘Hot Summer’ by contemporary observers) and

⁷⁰⁶ Baker to Morgan, ‘HM Ambassador’s Despatch’, 1 May 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁷⁰⁷ Trench to FCO, ‘Political Situation’, 19 June 1975, FCO 9/2269.

⁷⁰⁸ Trench to FCO, ‘Portugal,’ 11 July 1975, FCO 9/2271.

⁷⁰⁹ A new provisional government was established on the 8th August. This was a minority government with only a very narrow body of support amongst the Portuguese electorate, consisting of ministers from across the radical left spectrum, including the PCP.

⁷¹⁰ Manuel, *The Uncertain Outcome*, p.115.

⁷¹¹ For a narrative of events during this period, see Robert Harvey, *Portugal: Birth of a Democracy* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd), pp. 64-71.

almost led to economic collapse, exacerbated by the problem of assimilating Portuguese nationals returning rapidly from the overseas territories.⁷¹²

The British Embassy greeted developments with confusion and alarm. Everyday business was increasingly disrupted by events, with more time spent protecting British citizens and their interests. The fluid political environment made accurate reporting difficult. As the political situation deteriorated, the Ambassador complained that “In the feverish political atmosphere which has prevailed for the past ten days, it is difficult to determine the weight to be given to the many, often conflicting, reports reaching us.”⁷¹³ There was mounting concern at the dominant position of the radical left in Lisbon, the Ambassador reaching the conclusion that “So we are faced with a scenario which is either totally gloomy or highly dangerous, depending on whether one considers the slide to Communist-dominated military rule to be likely to progress unresisted, or to provoke effective opposition.”⁷¹⁴ The British Embassy continued to maintain, however, that eventually the political moderates would achieve power. The significance of the AFM communiqué was immediately recognised, an FCO official arguing, “This was a crucial event in the development of the Portuguese Revolution.”⁷¹⁵ The Ambassador, rather than recommending changes to British policy and believing there was little scope for effective intervention, concluded, “I confess that, beyond the very limited types of action which we have been discussing – visits, aid, etc – I do not see that there are many options open to us.”⁷¹⁶ It followed that, unlike the American Embassy, which actively intervened in the political process, the British Embassy instead gave “a high priority to examining the troubles and possible dangers facing the British Community.”⁷¹⁷ The British Ambassador in Lisbon sent detailed despatches to London outlining incidents of harassment, intimidation and the takeover by workers of many British businesses, and recommended that “Strong representation should be made to the Portuguese Foreign Minister about the difficulties being experienced by foreign firms and nationals.”⁷¹⁸

The Labour Government’s initial reaction to developments in Portugal was to maintain existing policy. An FCO official reiterated that Britain must “keep in touch with the

⁷¹² ‘Portuguese Economy: Towards Collapse’, *The Economist*, 12 July 1975, p.86. It was coined the ‘Hot Summer’ by the Portuguese media both for the political crisis and excessive temperatures.

⁷¹³ Trench to FCO, ‘Political Crisis,’ 25 July 1975, FCO 9/2271.

⁷¹⁴ Trench to Goodison, ‘Political Situation,’ 15 July 1975, FCO 9/2271.

⁷¹⁵ Clark to Goodison, 24 June 1975, FCO 9/2271.

⁷¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷¹⁷ Trench to Goodison, ‘Political Situation,’ 15 July 1975, FCO 9/2271.

⁷¹⁸ Trench to FCO, ‘EEC/Portugal’, 11 July 1975, FCO 59/1308.

moderate elements in Portuguese life and give them what legitimate support and encouragement we may,” whilst attempting to “pursue contacts with some of the more radical and influential members of the AFM who still have fairly open minds,”⁷¹⁹ Such contact reassured the Labour Government as to the direction of events in Portugal. A meeting on the 4th July between Hattersley and Major Alves revealed that “radical solutions were being considered, but things would change and more moderate compromises would emerge.”⁷²⁰ During a meeting held in London on 27th June, Callaghan was impressed by the newly appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, Major Melo Antunes, who “came across as an earnest, intelligent and forceful person who wished to create in Portugal a democratic socialist society.”⁷²¹ After the meeting he informed Kissinger “that those within who favoured totalitarianism were vocal but not the majority within the AFM.”⁷²² However, as the political crisis worsened, the Labour Government came under pressure from Soares to give more active assistance to the moderate parties. On the night of his resignation from the provisional government, he called at the British Ambassador’s private residence to urge the Labour Government not to attend the Helsinki Summit as a protest at the Soviet Union’s role in recent events and, alongside its western allies, to organise military manoeuvres in Portugal. He also called on the Labour Party to support the PSP by providing greater funding.⁷²³ During the following weeks, as the situation in Lisbon deteriorated, a clandestine meeting was arranged with the Embassy where Soares revealed, through an emissary, that “he expected a left-wing coup within the next few days,” and that “he was determined to resist and start an underground movement.”⁷²⁴ An associate of Soares later clarified “He meant money and maybe even arms.”⁷²⁵ These meetings, during periods of greatest uncertainty, reveal that Soares continued to consider the Labour Government a close ally despite the continued moderation of its policies.⁷²⁶

The Secretary of the Conservative Foreign Affairs Committee, Winston Churchill MP, urged the Labour Government to give greater assistance to the moderate parties in Portugal. He had been persuaded by Soares during a visit to Portugal that the PCP was

⁷¹⁹ ‘Brief No.3 Anglo-Portuguese Relations,’ 18 June 1975, PREM 16/602.

⁷²⁰ ‘Record of Conversation between the Minister of State and Major Alves,’ 4 July 1975, FCO 41/1694.

⁷²¹ ‘Secretary of State’s meeting with Dr Kissinger’, 12 July 1975, FCO 9/2302.

⁷²² *Ibid.*

⁷²³ Trench to FCO, ‘Portuguese Political Crisis,’ 12 July 1975, FCO 9/2271.

⁷²⁴ Trench to FCO, ‘Political Crisis,’ 22 July 1975, FCO 9/2271.

⁷²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷²⁶ The Labour Government actually ordered all naval ships to remain at least fifty nautical miles outside Portuguese waters. Callaghan to Lisbon, ‘Ship and Aircraft movement’, 23 July 1975. FCO 9/2290.

receiving substantial support from the Soviet Union.⁷²⁷ He was approached by British businessmen involved with trade to Portugal, who asked what constructive help they could offer the democratic parties there. His advice, he revealed in a private meeting with Callaghan, was that “the only party worth supporting in the immediate term was the Socialist Party,” which meant that “This would have to come seemingly from the Labour Party.”⁷²⁸ On the 25th July he spoke about Portugal to Wilson, who, agreeing to his proposal, “thought that it may be possible to arrange some means of getting funds to Portugal.”⁷²⁹ However, Tom McNally MP, representing the Labour Party, remained sceptical, protesting to Callaghan that “It is not an original idea and we have no evidence that Mario Soares is at the moment hard up for cash.”⁷³⁰ Harold Wilson’s motivation, he implied, was party political, because during a recent parliamentary foreign policy debate on détente, the Conservative spokesman had raised the issue of Portugal. He observed, “Churchill is well able to generate publicity and may therefore need to be treated carefully.”⁷³¹ Callaghan’s decision to endorse the proposal was partly political; so as to maintain the Labour Government’s distance from the initiative, he was emphatic that “any funds he collects should be sent to Hayward direct – not through me.”⁷³² The decision to review financial support for the PSP did not signal a change in Labour Government policy, and there remained scepticism as to whether any intervention would be effective. There is no documentary record in the National Archive or the Labour Party Archive that the Labour Government did encourage British businesses to support the PSP during the Portuguese Revolution, suggesting that this was an initiative that either did not transpire, or only involved private individuals on a small scale.

The Ford Administration’s decision to support the moderate political parties in Portugal brought pressure on the Labour Government to do the same. Throughout the ‘Hot Summer’ concern increased in Washington at developments in Portugal and their international implications. The appointment to the overseas territories of administrators sympathetic to Marxist national liberation movements meant that they received support prior

⁷²⁷ Churchill informed McNally during a telephone conversation that “Some evidence to support this was that during the recent election campaign the Communists’ publicity was 10:1 more in volume than the other parties. Another point was that whereas all the democratic parties were ‘bust’ the Portuguese Communists were able to employ some 2,000 full time paid officials.” McNally – Record of a Telephone Conversation between Mr Winston Churchill MP, and Mr Tom McNally, Friday 18 July, 1975, 2222: I/PSP: 74-75 - Callaghan Papers, Box 136.

⁷²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷²⁹ Szlamp to McNally, 25 July 1975, 2222: I/PSP: 74-75 - Callaghan Papers, Box 136.

⁷³⁰ McNally to Callaghan, 21 July 1975, 2222: I/PSP: 74-75 - Callaghan Papers, Box 136.

⁷³¹ *Ibid.*

⁷³² Handwritten minute by Callaghan on McNally to Callaghan, 21 July 1975. *Ibid.*

to independence. A visit to Cuba by the influential AFM leader Carvalho Otelo at the end of July raised serious concerns in Washington, leading to the return of Ambassador Carlucci to discuss developments in Portugal with Kissinger on the 11th August.⁷³³ The Ford Administration decided to intervene more actively in Portuguese politics to prevent further radicalisation. Soares was now considered the best hope for pluralistic democracy and given unambiguous assistance.⁷³⁴ Likewise the moderate Antunes group within the AFM received direct support and advice.⁷³⁵

However, the exact nature of US intervention remains unclear, particularly the role of the CIA, its relationship with the Catholic Church and right-wing nationalist groups in the Azores.⁷³⁶ There are a number of files from the CIA's 40 Committee which refer to 'covert action', including one document in which Kissinger comments, "I am not so much against a coup as such, shocking as it may sound to some of my colleagues."⁷³⁷ However, these documents are heavily redacted, the remaining sections are concerned with the programme of support to Soares and Antunes. Kissinger rejected many 40 Committee proposals (although their details are not specified) arguing, "Well frankly I regard a \$1.3 million program as an amateurish operation. It just amounts to permitting everybody to cover his ass and being able to say he did something."⁷³⁸ He commented in exasperation, "why not come up with an effective program and we will get the money we need. I still regard this Forty Committee paper as an amateurish, high school kind of program."⁷³⁹ It appears that Kissinger was willing to support a more substantial covert operation but he did not receive adequate proposals for such a programme. This suggests the administration was operating under political constraints in Washington which made planning for covert operations difficult. There is nothing in the British archival record to suggest that the Labour Government was aware of discussions on covert operations by the Ford administration during this period.

⁷³³ Memorandum of Conversation, 'Portugal', 12 August 1975, Ford Library, National Security Adviser, NSC Staff Files, Box 17, Portugal 1975.

⁷³⁴ Telegram 61177/Tosec 726, Department of State to the Consulate in Jerusalem, 'Portugal: Contingencies and Recommended Courses of Action—Action Memorandum', 19 March 1975, Ford Library, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box 35, NSSM 221. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 147).

⁷³⁵ Memorandum from the 40 Committee Executive Secretary (Ratliff) to Secretary of State Kissinger, 'Covert Action Program for Portugal', 3 March 1975, National Security Council Files, Ford Intelligence Files, Portugal—GRF. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 145).

⁷³⁶ For recent scholarship on US covert activities in Portugal see Mario Del Pero, "Which Chile, Allende?" *Cold War History*, pp.638-641. Gomes and Moreira de Sa, *Carlucci vs Kissinger*, pp. 236-254.

⁷³⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, 'Portugal', 12 August 1975, Ford Library, National Security Adviser, NSC Europe, Canada, and Ocean Affairs Staff Files, Box 17, Portugal 1975 (10). <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 158).

⁷³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷³⁹ *Ibid.*

The Ford Administration sought to coordinate closely with its western allies on relations with Portugal.⁷⁴⁰ State Department official asked Sir John Killick, during a meeting between Callaghan and Kissinger, “if the Americans could have advance notice of statements by HMG of political significance on Portugal.”⁷⁴¹ The US approach to Portugal had become broadly similar to that of the Labour Government: to provide financial assistance to the PSP and to encourage political moderates within the AFM. Callaghan had received Major Antunes in London on the 27th June and expressed support for his political position. However, the Labour Government remained sceptical as to whether intervention in Portugal would be effective. There was even concern that direct intervention by the US might prove counterproductive. During a Cabinet meeting Callaghan raised “a possibility that the Communist Party, with the backing of some of the members of the AFM, might stage a left-wing coup ostensibly to forestall intervention by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.”⁷⁴² However, the close institutional ties between Britain and America enabled public differences on policy to be avoided, with particularly close cooperation between their Ambassadors in Lisbon.⁷⁴³

There were, however, differences between Britain and the United States on Portugal’s membership of NATO, which were exacerbated by attempts to achieve a common negotiating position at the Helsinki Summit.⁷⁴⁴ In particular the issue of whether to allow any discussion of a new generation of tactical nuclear weapons threatened to end the carefully constructed consensus reached in late 1974 whereby Lisbon was excluded from any discussion of nuclear issues.⁷⁴⁵ The West European members continued to argue that whilst Portugal’s membership might compromise NATO’s security, the geopolitical implications of its withdrawal from the alliance was the greater threat to western interests.⁷⁴⁶ The State Department remained sympathetic to the West European position. Indeed tacit support was given by certain officials to their counterparts in the FCO, encouraging them to maintain their

⁷⁴⁰ Telegram 607/Secto 437, From the Consulate in Jerusalem to the Department of State, 21 March 1975, 1516Z, Ford Library, National Security Adviser, NSC Europe, Canada, and Ocean Affairs Staff Files, Box 17, Portugal 1975 (4). <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 148).

⁷⁴¹ Callaghan to FCO, ‘US Request for Advance Notice of Statements by HMG on Portugal’, 15 July 1975, FCO 9/2302.

⁷⁴² 24 July 1975, CC(75) 37th Conclusions Minute 2, CAB 128.

⁷⁴³ Trench to FCO, ‘Moral Support for Azevedo and Co.’, 26 November 1975, FCO 9/2292.

⁷⁴⁴ Logan to Tickell, ‘MBFR – Portuguese’, 10 July 1975, FCO 9/2290.

⁷⁴⁵ Gomes and Moreira de Sa, *Carlucci vs Kissinger*, pp.177-186.

⁷⁴⁶ Macdonald to Wells, ‘Military Implications for NATO of the Security Situation in Portugal’, 26 May 1975, FCO 9/2290. Baker to Hunter, ‘NATO Portuguese Security’, 15 August 1975, FCO 9/2290.

opposition to the Ford Administration.⁷⁴⁷ Kissinger became increasingly insistent that the issue be resolved because of the dominant position of the radical left in Lisbon and as a result the decision was made to restrict NATO allies' access to nuclear secrets.⁷⁴⁸ This outcome, an FCO official noted, although affecting Britain less "because of our special arrangements with the Americans", meant that "it tends to reduce the effectiveness of allied cooperation."⁷⁴⁹

During the Hot Summer the Labour Government's policy towards Portugal was fiercely opposed by left-wing MPs within the Labour Party.⁷⁵⁰ The most sustained and informed criticism was made by maverick MPs of the International Department of the NEC, who were committed to a radical, internationalist British foreign policy. The Labour Government was criticised for primarily being concerned with ensuring that Portugal remained a NATO member. There was also scepticism as to whether the PSP remained a socialist party, and should therefore receive support rather than the more left-wing parties in Lisbon. The Secretary of the International Committee, Jenny Little, argued against further contact with the PSP, believing "that we should stay aloof for a time until matters had cleared."⁷⁵¹ The Ford Administration's role in Portugal was viewed through the prism of previous covert operations to thwart democratic socialist revolutions, particularly Chile in 1973. That the Conservative Party MP Winston Churchill was an enthusiastic exponent of the Socialist International's role in Portugal increased suspicion of its activities.⁷⁵²

Judith Hart and Jenny Little made separate visits to Lisbon on behalf of the International Committee during August 1975. On their return they wrote reports critical of western policy which were widely disseminated across the Labour Party.⁷⁵³ The reporting of events in Portugal by western media was criticised for a bias against socialism, including the

⁷⁴⁷ Ramsbotham to FCO, 'Portugal', 20 June 1975, FCO 9/2032.

⁷⁴⁸ Telegram 61177/Tosec 726, Department of State to the Consulate in Jerusalem, 'Portugal: Contingencies and Recommended Courses of Action—Action Memorandum', 19 March 1975, Ford Library, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box 35, NSSM 221. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 147).

⁷⁴⁹ Peck to Killick, 'Portuguese Security', 19 August 1975, FCO 9/2290.

⁷⁵⁰ Tony Benn's diary includes a number of entries critical of government policy. He recalled a conversation with Judith Hart where they discussed "the CIA and our suspicions that they are involved in skulduggery there." Tony Benn, *Against the tide: diaries 1973-1976*, (London: Hutchinson, 1989), p. 423.

⁷⁵¹ McNally to Callaghan, 'Portugal', 17 July 1975, Callaghan Papers, Box 134.

Ron Hayward decided to go ahead and visit Portugal as a guest of the Ambassador Trench, and Jack Jones to demonstrate solidarity with the PSP by attending its conference. *Ibid.*

⁷⁵² During the summer of 1975, Winston Churchill wrote to the Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme to express his concern at the inactivity of the Labour Party in support of the Socialist International in Portugal. Szlamp to McNally, 25 July 1975, 2222: I/PSP: 74-75 - Callaghan Papers, Box 136).

⁷⁵³ Judith Hart, 'Report on Portugal', ID/1974-75/116 - Labour Party Archive, International Department.

BBC World Service, where “press comment follows orthodox conservative patterns.”⁷⁵⁴ The notes and personal correspondence made by Judith Hart during her visit reveal the full extent to which she privately opposed government policy. As an ardent advocate of democratic socialism, she expressed admiration for the radical left: “We are impressed by the strength and unity of the movement for democracy and socialism in Portugal, and by the experiments here in direct democracy”⁷⁵⁵ She was dismissive of the PSP, arguing that “Portugal is in a revolutionary situation, but the PS is doing nothing which is revolutionary,” and that there was “No middle way of social democracy in Portugal.”⁷⁵⁶ The United States’ policy was viewed with suspicion; “Ford must support capital,” she argued, which meant that “There is no question of a threat to political freedom, except from the Right.” Developments in Portugal were seen from a wider radical perspective where “If Portugal stays left; if Spain crumbles; if Italy goes; and then, even, France – what is Europe then? And what happens in Britain?”⁷⁵⁷ These views were not included within her published report; prior to the meeting of the International Committee on the 9th September there was a request that she “would prefer to report verbally to the Committee on certain aspects. The subject is too delicate to risk leaks.”⁷⁵⁸

The impact of events in Portugal was raised during Cabinet discussion of the forthcoming Helsinki Summit.⁷⁵⁹ Before the meeting Soares appealed to the Labour Government that “NATO should put it to the Soviet Union that the future of détente was threatened by the course the Portuguese Communists were adopting” and that Moscow should be asked “to restrain the Portuguese Communist Party, which was something they certainly had the power to do.”⁷⁶⁰ The Conservative opposition raised the subject of Portugal during a House of Commons debate on the forthcoming Helsinki Summit, its Foreign Affairs spokesman, MP Winston Churchill, noting that “the conference will also be taking place against the background of the substantial and recent victories of the Soviet Union and her allies in South East Asia, and what I believe to be clear interference by the Soviet Union in the internal affairs of our NATO ally, Portugal.”⁷⁶¹ The Labour Government was also lobbied

⁷⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁵ ‘Notebook of a visit to Portugal’, Hart/01/04 - Labour Party Archive, Judith Hart.

⁷⁵⁶ *Ibid.* Hart also insisted that Soares’ resignation from government in July had been premeditated, questioning “Why did he use the canard of the *República* saga to get out of the Government?” *Ibid*

⁷⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁸ Judith Hart, ‘Report on Portugal’, ID/1974-75/116 - Labour Party Archive, International Department.

⁷⁵⁹ 24 July 1975, CC(75) 37th Conclusions Minute 2, CAB 128.

⁷⁶⁰ ‘Secretary of State’, 27 May 1975, FCO 41/1694.

⁷⁶¹ Winston Churchill MP, ‘CSCE Debate’ (1307), Hansard, 15 July 1975.

by the Labour MP Ian Mikardo, following a meeting of the Socialist International. He briefed the Prime Minister that “it had been agreed that they should approach their respective party leaders to suggest that they should use Soviet anxiety about the CSCE Summit as a lever to induce the Russians to use their influence in turn on the Portuguese leadership to behave in a more responsible fashion.”⁷⁶² As a result the outcome of events in Portugal was now considered a litmus test of wider Soviet attitudes toward détente, and during the final weeks before the Helsinki conference the Labour Government sought to coordinate policy towards the Soviet Union and the PCP with other western states.

Developments in Portugal were discussed by political leaders at the European Council meeting held on the 16th and 17th July. Initially, these centred on calls to provide EEC funds to the provisional government, and this was strongly supported by the Labour Government as a solution to its economic difficulties in supplying bilateral aid. However, the French Government refused to allow economic aid to Portugal while communist ministers were in government. Its position differed because it had no partisan ties to the PSP, unlike other leading member states, and there was concern that this might further legitimise the increasingly popular French Communist Party. But there was serious concern at the geopolitical threat to France were a communist-influenced government to be established on the Iberian Peninsula, an outcome which “would be intolerable and would require a diplomatic and possibly other reactions.”⁷⁶³ This meant that the French delegation in Brussels accepted that events in Portugal should be raised with the Soviet Union during the Helsinki Summit. It was agreed that the British and French should make a joint approach to the Soviet delegation. This decision originated from its failure to reach a consensus on material assistance to the provisional government and also concern that this would lead to a loss of influence in Portugal at a critical moment.

The Helsinki Summit

The conference held in Helsinki between the 29th July and 1st August 1975 was the final stage of the CSCE process. A gathering of thirty-five heads of state signed a declaration of principle which covered a myriad range of issues (organised into ‘Baskets’), including an agreement to accept Europe’s post-war borders, non-interference in sovereign affairs and wider transnational issues such as political rights and human contacts. Both contemporary

⁷⁶² ‘Call on the Prime Minister by Mr Ian Mikardo, M.P.’, 15 July 1975, FCO 9/2271.

⁷⁶³ Hattersley to Callaghan, ‘Future Policy toward Portugal,’ 7 April 1975, FCO 9/2293.

observers and historians refer to the summit as the ‘high-point’ of détente, whilst recent interpretations of the Cold War stress the effect of its human rights provisions on the eventual collapse of communism in Eastern Europe.⁷⁶⁴ Despite Harold Wilson’s commanding opening speech to the Helsinki Summit (the choice of the Prime Minister was arbitrary), the Labour Government’s involvement was limited compared with that of other western allies, reflecting its more sceptical attitude towards east-west détente.⁷⁶⁵

The previous section has shown that Portugal became an essential element in Britain’s final planning for the Helsinki Summit. A discussion ensued within the Labour Government on how to raise Portugal with Soviet leaders during the CSCE conference. They sought to coordinate their approach with the French Government, whilst informing the Ford Administration of their actions. A request was sent to the British Embassy in Paris to “Please tell the Quai d’Orsay that we will be grateful to know the lines along which they are speaking to Brezhnev. Did they envisage both the Prime Minister and Giscard having a joint meeting with Mr Brezhnev (as distinct from their respective bilateral)?”⁷⁶⁶ The Labour Government’s position hardened after receiving further alarming reports from the British Embassy in Lisbon including Soares’ direct appeals for western intervention.⁷⁶⁷ Although they had always sought to coordinate their approach with other western allies, having received no response from the French Government they were now prepared to raise Portugal with the Soviet Union unilaterally.

The importance attached to events in Portugal by the British delegation in Helsinki was also affected by last minute changes to its personnel. FCO officials who had participated in the CSCE process from its inception were initially prominent. The international significance of the conference, however, alongside the limited number of places offered to each delegation by the host nation, led to their being replaced by FCO permanent under-secretaries. This brought complaints that “There are a large number of people on this

⁷⁶⁴ A recent account is Sarah Snyder, Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: a Transnational History of the Helsinki Network (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁷⁶⁵ A. Deighton ‘Ostpolitik or Westpolitik? British Foreign Policy, 1968-75’ International Affairs 74:4 (1998). Paul Williams, ‘Britain, Détente and the CSCE’, in Kenneth Dyson, ed., European Détente: Case Study of the Politics of East-West Relations (London: Pinter, 1986). Luca Ratti, Britain, Ost-and Deutschlandpolitik and the CSCE (1955-1975) (Oxford : Peter Lang, 2008). Martin Brown, ‘A very British vision of Détente – The United Kingdom’s foreign policy during the Helsinki Process, 1969-75’, in Frédéric Bozo, Marie-Pierre Rey, Piers Ludlow and Bernd Rother, ed., Visions of the End of the Cold War, 1945-1990, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012). Martin Brown, ‘Detente , British foreign policy and public opinion, 1969-1975’, unpublished conference paper, ‘Britain and the End of the Cold War’, organised by Centre for Contemporary British History, June 2009.

⁷⁶⁶ Callaghan to FCO, “Portugal”, 25 July 1975, FCO 30/2990.

⁷⁶⁷ Soares contacted the Embassy warning of an expected coup d’état on 22nd July and requested money and arms.

delegation whose connection with the CSCE is minimal or, in the case of some of the secretaries, whose involvement has been brief and inglorious.”⁷⁶⁸ These officials were more likely to demonstrate the attitude of those described by a recent historian as ‘Cold Warriors’, who were sceptical of Soviet intentions and played a prominent role after the events of the 11th March in the formulation of policy towards Portugal.⁷⁶⁹ The personnel change to the British delegation undoubtedly contributed to developments in Lisbon being seen within a wider east-west context.

The discussion within the Labour Government on how to raise events in Portugal was also “complicated by the uncertainty about who on the Portuguese side will be at Helsinki.”⁷⁷⁰ If political moderates were present any intervention would need to be judicious or their position would be compromised. A debate ensued as to whether to raise events in Portugal during open sessions or bilateral meetings at Helsinki. The decision was made that during the opening of the summit “The Prime Minister will probably not mention Portugal by name in his public speech given inter alia the possibility of a riposte from the Portuguese.”⁷⁷¹ It was also agreed that “A decision will need to wait until nearer Stage III, when we have a clear idea of the situation on the ground in Portugal.”⁷⁷² In the event, the makeup of the Portuguese delegation was not confirmed until the 29th July (the day of their scheduled bilateral meeting), although even then it remained unclear who the foreign minister would be.⁷⁷³

The uncertainty within the Labour Government meant that the British delegation arrived in Helsinki without having reached agreement on how events in Portugal would be raised with the Soviet Union. Despite a series of meetings with other western allies at the beginning of the conference, the British delegation made no attempt to coordinate its approach on Portugal. During a bilateral meeting with the US delegation on the 30th July events in Lisbon were not raised, whilst at the European political committee meeting on the same day, although Portugal was considered (alongside the Arab-Israeli conflict), the focus was on the forthcoming meeting in Stockholm.⁷⁷⁴ The British delegation awaited

⁷⁶⁸ Burns to Tickell, ‘CSCE: Stage III: Composition of Delegation’, 22nd July 1975, FCO 41/1773.

⁷⁶⁹ Keith Hamilton, ‘The Last Cold Warriors: Britain, Détente and the CSCE, 1972-1975’ (Oxford: St Antony’s College, EIRU/991, July 1999), pp. 1-5. He takes the phrase ‘cold warriors’ from an FCO document from 1972.

⁷⁷⁰ Callaghan to FCO, ‘Portugal’, 25 July 1975, FCO 30/2990.

⁷⁷¹ Killick to Wright, ‘Political Directors’ Meeting Helsinki’, 28 July 1975, FCO 30/2990.

⁷⁷² Callaghan to FCO, ‘Portugal’, 25 July 1975, FCO 30/2990.

⁷⁷³ Trench to FCO, ‘Portuguese Delegation to CSCE Summit’, 29 July 1975, PREM 16/1244.

⁷⁷⁴ Killick to Wright, ‘Political Directors’ Meeting Helsinki’, 28 July 1975, FCO 30/2990.

communication from their French counterparts on Portugal, but none was forthcoming. The Labour Government's decision to raise events was therefore made without consultation with western allies.⁷⁷⁵ Callaghan eventually resolved that during the bilateral meeting with the Soviet Union, "we should probably make a direct reference", believing that "the cardinal point is that the kind of situation which exists in Portugal has got to be cleared up if détente is to prosper or have any real meaning."⁷⁷⁶ His dilemma, however, was also to ensure that "Whatever is said to the Russians will be couched in such a way as to make our point as effectively as possible without in any way jeopardising the Conference."⁷⁷⁷

At the Helsinki Summit events in Lisbon were raised during bilateral meetings with the Portuguese and Soviet delegations. During a meeting with the Portuguese President, Wilson and Callaghan, whilst tactfully acknowledging the difficulties facing the government, raised with surprising frankness their concern at the treatment of moderate parties in Portugal and the prospects for parliamentary democracy. The meeting was dominated by a sharp exchange on the nature and relationship between democracy and socialism, Wilson bluntly retorting that "The question was which hand would ultimately be round the people's throats."⁷⁷⁸ Callaghan concluded, "But we felt that the right of choice was not at present being demonstrated."⁷⁷⁹ The British delegation only raised the problems facing British business in Portugal indirectly and at the end of the meeting, and Wilson promised to put these concerns into a letter to the Portuguese President.⁷⁸⁰

The bilateral meeting with the Soviet Union was held immediately before the final signing ceremony on the 31st July. The memoirs of both Wilson and Callaghan recall the meeting at length, while the FCO archives confirm and elucidate their accounts.⁷⁸¹ Aside from mutual congratulations on the success of the Helsinki meeting and improved Anglo-Soviet relations (which both parties agreed were an example of détente in action), Portugal

⁷⁷⁵ A Portuguese historian has argued that "Washington, Bona, Paris e Londres diferiam no grau de emenho posto na CSCE, o que se justifica pelo facto de os objectivos em jogo para cada um deles serem claramente distintos." (Washington, Bonn, Paris and London differed as to the degree of commitment invested in the CSCE, which is justified by the fact that the objectives at stake for each of them are markedly different.) Moreira de Sá, *Os Americanos na Revolução Portuguesa*, p.33.

⁷⁷⁶ Callaghan to FCO, 'Portugal', 25 July 1975, FCO 30/2990.

⁷⁷⁷ Killick to Wright, 'Political Directors' Meeting Helsinki', 28 July 1975, FCO 30/2990.

⁷⁷⁸ Hunt to FCO, 'Record of Meeting between the Prime Minister and the President of Portugal', 1 August 1975, FCO 9/2285.

⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸¹ Wilson, *Final Term*, pp.165-75.

was the only other issue discussed.⁷⁸² Wilson declared that he wished to mention an issue about which “he felt anxiety” and stated that “One test of détente was the position of Portugal”, meaning that “he hoped that Mr Brezhnev would use all his influence to ensure that the situation was resolved in a way which accorded with the wishes of the Portuguese people.”⁷⁸³ Despite the importance of the exchange, however, the meeting was foreshortened, and lasted only twenty minutes, whereas it was “Originally intended to last for one hour.”⁷⁸⁴ An FCO official bemoaned that this was the result of a “Soviet request to hold it immediately before the signing ceremony rather than after it as planned.”⁷⁸⁵ The timetabling of the meeting also meant that “the last part... had been slightly distracted by anxious secretariat officials trying to get Mr Brezhnev and Mr Wilson to the platform of Finlandia Hall.”⁷⁸⁶ That Portugal was raised at all, however, demonstrates its significance to the British delegation.

The limited time available also meant, an FCO official recorded, that “it was not possible to cover some issues, including Portugal, as fully as we would have wished.”⁷⁸⁷ In particular incendiary rumours that the Soviet Union was supplying military equipment to the PCP were only briefly discussed. It is illustrative that Brezhnev’s reply (“The Soviet Union was in no way involved in the situation. They were not sending arms to Portugal”) remains the only record of this exchange by FCO officials.⁷⁸⁸ This suggests that these allegations raised a heated but rushed exchange. Its ineffectual conclusion led to a request by Callaghan that “since time for discussion was so short, he would like to send Mr Brezhnev a memorandum about the question.”⁷⁸⁹ His biographer, Kenneth Morgan, makes reference to such a document in his personal papers, but the Callaghan archive is not catalogued, and this was not found during research at the Bodleian library.⁷⁹⁰

The effect of the British delegation’s exchange with their Soviet counterparts is difficult to gauge. Brezhnev concluded the meeting by observing that “many countries had approached him during the conference at Helsinki; he and his colleagues would think the

⁷⁸² Callaghan to FCO, ‘CSCE Anglo-Soviet Bilateral Meeting’, 2 August 1975, PREM 16/1244.

⁷⁸³ ‘Record of a meeting between the Prime Minister and the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in Finlandia Hall, Helsinki’, 1 August 1975, PREM 16/1244.

⁷⁸⁴ Callaghan to FCO, ‘CSCE Anglo-Soviet Bilateral Meeting’, 2 August 1975, PREM 16/1244.

⁷⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸⁶ Wright to FCO, 12 August 1975, PREM 16/1244.

⁷⁸⁷ Callaghan to FCO, ‘CSCE Anglo-Soviet Bilateral Meeting’, 2 August 1975, PREM 16/1244.

⁷⁸⁸ ‘Record of a meeting between the Prime Minister and the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in Finlandia Hall, Helsinki’, 1 August 1975, PREM 16/1244.

⁷⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁰ Morgan, *Callaghan- A Life*, p.433.

matter over when they returned to Moscow to see what could be done.”⁷⁹¹ It appears that the British delegation was the most assertive. An article in *Pravda* entitled “The Soviet Détente League Table” (which graded each bilateral meeting) recorded, perfunctorily, “UK businesslike and constructive”, in contrast to “French full mutual understanding.”⁷⁹² The British delegation was front page news in *Izvestiya* and *Pravda*, which an FCO official observed “seems to have placed it in a slightly more important category than for example Mr Brezhnev’s first meeting with President Ford.”⁷⁹³ A Portuguese historian recently observed that “It is very interesting to note the coincidence of timing regarding the conversations between Wilson, Callaghan and Brezhnev and Costa Gomes and the changing attitude of the PCP in relation to the military left.”⁷⁹⁴

The Labour Government’s intervention in Helsinki was an ad hoc response to the deteriorating situation in Lisbon, rather than an attempt to influence Soviet attitudes towards détente. It is indicative that the documents attached to the FCO’s planning for the bilateral meeting were an assortment of telegrams relating to Portugal from various FCO departments rather than a measured policy response.⁷⁹⁵ Its willingness to raise Portugal during such a critical international summit demonstrates not only the importance attached to developments in Lisbon, but also that the Labour Government remained sceptical of Soviet motives throughout détente. Its decision to unilaterally raise events with the Soviet delegation following the failure of its attempts to coordinate a common western response demonstrates the seriousness of its concerns.

Western European intervention

The Labour Government accepted an invitation to attend a meeting of Socialist leaders and Heads of Government in Stockholm immediately following the Helsinki Summit, to discuss ways in which democracy in Portugal could be supported. The tone of the meeting was somewhat alarmist. Olof Palme during his opening statement explained that the

⁷⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹² Sutherland to FCO, ‘The Soviet Détente League Table’, 4 August 1975, PREM 16/1244.

⁷⁹³ Weston to Wright, ‘Soviet Press Reports on the CSCE’, 14 August 1975, PREM 16/1244.

⁷⁹⁴ (E muito interessante verificar a coincidência temporal destas conversações em helsinkiua envolvendo Wilson, Callaghan, Brejnev e também Costa Gomes e a mudança de atitude do PCP em relação a esquerda militar). Paço ‘Friends in High Places’, Raquel Varela, ed., *Revolução ou Transição*, p.128.

⁷⁹⁵ See, ‘Annex A-D’, FCO 30/2990.

gathering “gave us an opportunity to consider our social democratic response to what may be a setting up of the ideological conflict on the part of the USSR,” and later warned that “We should also make clear to those western governments who anticipated a counter coup that a right-wing dictatorship was no solution for social democracy.”⁷⁹⁶ During his opening statement Soares hectored that “The Communist Party plot was part of a wider international communist strategy,” which had “unlimited financial resources and was receiving training from Cuba for a paramilitary militia.”⁷⁹⁷ Because Wilson and Callaghan attended the meeting as representatives of the Labour Party rather than of the Labour Government, they were able to meet Soares in person (for the first time since the April election) without accusations of interference in Portugal’s internal affairs. However, Wilson and Callaghan were sceptical of the value of the Stockholm meeting; as a socialist party gathering it was not a forum where concerns about the protection of British business interests could be raised, or the importance of maintaining constructive relations with the AFM.⁷⁹⁸ There was concern that the meeting could be portrayed as a first breach of Principle VI on “intervention direct or indirect, individual or collective, in the internal affairs of another participating state,” from the final act of the Helsinki Accords.⁷⁹⁹ Wilson and Callaghan also attended the Stockholm meeting in part to reaffirm the Labour Government’s commitment to an organisation to which they had previously appeared indifferent. McNally briefed that “There is some discontent amongst its partners at what they have occasionally seen as boorish and destructive tactics” at Socialist International meetings.⁸⁰⁰

During the meeting in Stockholm, whilst other delegates publicly outlined proposals for assistance and intervention in Portugal, Wilson and Callaghan appealed for these to be addressed in private, arguing that “Time for words was still with us, but it was also time for action, which should be discussed in a smaller group.”⁸⁰¹ This unwillingness to discuss support for the PSP at an open forum probably reflected the parlous financial position of the Labour Party. It had recently struggled to raise its membership fee for the Socialist International, a consequence of a wider funding crisis resulting from an economic recession and the cost of General Election and referendum campaigns. The NEC’s International

⁷⁹⁶ ‘Meeting of Socialist Party Leaders and Heads of Government’, 2 August 1975, 2207 - Callaghan Papers, Box 22.

⁷⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁸ Callaghan to FCO, ‘Political Crisis’, 25 July 1975, FCO 9/2271.

⁷⁹⁹ Killick to FCO, ‘Portugal: Stockhom Meeting’, 31 July 1975, FCO 9/2285.

⁸⁰⁰ McNally to Callaghan, ‘Notes – Stockholm’, 1 August 1975, 2205: PSP: 74-76 - Callaghan Papers, Box 136.

⁸⁰¹ ‘Meeting of Socialist Party Leaders and Heads of Government’, 2 August 1975, 2207 - Callaghan Papers, Box 22.

Department meeting prior to Stockholm, besides discussing events in Portugal, considered a “statement on the financial difficulties of the Party” from the General Secretary and its implication for their budget.⁸⁰² This led McNally to inform the secretariat of the Socialist International that “The Labour Party is at present in a very precarious position,” and must reduce its contributions that year.⁸⁰³

The Stockholm meeting led to the formation of the ‘Committee of Friendship and Solidarity with Democracy in Portugal’, which aimed to “work actively to prevent an isolation of Portugal from the rest of Europe.”⁸⁰⁴ There was also agreement to meet on further occasions to discuss Portugal.⁸⁰⁵ Although a useful forum, enabling the Labour Government to demonstrate a commitment to the moderate parties in Lisbon without facing accusations of direct intervention in Portugal’s internal affairs, the meeting held in London on the 5th September challenged this premise.⁸⁰⁶ The ambiguity of a government in Number 10 hosting a partisan gathering of fellow socialist movements from elsewhere made protocol at the meeting problematic. A record of the meeting could not be widely distributed across Whitehall, nor could a copy be sent to Kissinger in Washington. The Portuguese Embassy could not be approached to support Soares and his delegation during their visit.⁸⁰⁷ The FCO was sceptical of the value of the London meeting; an official preparing the briefing noted, “I believe that the range of options for party activity is narrower than that open to Government,” and that “It is very difficult to suggest concrete ways in which Western European Socialist parties can influence events in Portugal apart from supplying money to Dr Soares and giving him advice and encouragement.”⁸⁰⁸ The evolution of events in Portugal from concern at the relationship between the military and the moderate parties, to the relationship between factions within the AFM, and the possibility of civil war, reduced further the scope for participants at the meeting to influence events. Although the Labour Government did participate in gatherings of the Socialist International, they did not demonstrate either the ability or the willingness to support a common policy towards Portugal with its European socialist partners.

⁸⁰² 23 July 1975, Labour Party Archive, International Department – NEC Minutes.

⁸⁰³ 20 July 1975, Socialist International Correspondence 1964-87 - Labour Party Archive, International Department.

⁸⁰⁴ Olof Palme to FCO, 27 August 1975, FCO 9/2287.

⁸⁰⁵ Further meetings of the Socialist International were held in London on the 13th August and 5th September.

⁸⁰⁶ The preparation for the meeting was complicated by Callaghan’s absence which meant that Wilson had to be rapidly briefed on Britain’s recent relations with Portugal.

⁸⁰⁷ Callaghan to FCO, 3 September 1975, FCO 9/2287.

⁸⁰⁸ Goodison to FCO, ‘Portugal: Meeting of Socialist Leaders’, 5 September 1975, FCO 9/2287.

The Labour Government also sought to promote its interests in Portugal by encouraging the provision of EEC economic aid.⁸⁰⁹ Britain's economic weakness meant that it was unable to match the bilateral assistance given by West Germany and the US; it also meant that it faced losing its traditional position as Portugal's closest ally. A multilateral approach, through the EEC, became a crucial means for maintaining influence in Lisbon and demonstrating a commitment to democracy. Callaghan argued that "Because of the multiplier effect of making our contribution through the Community scheme, the political benefits to the West as a whole seem likely to be quite substantial by comparison with the small sums involved."⁸¹⁰ However, despite broad agreement between the Nine on the necessity of providing immediate economic assistance, achieving a consensus proved difficult. The Belgium and West German governments continued to prefer a coordinated bilateral response whilst the French demanded that no aid be given until democracy was clearly established.⁸¹¹ The EEC Heads of Mission in Lisbon reported to Brussels on "the difficulties experienced by the managers of foreign companies in Portugal," which made it hard to justify the provision of economic assistance.⁸¹² There was also wide concern that economic aid would strengthen those opposed to democracy, which meant that "All the Nine had been unanimous in linking closer economic and financial cooperation between the EEC and Portugal with the development of a pluralistic democracy in Portugal."⁸¹³

The debate within the Labour Government on the proposed different methods of providing EEC aid reflected wider concerns. The British Ambassador in Lisbon remained sceptical as to whether economic assistance would be effective, given the political and economic chaos in Portugal, concluding that "In view of the desperate economic situation, any financial aid that we gave now was likely to go down the drain."⁸¹⁴ The FCO pressed for the provision of immediate aid, believing that this was the best means to influence the current government in Lisbon, but Britain's economic weakness and Treasury opposition made this difficult. A proposal to offer an EEC loan, financed by member states, was considered, but it

⁸⁰⁹ For the role of the EEC in Portugal's transition to democracy, see Nuno Severiano Everiano Teixeira, 'From Africa to Europe. Portugal and European Integration', Antonio Costa Pinto, Nuno Severiano Everiano Teixeira, ed., Southern Europe and the Making of the European Union, (Columbia University Press, New York, 2002), p.24 and David Corkill, 'Portugal's Changing Integration into the European and Global Economy', Stephen Syrett, ed., Contemporary Portugal. Dimensions of Economic and Political Change (Ashgate, Burlington, 2002), pp.83-103.

⁸¹⁰ Callaghan to Healey, 2 July 1975, FCO 81/74.

⁸¹¹ Palliser to FCO, 'Meeting of the Council of Ministers (Foreign Affairs)', 15 July 1975, FCO 59/1308.

⁸¹² Gullan to Baker, 'EEC/Portugal: Problems of Foreign Firms in Portugal', 16 July 1975, FCO 9/2303.

⁸¹³ Hunt to FCO, 'Record of a meeting between the PM and the President of Portugal', 1 August 1975, FCO 9/2285.

⁸¹⁴ Trench to FCO, 'Political Situation', 10 July 1975, FCO 59/1308.

was decided that “This is probably well beyond our present capacity.”⁸¹⁵ The provision of EEC aid was equally problematic because, as an official explained, “we might well have great difficulty in meeting our share.”⁸¹⁶ The FCO was unable to provide direct aid, because “It is more than likely that the FCO will suffer expenditure cuts on our budget across the board.”⁸¹⁷ Such was Britain’s economic weakness that concern was expressed at the likely consequences of a democratic outcome in Portugal. An FCO official noted that “Portugal could conceivably throw up a regime so democratic as to deserve our unstinted support.”⁸¹⁸ Any such proposal for aid by Brussels meant that “An exceptional contribution from the community budget would necessarily involve an increase in UK public expenditure to which ministers are opposed in the present economic situation.”⁸¹⁹ Therefore the Labour Government decided to press for assistance to Portugal through loans from the European Investment Bank, which would initially be backed by guarantees from the EEC, rather than by traditional guarantees by member states. Such a scheme would make the greatest possible impact on the political process in Lisbon, maximising the assistance given to Portugal whilst requiring only a minimal outlay from the national budget of each member state.

An ad-hoc committee on Portugal was established by the European Foreign Affairs Council to consider possible options for providing economic assistance.⁸²⁰ The appearance of action, followed by a protracted decision-making process, suited the Nine who were thus able to demonstrate a commitment to democracy in Portugal without giving any immediate financial assistance; this enabled them to wait until the direction of events in Lisbon became clearer. A West German Foreign Ministry official, during a meeting with Kissinger in Bonn, explained that “One of the things we have decided in order to try to help the moderates is to announce financial aid but not give the aid unless the moderates’ position is strengthened.”⁸²¹ However, the political crisis following Soares’ resignation led to intense lobbying by the moderate parties in Lisbon and the State Department in Washington for immediate assistance from the EEC.⁸²² There was recognition that the provision of economic assistance to Portugal could play a crucial role in the outcome of events. The British Ambassador argued that “the

⁸¹⁵ Braithwaite to Butler, ‘European Aid for Portugal and Egypt’, 25 June 1975, FCO 81/74.

⁸¹⁶ Baker to Killick, ‘EEC Help for Portugal’, 22 August 1975, FCO 59/1308.

⁸¹⁷ Arbuthnott to FCO, ‘Exceptional Financial Assistance to Egypt and Portugal’, 10 July 1975, FCO 59/1308.

⁸¹⁸ Baker to Killick, ‘EEC Help for Portugal’, 22 August 1975, FCO 59/1308.

⁸¹⁹ Callaghan to FCO, ‘EEC/Portugal: Exceptional Financial Assistance’, 18 June 1975, FCO 59/1308.

⁸²⁰ Pallister to FCO, ‘Meeting of Ad Hoc Working Party on Portugal’, 1 July 1975, FCO 9/1308.

⁸²¹ ‘Memorandum of Conversation’, Bonn, May 20, 1975, US National Archives, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, P820125–0430.

⁸²² *Ibid.*

socialist demand would prevail once the military had come to understand that the socialists alone had the right contacts in Western Europe and North America to attract foreign investment on the massive scale required to forestall economic disaster in Portugal.”⁸²³ The Irish Foreign Minister Garret FitzGerald, speaking for the Irish Presidency of the Council, informed member states that “Even the leftward elements of the Armed Forces Movement had come to recognise that they could not get assistance elsewhere and must look to the European Community.”⁸²⁴

After Soares’ resignation the European Council called for an immediate provision of exceptional aid. There was also a marked change in tone within Whitehall circles, with wide acceptance that Portugal was moving inexorably towards a decisive political crisis. The institutional delay caused by opposition to aid provision now ceased. An FCO official concluded that “we should prepare for an emergency rescue operation in the late autumn, rather than a long-term programme which started earlier.”⁸²⁵ The EEC decided to make an immediate symbolic gesture, intended to have a political impact, by promising 180m units of account, although the precise details of the arrangement were made deliberately ambiguous so that the provision of aid would occur only after the prospect of pluralistic democracy in Lisbon was guaranteed.⁸²⁶ Although important for shaping Portuguese public opinion, the imprecise nature of the economic programme meant that the Nine were unable to directly affect the political process in Lisbon through conditionality.⁸²⁷

The ‘Document of Nine’

The political anarchy in Lisbon brought social and economic chaos throughout Portugal, leading to a backlash against the provisional government. In an attempt to remove Prime Minister Gonçalves from office, the political moderates within the AFM released the ‘Document of the Nine.’ This condemned the government for attempting to introduce a people’s democracy modelled on those of Eastern European countries, and called instead for democratic socialism as mandated by the Portuguese electorate. The radical left within the AFM responded with the ‘COPCON’ document which dismissed their opponents as a “well

⁸²³ Trench to FCO, ‘Portuguese Political Situation’, 22 August 1975, FCO 9/2272.

⁸²⁴ Palliser to FCO, ‘Meeting of the Council of Ministers (Foreign Affairs)’, 15 July 1975, FCO 59/1308.

⁸²⁵ Trench to FCO, ‘Political Situation’, 10 July 1975, FCO 59/1308.

⁸²⁶ Cabinet Memorandum: White Paper on Developments in the European Communities: April to October 1975. CAB 129/186/1, p.3.

⁸²⁷ ‘Portugal: It’s the thought that counts’, *The Economist*, 11 October 1975, p.50.

orchestrated domestic and international reactionary campaign,” and called for Gonçalves’ resignation in order that a more radical government could be established and the socialist revolution completed. This was the most critical point of the Portuguese revolution. Mass demonstrations were held in Lisbon by the supporters of each side, whilst the allegiance of the armed forces was divided between different factions within the AFM. By the end of August, with Portugal sliding towards civil war and following diplomatic pressure from western allies, the Portuguese President decided to disband the provisional government on 8th September.⁸²⁸

Despite the precarious political situation, until the final week of August the Labour Government remained optimistic that political moderates would succeed. An FCO official observed that “There is a good chance that the Communists will lose a lot of their current power and their position at the centre of things in the near future.”⁸²⁹ However, the Ford Administration became increasingly pessimistic at developments in Lisbon and sought to influence the outcome by asserting control over the diplomatic response of the western allies. At the height of the crisis, Washington received a request from moderates within the AFM for western governments to send a diplomatic *démarche* to Lisbon. The British, Netherlands and West German governments were contacted by their US Embassies who warned that “the moderates’ momentum was being lost”, and urged that “western countries should take immediately, any action that they could to strengthen the resolve of Costa Gomes to move things in a moderate direction.”⁸³⁰ They were informed that the Ford Administration was considering the question “is Portugal really deserving of our support?”⁸³¹

The Labour Government’s response to the request for a *démarche* was hindered by Callaghan’s absence on a holiday in Ireland. Unlike each previous crisis since the April Revolution, there could be no direct communication between Kissinger and Callaghan. Aware of divisions on Portugal within the Ford Administration, FCO officials in London were even concerned “whether the American approach has Kissinger’s personal authority.”⁸³² There was scepticism within the FCO whether sending a *démarche* would have any positive effect, and concern that doing so would “strengthen the communists (sic) hands by an appearance of western threats”, whilst the Portuguese President should not be made to act “if

⁸²⁸ For an account of this period see, Manuel, *The Uncertain Outcome*, pp. 106-108.

⁸²⁹ Baker to Killick, 22 August 1975, FCO 9/2294.

⁸³⁰ Callaghan to FCO, ‘Portugal: Internal Situation’, 26 August 1975, FCO 9/2272.

⁸³¹ *Ibid.*

⁸³² *Ibid.*

he believes it will lead to an avoidable civil war.”⁸³³ The British Ambassador also advised against sending a *démarche*, arguing that “In our own case I believe that a forceful line, similar to that of the Americans, would be a mistake, given the limited extent of any contribution to economic aid for Portugal that we are likely to be able to make.”⁸³⁴ The circumstances behind Washington’s request were only known to certain British officials because American “contacts with the Melo Antunes Group were strictly confidential and must be protected”, which meant there could not be a wider distribution of information across Whitehall.⁸³⁵ Therefore, as a result of Callaghan’s absence from London and a consensus within the FCO, the British Ambassador did not join his counterparts in sending a *démarche* on the 22nd August.⁸³⁶

By the end of August, the political situation in Portugal had deteriorated to such an extent that Washington once again pressured London to send a *démarche*. The US shared information that moderates within the AFM “might be prepared to grasp military control of Lisbon on behalf of the Antunes group,” and that “If this does not work out, the Antunes Group would consider they had no alternative but to move their headquarters to the north and rally the support of military commanders there,” which meant “effectively precipitating a division of the country.”⁸³⁷ FCO officials still maintained “the possibility that *démarches* by us and our allies will be counterproductive in their overall effect.”⁸³⁸ Such was the pressure from Washington that Sir John Killick concluded, “I believe that the Secretary of State will be anxious to keep in step with the Americans if at all possible, and inaction, even if it may be correct, is not comfortable.”⁸³⁹ Finally the decision was reached to send a *démarche*, although this would be shaped by British priorities rather than by the guidelines sent by the State Department, an FCO official explaining that “I recommend that we instruct Mr Trench to do what the Americans tell us Melo Antunes has asked for, but in the way that Mr Trench has suggested.”⁸⁴⁰ The British Ambassador requested an audience with the Portuguese President on the 27th August, and during a frank exchange called for Gonçalves’ removal as

⁸³³ *Ibid.*

⁸³⁴ Trench to FCO, ‘Portuguese Political Situation’, 27 August 1975, FCO 9/2272.

⁸³⁵ Callaghan to FCO, ‘Portugal: Internal Situation’, 26 August 1975, FCO 9/2272.

⁸³⁶ The British Ambassador did leave a “message regarding the difficulties of British firms operating in Portugal” on the 22nd August, but this was not the subject of direct discussion as had also been the case during Harold Wilson’s meeting with the Portuguese President at Helsinki. Trench to FCO, ‘Political Situation’, 22 August 1975, FCO 9/2272.

⁸³⁷ Trench to FCO, ‘Change of Prime Minister: Reaction of Antunes Group’, 30 August 1975, FCO 9/2272.

⁸³⁸ Baker to Killick, 27 August 1975, FCO 9/2294.

⁸³⁹ Callaghan to FCO, ‘Portugal: Internal Situation’, 26 August 1975, FCO 9/2272.

⁸⁴⁰ *Ibid.* In Callaghan’s continued absence from London, Sir John Killick wrote the note of authorisation. Baker to Killick, 27 August 1975, FCO 9/2294.

Prime Minister. However, he made only the general appeal, “We accept that democracy can take many forms. But we do not regard rule by any repressive minority against the freely expressed wishes of a large majority of the people as compatible with democracy.”⁸⁴¹ The US Ambassador in contrast explicitly threatened Portugal with withdrawal from NATO and warned that “the United States will not be able to justify to its own people continued – much less expanded - support for Portugal of any kind.”⁸⁴²

Immediately after the British *démarche* was sent, during the first week of September, the political situation in Lisbon reached such a critical point that Portugal appeared to be descending into civil war. The British Ambassador reported that “the whole situation here is in turmoil and no-one is rash enough to predict what the outcome will be.”⁸⁴³ The seriousness of events led the British Embassy to abandon its previous caution and advise that “Our unanimous conclusion, on a personal basis, was that the time had come when the PS must make a stand, whatever the consequences. Over the past sixteen months numerous attempts at compromise had merely resulted in a steady drift towards the extreme left.”⁸⁴⁴ For the first time since the April Revolution, the Labour Government gave serious consideration to the possibility of a civil war in Portugal, concluding that “Although the latest developments are slightly more hopeful, it is not impossible that the Antunes group may feel obliged to move to the north and attempt to rally from there all opponents of Gonçalves and the PCP.”⁸⁴⁵ Rapidly scrawled handwritten notes by Callaghan on a memorandum for a forthcoming meeting of the NEC’s International Department reveal greater concern at potential developments than other documents, listing economic catastrophe and civil war as possible scenarios facing Portugal.⁸⁴⁶

Some historians argue that the Labour Government was involved in organising armed resistance against the radical left.⁸⁴⁷ Kenneth Morgan argues that “The full story of the support that the British Labour government offered the Portuguese Social Democrats, including covert military assistance in dropping supplies, has to be told.”⁸⁴⁸ The AFM certainly blamed outsiders for intervening in Portuguese affairs, and much of the western

⁸⁴¹ Killick to FCO, ‘Portugal Internal Situation’, 28 August 1975, FCO 9/2294.

⁸⁴² Callaghan to FCO, ‘Portugal Internal Situation’, 26 August 1975, FCO 9/2290.

⁸⁴³ Trench to FCO, ‘Portugal and NATO’, 2 September 1975, FCO 9/2290.

⁸⁴⁴ Trench to FCO, ‘Internal Situation’, 30 August 1975, FCO 9/2272.

⁸⁴⁵ Trench to FCO, ‘Emergency Communications’, 2 September 1975, FCO 9/2272.

⁸⁴⁶ McNally to Callaghan, ‘Secretary of State’, 4 September 1975, FCO 9/2277.

⁸⁴⁷ Morgan *Callaghan- A Life*, p.433. Moreira *Os Americanos*, pp.138-144. Gomes & Moreira, *Carlucci vs Kissinger*, p. 355.

⁸⁴⁸ Morgan *Callaghan- A Life*, p.433.

media reported on the western alliance's diplomacy as a prelude to a possible coup d'état.⁸⁴⁹ There was contingency planning within the FCO on whether to follow Soares and other moderate politicians to the north of the country in the event of a civil war, and how contact could be maintained with British residents living in the southern regions of Portugal.⁸⁵⁰ It was decided to install immediately a secure radio-telephone within the British consulate in Porto, and an agreement was reached that allowed American facilities to be used in the event of an emergency.⁸⁵¹ Recent historical studies in Portugal assert that Callaghan was involved in planning a military intervention (alongside its western allies) and a number of British historians and biographers refer to the existence of such a programme, but these are not verified by published sources.⁸⁵² US archival records reveal that during a meeting with Ambassador Carlucci in Washington, Kissinger commented, "We would be prepared to help with military equipment if necessary. So would Callaghan", but the Ambassador's reply that "Small arms are available in Portugal", suggests that such a programme was unnecessary.⁸⁵³ There is no British archival evidence that covert operations were planned by the US and Britain, but given the seriousness of the situation in Lisbon, and its potential implications for the NATO alliance, it does appear likely that consideration would have been given to the possibility.

The crisis in early September coincided with pressure once again to address Portugal's status within NATO. The summer break allowed a delay in passing information which avoided Portugal's removal from decision-making councils, but officials were aware that "The arrangements made for the month of August whereby the distribution of material to all members of the Alliance was held up could not long continue now that the Alliance was resuming its normal activities."⁸⁵⁴ The escalating political crisis in Lisbon meant that "From the security point of view there was now a strong case for withholding all NATO secret material from the Portuguese."⁸⁵⁵ The British delegation maintained that "The two principal dangers which they have had to take into account are that the Portuguese might leave NATO

⁸⁴⁹ See for example, 'Fiddling while Portugal burns', *The Economist*, 30 August 1975, pp. 34-37.

⁸⁵⁰ The Embassy had reviewed its evacuation plans following a parliamentary question on the 16th July.

⁸⁵¹ Trench to FCO, 'Emergency Communications', 2 September 1975, FCO 9/2272.

⁸⁵² Mario Soares told the historian Josep Sanchez Cervelló, "Callaghan enviou-me um official do service de espionagem britânico, que pus em contacto com os 'Nove.'" (Callaghan sent me an official from the British espionage service, whom I put into contact with the "Nine"), Gomes and Moreira de Sa, *Carlucci vs Kissinger*, p. 355.

⁸⁵³ Memorandum of Conversation, 'Portugal', 15 September 1975, Ford Library, National Security Adviser, NSC Staff Files, Box 18, Portugal 1975 (13). <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 160).

⁸⁵⁴ 'Portugal – NATO Security', 2 September 1975, FCO 9/2290.

⁸⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

in a fit of pique, and that drastic NATO action (news of which could well become public) might be used by the Portuguese Communists as propaganda to improve their position in the power struggle.”⁸⁵⁶ The absence of Callaghan from London meant that the issue was addressed by Hattersley, as Minister of State at the Foreign Office; he had always been the minister most concerned with the impact of events in Portugal on NATO and on the US reaction. On the 8th September, Hattersley reached the decision to accept a US proposal that all NATO secret material should be withheld from the Portuguese.⁸⁵⁷

The unexpected dismissal of Prime Minister Gonçalves meant that the Labour Government was suddenly relieved of making a decision on Portugal’s membership of NATO and of responding to the possible outbreak of civil war. The establishment of a government on the 9th August, dominated by political moderates for the first time since the April Revolution, transformed the Labour Government’s policy towards Portugal. It now sought to assist Prime Minister Pineiro de Azevedo’s government, whilst preventing the radical left from mobilising support within the armed forces for a coup d’état. The Labour Government had acted somewhat against its better judgement in sending a démarche, but the outcome of events meant that Britain was now in a stronger position to play a diplomatic role in Lisbon.

Britain and the ‘Hot Summer’

The power struggle between the radical left and political moderates after the constituent assembly elections had led the Labour Government to conclude that “The crunch point has come.”⁸⁵⁸ However, during the critical period that followed, Britain’s influence in Lisbon actually declined. The course of events created an insuperable dilemma for British policy whereby, the British Ambassador in Lisbon explained, “we had to encourage her in the building up of a democratic system without appearing to take sides against the military or withdrawing support from the democrats.”⁸⁵⁹ This conundrum came to dominate relations with Portugal through the summer of 1975, until the establishment of a moderate government allowed unequivocal support to be given.

⁸⁵⁶ Hunter to FCO, ‘Portugal: NATO Security’, 5 September 1975, FCO 9/2290.

⁸⁵⁷ Hunter to FCO, ‘Portugal: NATO Security’, 9 September 1975, FCO 9/2290.

⁸⁵⁸ Callaghan to FCO, ‘Portugal: Internal Situation’, 26 August 1975, FCO 9/2272.

⁸⁵⁹ Baker to FCO, ‘HM Ambassador’s Despatch’, 1 May 1975, FCO 9/2269.

The Labour Government was confident after the April Revolution that once elections were held there would be a successful transition to democracy in Portugal. However, the radical left's consolidation of power after the failed right-wing coup led to a major reassessment of British policy. The threat to the integrity of the NATO Alliance meant that the international implications of events now became the Labour Government's principal concern. The 'Hot Summer' coincided with a series of international gatherings, culminating in the Helsinki Summit of August 1975. Bilateral meetings held with the Portuguese delegation at these gatherings became the principal means by which Wilson and Callaghan pursued the strategy of maintaining constructive relations with the provisional government. The international dimensions of events in Portugal were also addressed at these meetings and will be discussed in the final chapter. Therefore summit diplomacy rather than British activity in Lisbon became the principal means by which the Labour Government conducted relations with Portugal during this period.

The radical left's consolidation of power after the failed coup on the 11th March led the US to describe Portugal as a "Trojan Horse" within NATO.⁸⁶⁰ Its outcome meant that the strategy that Kissinger had pursued since the April Revolution had clearly failed. He privately admitted to the British that "One reason for this was that the United States had not started soon enough – i.e. last year – in cultivating a meaningful relationship with the new Portugal."⁸⁶¹ After the constituency elections the US reluctantly allowed the Labour Government to take the lead on policy towards Portugal and accepted its argument that Soares and the PSP was the best hope. However, after developments in Lisbon during the 'Hot Summer' became serious for US interests, Washington sought once again to actively intervene in Portugal and to lead the western response. Despite the Ford Administration's adopting a similar approach to the Labour Government, it had less influence in Washington than in any other period after the April Revolution. The Labour Government's more nuanced policy of pursuing constructive relations with the Portuguese government antagonised the Ford Administration.

The Socialist International enabled the Labour Government to support the PSP without antagonising the provisional government in Lisbon. Having a multilateral organisation represent internationalist social democratic values was also more likely to be

⁸⁶⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, 'Meeting with Portuguese', Brussels, 29 May 1975, National Archives, RG 59, Records of Kissinger, Entry 5403, Box 23, Classified External Memcons, May–December 1975, Folder 2. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 154).

⁸⁶¹ Killick to FCO, 'Portugal', 29 May 1975, FCO 9/2289.

effective than the efforts of individual parties, which could be seen to serve their own national interests. However, although Washington supported the role of the Socialist International in Portugal, the Labour Government did not serve as its point of contact. Instead, the USA did so principally through Olof Palme from neutral Sweden, and former Chancellor Willy Brandt of West Germany (whose Ostpolitik policy had antagonised the Nixon Administration).⁸⁶² As a leading member, the Labour Government could have demonstrated its value to the Anglo-American relationship. This suggests the Labour Government saw the Anglo-American relationship in terms of the British national interest, rather than as an element of party political values.

During the ‘Hot Summer’ West Germany became increasingly significant, organising a comprehensive programme of support for democracy in Portugal. The tenets of its approach – cooperation with the US, support for the PSP and independent trade unions, the provision of economic aid to and diplomatic pressure on the Portuguese government - were similar to those of the Labour Government, but there was surprisingly little close coordination between the European allies. Ana Mónica Fonseca argues convincingly that for West Germany relations with Portugal were a significant element in its ‘Westpolitik’ strategy, whereby encouraging political change in the authoritarian regimes of southern Europe would set a precedent for Eastern Europe.⁸⁶³ Hence the premises of the British and West German approach differed, with the latter motivated by a wider strategic foreign policy goal. Therefore, despite shared interests, their cooperation was within multilateral institutions rather than state to state relations. It is illustrative that in an effort to deepen relations Schmidt visited Britain in November 1975, culminating with a speech to the Labour Party conference, but there had been no attempt prior to the visit to coordinate policy on Portugal. The increased influence of Bonn on the PSP was also a reflection of the disparity of economic resources between West Germany and Britain. As a result the relationship between the Labour Party and the PSP did atrophy during the ‘Hot Summer’, allowing West Germany to become its principal sponsor.

Prior to the Brussels Summit the Labour Government realised that its influence in Lisbon would depend largely on an ability to offer financial assistance. There was a consensus throughout Whitehall that this was a political imperative, but Britain’s economic

⁸⁶² Jean-François Juneau, ‘The Limits of Linkage: The Nixon Administration and Willy Brandt’s *Ostpolitik*, 1969–72’, *The International History Review* Volume 33, Number 2 (2011), pp. 277-297.

⁸⁶³ Fonseca, ‘The Federal Republic of Germany and the Portuguese Transition to Democracy’, pp. 35-56.

weakness meant that a number of ministries raised bureaucratic obstacles to the provision of bilateral aid. A multilateral EEC response became crucial to British interests, although this meant giving the EIB a new role providing economic assistance outside of the Community. Ironically, given Britain's concern with EEC membership such as the loss of sovereignty, trade preferences, budget rebate issues and a divisive referendum on continued membership, on this issue the FCO became the vanguard for encouraging institutional change, against the opposition of its European partners.

The course of events in Portugal was closely tied to that of the overseas territories during the 'Hot Summer'. The dominance of the radical left in Lisbon led to the appointment of colonial administrators sympathetic to the national liberation movements with which they had once fought. In Angola assistance was given to the MPLA, enabling them to seize control of state institutions and thereby shifting power in their favour. In East Timor Portuguese Marxist groups seeking independence rather than assimilation into Indonesia were favoured. This dimension of the Portuguese Revolution has been stressed by historians such as Kenneth Maxwell.⁸⁶⁴ To the Ford Administration events in the overseas territories were an emerging sphere of proxy Cold War conflict intrinsically tied to events in Lisbon. Hence Kissinger instructed Ambassador Carlucci, "I want the Portuguese to understand that we object to the role that they are playing there and particularly their help to the MPLA."⁸⁶⁵ The Labour Government after the April Revolution carefully connected events in Lisbon with those in the overseas territories because they were seeking a resolution of the Rhodesian question; once the principle of independence was granted this ceased. Therefore the Labour Government's concern in sub-Saharan Africa was the solution of post-colonial issues rather than participation in the emerging Cold War rivalry, reflecting its changed world role.

The period following the constituent assembly elections saw significant changes in how British policy towards Portugal was made. There was increased concern with the international implications of events, particularly the prospect of a Portuguese withdrawal from NATO. This meant that the initiative for British policy came from Wilson and Callaghan, including Cabinet discussions on Portugal taking place for first time since the April Revolution. The attempt to maintain constructive relations with the provisional government made bilateral talks between Wilson, Callaghan and their Portuguese

⁸⁶⁴ Maxwell, *The Making of Portuguese Democracy*, pp. 121-30.

⁸⁶⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, 'Portugal', 15 September 1975, Ford Library, National Security Adviser, NSC Staff Files, Box 18, Portugal 1975 (13). <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 160).

counterparts the best means to conduct British policy in Portugal. This meant that close personal and partisan ties between the Labour Government and Soares became less important. Indeed, there were emerging doubts as to whether he had the qualities for leadership; an FCO official observed that “Dr Soares knows his problems and the situation in Portugal better than we can hope to. But his judgement does not always match his charisma.”⁸⁶⁶ This led to a cooling of relations, with an official explaining that “We hope that our measured low-key response to these requests will have helped Dr Soares to realise the limitations within which we operate, and will help to steady him down.”⁸⁶⁷ The bilateral approach also reduced the British Embassy’s significance as a conduit between the Labour Government and political moderates in Portugal.

However, whilst Wilson and Callaghan dominated the British response, they could not give Portugal regular or sustained attention because they were distracted by other pressing international and domestic issues. This meant, unlike the period immediately after the Carnation Revolution, that policy making became less coordinated within the Labour Government. During the ‘Hot Summer’, whilst the British Embassy was increasingly focused on protecting British business interests, those departments within the FCO concerned with Portugal were concentrating on other aspects. There were even divisions within the Labour Government as its approach to Portugal antagonised left-wing members sympathetic to the radical left in Lisbon. The importance of Soares to western strategy led members of the Labour Party who were sympathetic to the radical left in Lisbon to maintain that he was only committed to achieving power, rather than promoting democratic socialism.

During the ‘Hot Summer’ the Labour Government struggled to understand the fluid and chaotic political environment. This was partly because there were fewer opportunities to discuss events in Lisbon with Soares than in the period immediately after the April Revolution. There was a better understanding in London of the political role of the Portuguese military, a moderate figure within the AFM for example explaining the Byzantine reasoning whereby “some elements within the AFM were only able to disconnect from the Communist Party by becoming more left-wing.”⁸⁶⁸ However, many opportunities existed for Britain to influence events by supporting civil society, such as the independent media and trade unions. The BBC’s significance within Portugal meant that the Labour Government did

⁸⁶⁶ Baker to Killick, ‘Advice for Dr Soares?’, 28 July 1975, FCO 9/2285.

⁸⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶⁸ ‘Record of Conversation between the Minister of State and Major Alves,’ 4 July 1975, FCO 41/1694.

have a powerful means to shape the political process, but this was neither understood nor appreciated, with concern raised instead at the detrimental impact of its coverage on relations with the provisional government. Therefore the contemporary international relations concept of 'soft power' cannot easily be applied to an historical analysis of British policy towards Portugal.

The dismissal of General Gonçalves was a critical point of the Portuguese Revolution; the government of Admiral Pinheiro de Azevedo was the first since November 1974 to be controlled by political moderates, whilst the radical left responded by organising a coup d'état. The Labour Government, whilst being relieved at the outcome of the 'Hot Summer', now faced the dilemma of how to meet the pledge Callaghan made in August: "I think we must prepare for real and very quick help to Portugal if the moderates win."⁸⁶⁹

⁸⁶⁹ Baker to Killick, 22 August 1975, FCO 9/2294.

Chapter VI – The Consolidation of Democracy

(September 8th, 1975 – July 23rd, 1976)

The appointment of the sixth provisional government transformed Lisbon's power struggle. The new Prime Minister, Admiral Azevedo, chose a cabinet which closely matched the outcome of the Constituent Assembly Elections, which meant that (alongside the control of the Armed Forces Movement by the Antunes Group) political moderates were dominant in Lisbon for the first time since Spínola's resignation in September 1974. The radical left responded by strengthening its influence within the Portuguese military and in organising land seizures and public demonstrations. These efforts to destabilise the provisional government culminated in an attempted coup d'état on the 25th November, the failure of which ended the revolutionary phase of the Carnation Revolution. The establishment of a moderate government in Lisbon meant that the principal aim of the Labour Government in Portugal (since the overseas territories had been granted their independence) was achieved, and that relations could now be conducted through state diplomacy rather than partisan ties with the Portuguese Socialist Party. However, mounting economic and social problems facing Portugal made international support essential to ensure a democratic outcome. This chapter will consider the British response to these events, from the appointment of the sixth provisional government on the 8th September 1974 until the Presidential elections on July 23rd 1975, the outcome of which marked Portugal's successful transition to democracy.

These events coincided with a series of significant international developments which shaped their outcome. The aftermath of decolonisation led to the evacuation of Portuguese nationals from Angola. The rapid decline of Franco's health, which meant that "the sense of a regime crumbling was all-pervading", made events in Portugal appear the precursor for a similar transition in Spain.⁸⁷⁰ The series of international summits that began during the summer of 1975 continued; their number, and the range and significance of issues discussed, led a biographer of Wilson to describe this as a period when "Summitry was becoming infectious."⁸⁷¹ The optimism engendered by the Helsinki Summit soon evaporated over

⁸⁷⁰ Paul Preston, *Franco* (London: Harper Collins, 1993), p.775. An example of contemporary reporting was an article on Spain's political future, entitled "On the Lisbon Road". *The Economist*, September 6th, 1975, p. 51.

⁸⁷¹ Austen Morgan, *Harold Wilson* (London: Pluto Press, 1992), p. 485.

issues such as trade and emigration, whilst Angola's civil war (which began before independence), alongside Indonesia's invasion of East Timor, fatally undermined superpower détente. The global energy crisis and economic recession led western states to coordinate their response, leading to an informal gathering at Rambouillet in France - which became the G7, that crucial forum for international diplomacy. Although events in Portugal were not the subject of formal discussion, they were raised privately between participants during these meetings.

The main argument of this chapter concerns the impact that Britain's economic difficulties had on relations with Portugal. Despite urgent pleas from the FCO, the Treasury would not provide aid on a scale which would have given influence in Lisbon, eroding any claim to a special relationship resulting from the 'oldest alliance'. The Labour Government's decision to cut defence rather than welfare spending damaged transatlantic relations, reducing cooperation with the United States on foreign policy issues such as Portugal.⁸⁷² The domestic difficulties facing the Labour Government also undermined the coherence and effectiveness of British diplomacy. The cancellation of a ministerial visit to Lisbon, alongside criticism of the provisional government by left-wing members of the Labour Party, seriously damaged future relations with Portugal. As a result, when parliamentary and presidential elections were held in 1976, the Labour Government had little direct influence in Lisbon. There is some evidence (albeit largely from uncorroborated sources) that covert intervention alongside the United States was planned were there to be a coup d'état or civil war in Portugal. This suggests that, despite their differences on other issues, close institutional cooperation continued between British and American intelligence and security services.

During this period there were significant changes in how British policy towards Portugal was made. The removal of a radical left-wing government in Lisbon, antithetical to western interests, meant that Wilson and Callaghan played a less prominent role. They were also increasingly overwhelmed by pressing economic and political problems, leading Wilson to recall that "it was the most hectic I have ever known either as Prime Minister or as a member of Clement Attlee's post-war Cabinet."⁸⁷³ This meant that even Callaghan became largely focused on domestic issues, particularly following Wilson's resignation in March 1976, and the subsequent Labour leadership election. Therefore, although the provisional

⁸⁷² Thomas Robb, 'The 'Limit of What is Tolerable': British defence cuts and the Anglo-American 'special relationship', 1974-1976, *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (June 2011), pp. 321-337.

⁸⁷³ Wilson, *Final Term*, p. 181. There has also been speculation amongst historians about whether Wilson's physical and mental capacities were impaired during this period.

government in Lisbon faced continuing threats, and the opportunity existed to promote British interests, there was little direct contact during this period. Despite the presence in government of the PSP, relations with the Labour Party atrophied, whilst contact with the Antunes Group ceased entirely following the attempted coup d'état. The emergence of a moderate government in Lisbon allowed the British Embassy (which had often failed to understand developments in Portugal) to work closely with the new government. This made it far more effectual in defending British interests and predicting the course of events in Lisbon. The absence of clear policy guidance from the Labour Government meant that the initiative passed to the FCO. There was a recommendation that relations be established with a wider range of moderate parties in Lisbon beside the PSP. The Labour Government was also influenced by lobbying from business groups in Portugal who argued that British interests would be more effectively protected by applying pressure on the provisional government, rather than by providing support and encouragement.

There was also increasing divergence between the Labour Government's approach to Portugal and that of its western allies. The United States was now concerned with how events in Lisbon affected Angola, whose civil war had suddenly become a Cold War crisis with implications throughout the southern African region.⁸⁷⁴ The conduct of policy towards Portugal changed following the 'Halloween massacre', which saw the reshaping of President Ford's foreign policy team in preparation for the forthcoming presidential elections.⁸⁷⁵ These changes reduced Kissinger's influence on foreign policy-making relative to the State Department. The Ford Administration was also constrained by the House of Representatives' attempt to reassert control over foreign policy making in the aftermath of Watergate.⁸⁷⁶ In contrast to the Labour Government, leading western European states continued to play a significant role supporting Portuguese democracy through the Socialist International, particularly during the parliamentary and presidential elections when advice and substantial financial assistance were given.⁸⁷⁷

⁸⁷⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, 'Portugal', 15 September 1975, Ford Library, National Security Adviser, NSC Staff Files, Box 18, Portugal 1975 (13). <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 160).

⁸⁷⁵ Kissinger's dual role as National Security Adviser and Secretary of State was abolished (he retained the former position). Jussi Hanhimäki, *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 427.

⁸⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 428-431.

⁸⁷⁷ Fonseca, *Journal of European Integration History*, pp. 51-54.

The appointment of the sixth provisional government meant that Portugal became a less significant issue within British foreign policy. This is clearly seen in FCO planning for international meetings. After the 11th March coup d'état attempt, Portugal was always a leading item on the agenda; it was the only issue raised with the Soviet delegation in Helsinki and the Socialist International in Stockholm. The political stability in Lisbon now made the wider implications of the Portuguese Revolution more important. During the bilateral meeting in Paris between Callaghan and Kissinger in November 1975, Angola was third on the agenda and Portugal seventh, whereas at the bilateral meeting between Crosland and Kissinger in April 1976, there was no mention of Portugal, and events in Angola topped the agenda.⁸⁷⁸ Moreover, after Franco's demise, Portugal was included only as an adjunct to events in Spain at international gatherings.⁸⁷⁹ Its declining importance was also the result of the Labour Government's focusing on addressing its own domestic crises. The increasing significance of a range of foreign policy issues extraneous to the Cold War, such as the energy crisis and improving relations with developing countries, also meant that Portugal was less important; it was entirely absent from FCO planning for the Rambouillet summit (forerunner of the G7 meetings).

During the months that followed its appointment, the sixth provisional government reversed measures such as controls on the media and independent trade unions, previously introduced by the radical left to entrench their position in Lisbon. The radical left responded by accelerating land seizures and building their support within the Portuguese military, leading to rumours of a coup d'état, or even civil war. The political turmoil, alongside the effects of rapid decolonisation, exacerbated Portugal's economic crisis. During the following weeks political tensions escalated further, as each side, fearing the other's intention, manoeuvred to thwart supposed conspiracies. These events culminated in the November coup d'état attempt, when supporters of the provisional government within the armed forces either responded to, or acted to prevent, an attempt by their opponents to seize power (exactly whom remains a point of contention amongst historians), decisively tilting the political balance in Portugal towards the political moderates.⁸⁸⁰ The provisional government, despite

⁸⁷⁸ 'Record of a conversation between the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the US Secretary of State', 16 November 1975, FCO 82/581. 'Secretary of State's Meeting with Dr Kissinger', 24 April 1976, FCO 82/668.

⁸⁷⁹ 'Federal Republic of Germany, Bilateral Meeting', 11 November 1975, FCO 59/1375. 'Briefing for bilateral with Dr Kissinger during NATO meeting', 10 December 1975, FCO 82/581.

⁸⁸⁰ Manuel, *The Uncertain Outcome*, pp.123-126.

mounting economic and political problems, held parliamentary and presidential elections, the outcome of which ensured Portugal's successful transition to parliamentary democracy.

Support for the Sixth Provisional Government

The power struggle in Portugal during the summer of 1975 culminated in Prime Minister Goncalves' resignation on the 8th September. His replacement, Admiral Pinheiro de Azevedo, although a member of the radical left, had become convinced during the Hot Summer that only a government representative of the Portuguese electorate could restore political authority. As a result he immediately offered leading moderate politicians ministerial posts within his government.⁸⁸¹ However, Azevedo faced the dilemma of whether to also appoint representatives from the radical left, fearing that to do so would undermine his government from within, but to exclude them entirely would mean that without the responsibility of office, Portugal's economic crisis would enable them to increase their popular support. The sixth provisional government, formed on the 13th September, was largely composed of political moderates, particularly from the PSP. They made an immediate commitment to hold parliamentary and presidential elections the following year, and to restore discipline within the armed forces. The radical left now sought to challenge the new government by encouraging land seizures in the south and bolstering their support within the Portuguese armed forces. The continued political instability, alongside the return of impoverished refugees from Angola, worsened Portugal's mounting economic problems, leading to further civil unrest, and by the final week of October rumours first circulated around Lisbon of an imminent coup d'état.

The British Government welcomed the appointment of Prime Minister Azevedo, believing that this made a transition to democracy possible. There was disagreement, however, as to whether this could be achieved with the PCP outside government, as some feared that this "may simply turn out to be an opportunity for the Communist Party further to undermine any prospect of pluralist democracy."⁸⁸² During the week Azevedo formed his government, the British Embassy reported the renewed threat from the radical left,

⁸⁸¹ Many of those appointed were those who had previously resigned over the República Affair.

⁸⁸² Barrett to 10 Downing Street, 'Brief for Prime Minister's Meeting on Portugal', 3 September 1975, PREM 16/1053.

particularly the seizure of an arms cache in Lisbon, which raised the spectre of civil war.⁸⁸³ The Ford Administration, more sceptical of the significance of Azevedo's appointment, argued against the PCP receiving ministerial posts. During a meeting between Kissinger and Callaghan in New York on the 6th September, the latter argued that "the Communists must share responsibility for dealing with the economic situation."⁸⁸⁴ Kissinger continued his opposition, only sardonically conceding "unless it is something minimal e.g. a Communist Sports Minister."⁸⁸⁵ By the following week Kissinger's position had hardened, and he sent a message to Callaghan expressing his fear that "the manner in which the Communists have acted to translate their minority status into positions of power in key areas of influence gives one no reason to think they will behave any differently in the future."⁸⁸⁶ He requested that these concerns be shared with Soares during a scheduled meeting with Callaghan, including the message: "we do not intend to assist any Portuguese Government in which the Communists have positions of any significance."⁸⁸⁷ In the event Soares' schedule prevented a meeting being held.

The appointment of the sixth provisional government meant that for the first time since the April Revolution the Labour Government could give unambiguous support to Portugal. The British Ambassador called for the new government to be welcomed because "their objective of having the civilian cabinet posts distributed in proportions corresponding to the performance of the major parties in the April elections" would mean moderate democratic politicians were ascendant in Lisbon.⁸⁸⁸ The principal concern of the Labour Government that summer - the presence of communist ministers within a NATO member-state - was now allayed. There was optimism that British economic interests in Portugal would be better protected. In the weeks following the government's appointment, however, there was mounting concern with the activity of the radical left. The deterioration in Franco's health also meant serious consideration was given to how events in Portugal might impact on Spain; an FCO report concluded that "Portugal should serve as a lesson to us when considering the far greater prize in Spain."⁸⁸⁹ The FCO's Southern European Department, previously sanguine about the threat from the radical left in Lisbon, argued that events on the

⁸⁸³ Manuel, *The Uncertain Outcome*, p.123.

⁸⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁵ Morgan to FCO, 'Portugal: Dr Kissinger's Message of 10 September', 10 September 1975, FCO 9/2292.

⁸⁸⁶ James to Barrett, 10 September 1975, FCO 9/2292.

⁸⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁸ Trench to FCO, 'New Portuguese Government', 23 September 1975, FCO 9/2294.

⁸⁸⁹ McNally to Wright, 23 July 1975, PREM 16/1053.

Iberian Peninsula were entwined, particularly following an attack on the Spanish Embassy by Portuguese militants protesting at the execution of political prisoners.⁸⁹⁰

The appointment of a government in Lisbon committed to democracy but facing political and economic difficulties led to a consensus amongst western states that immediate economic support was necessary. The EEC aid committed to Portugal that summer had been deliberately structured to ensure delay until a propitious political outcome was assured. Following Azevedo's appointment there was agreement that "he should be given a response with all speed and that this response should not have to wait for the next council in October."⁸⁹¹ A series of meetings was held intended to influence the formation of the sixth provisional government.⁸⁹² This led to the immediate provision of previously agreed aid by the EEC, although this was still conditional and given in stages (unlike American and West German bilateral aid), which reduced its political effectiveness. The aid programme committed the Labour Government to providing a £4.5 million subsidy, through the EEC Budget, on the loan of 150 million units of account which the Portuguese received from the European Investment Bank.⁸⁹³

The Labour Government agreed that Portugal needed additional economic aid. However, Britain's worsening economic problems (a special Cabinet meeting had recently discussed further public spending cuts) made encouraging more assistance by the EEC the most attractive option.⁸⁹⁴ An FCO official argued that "We are too poor to rescue Portugal alone, and if we are more willing to help them than some of our partners we would do well to use much of whatever we can afford, multilaterally, with a view to squeezing contributions out of them."⁸⁹⁵ A continuing role for the EEC was also considered significant because "Portugal attaches importance to a community reaction."⁸⁹⁶ However, there appeared to be insuperable obstacles to achieving consensus on further EEC aid, with leading member-states such as West Germany continuing to favour bilateral assistance. Lobbying in Brussels was

⁸⁹⁰ Trench to FCO, 'Portugal: Annual Review for 1975, 21 January 1975, FCO 9/2275. Preston, *Franco*, p.775.

⁸⁹¹ Callaghan to FCO, 'EEC help to Portugal', 30 September 1975, FCO 9/1307.

⁸⁹² In a rapid succession of meetings between the 11th and 23rd September, the Ad Hoc Group on Portugal, the Foreign Affairs Council Meeting and Financial Council reached agreement on the details of providing aid.

⁸⁹³ Prentice to Callaghan, 'Aid to Portugal', 28 October 1975, FCO 9/2306.

⁸⁹⁴ Kathleen Burk and Alec Cairncross, *Goodbye Great Britain: The 1976 IMF Crisis* (Yale University Press: New Haven & London, 1992), p.16.

⁸⁹⁵ Baker to FCO, 'Bilateral Aid for Portugal', 14 October 1975, FCO 9/1307.

⁸⁹⁶ Callaghan to FCO, 'EEC help for Portugal', 24 September 1975, FCO 9/1308.

unlikely to be successful given the Labour Government's political isolation.⁸⁹⁷ The option most attractive to Lisbon was an expansion of trade with the Nine, alongside the promise of future accession talks. The difficulty with such a course was that EEC tariffs discriminated against many Portuguese products and reversing these would be difficult.⁸⁹⁸ Callaghan commented that during the global recession, "Western Governments face domestic problems in taking more exports of Portuguese textiles, wire, cork and agricultural products."⁸⁹⁹ The Labour Government was particularly concerned that proposals "to waive the ceilings on imports on Portuguese textiles" would harm constituencies in northern England.⁹⁰⁰

The obstacles to further EEC assistance led to calls within the Labour Government for bilateral aid. This was first raised by Callaghan during the formation of Azevedo's government. He argued forcefully that bilateral aid would bring political influence in Lisbon, providing that they "who have worked hard with encouragement and advice to assist Dr Soares to achieve this end, should make a clear and public gesture towards such a government soon after it takes office."⁹⁰¹ Following the provisional government's appointment, a public display of support by giving bilateral aid was considered essential, given that previously the Labour Government had sought to avoid any impression of directly intervening in Portuguese affairs through multilateral aid. The FCO also made the calculation that "The EEC have now made a multilateral offer, so that we no longer fear that a bilateral offer by us will harm the prospects of that."⁹⁰²

Having explored the possibility of EEC aid, Callaghan now approached the Treasury to explain that "as a result of our discussions in the Community I am satisfied that bilateral aid to Portugal really is a necessity."⁹⁰³ The criticism that small-scale aid would have negligible impact on the Portuguese economy was countered by the argument, "But my judgment is that it will have a significant political impact at a moment when there is still all to play for."⁹⁰⁴ Callaghan also noted that the provision of aid by the United States and West Germany was likely to increase, which threatened further Britain's traditional position as Portugal's closest

⁸⁹⁷ Britain's difficult relations with members of the EEC were considered in 'Eight pairs of eyebrows', *The Economist*, 25 October 1975.

⁸⁹⁸ 'Foreign and Farm Ministers: Southern Discomfort', *The Economist*, 28 June 1975.

⁸⁹⁹ 'Callaghan to FCO, 'Portuguese Textiles'', 27 June 1975, FCO 30/2717.

⁹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰¹ Barrett to 10 Downing Street, 'Brief for Prime Minister's Meeting on Portugal', 3 September 1975, PREM 16/1053.

⁹⁰² Callaghan to Prentice, '22 October 1975, FCO 9/1307.

⁹⁰³ Callaghan to ODM, 'Aid to Portugal, 24 October 1975, FCO 9/2306.

⁹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

ally.⁹⁰⁵ In a series of correspondence with the Treasury, the FCO argued strongly that bilateral aid was in the British national interest, a position outlined by an official who noted that “it will build up direct links between us and Portugal, with visits by experts in both directions. It will make for us grateful clients in Portugal, and provide practical demonstrations of our friendship.”⁹⁰⁶ Despite such lobbying, the Treasury remained implacably opposed to providing bilateral aid. This stance hardened once the political situation in Lisbon began to deteriorate in the weeks following the provisional government’s appointment. A Treasury official noted that “HM Ambassador has reported to you threats of extremist left-wing coups, indiscipline in the Armed Forces and an admission by Admiral Azevedo that the Government were not able to control Lisbon completely, let alone the rest of the country.”⁹⁰⁷

The Treasury’s continued opposition to bilateral aid led Callaghan to approach Wilson for support. He sought agreement to the principle of giving such assistance, an FCO official recording that “If the Prime Minister’s reaction is favourable perhaps the Private Secretary would add a further paragraph to the draft to this effect.”⁹⁰⁸ Callaghan argued that continued British influence in Lisbon depended on the provision of bilateral aid; a forthcoming ministerial visit to Lisbon by Hattersley caused him to say, “I do not think we can afford to send him empty handed.”⁹⁰⁹ Callaghan also expressed concern that the credibility of British foreign policy was being damaged by the perception that policy aims could not be supported by military and economic means. An FCO official recorded that, to challenge this perception “Mr Callaghan would however wish to be able to inform certain of his Foreign Minister colleagues in New York next week that a decision in principle had been taken.” There was particular concern at the potential damage to Anglo-American relations.⁹¹⁰ It was pointedly noted, “He is breakfasting with Dr Kissinger on 23 September when this subject may well arise.”⁹¹¹ Although Wilson eventually agreed to bilateral aid, he insisted this should come from the overseas aid budget rather than directly from the Treasury.⁹¹²

⁹⁰⁵ The United States provided \$35 million and West Germany DM 70 million (\$27 million). During a meeting of the Ad Hoc Group on Portugal, Germany revealed their intention to provide further support. Pallister to FCO, ‘EEC help for Portugal’, 23 September 1975, FCO 59/1308.

⁹⁰⁶ Callaghan to Prentice, 22 October 1975, FCO 9/1307.

⁹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰⁸ Goodison to FCO, ‘Aid to Portugal’, 19 September 1975, FCO 59/1308.

⁹⁰⁹ Callaghan to ODM, ‘Aid to Portugal’, 24 October 1975, FCO 9/2306.

⁹¹⁰ Goodison to FCO, ‘Aid to Portugal’, 19 September 1975, FCO 59/1308.

⁹¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹¹² Manning to FCO, ‘Aid to Portugal’, 22 September 1975, PREM 16/1054.

After returning from New York, Callaghan promised only to “rest in stirrups” until an agreement on bilateral aid to Portugal was achieved.⁹¹³ He appealed to the ODM “by means of a letter from the Private Secretary” that they consider urgently the issue of aid to Portugal.⁹¹⁴ Despite anticipated opposition, this proposal elicited an unexpected response - a letter from the Private Secretary committing the department to aid, with a handwritten admission, “This is strictly a political gesture.”⁹¹⁵ The ODM requested in return a sympathetic future spending-round that acknowledged this commitment.⁹¹⁶ Therefore, although sympathy for Portugal existed throughout the Labour Government, the political implications of public spending cuts were the determining factor in accepting a commitment of aid. Despite the ODM’s agreement, the Treasury continued to delay any immediate decision on aid to Portugal and a heated exchange of letters with the FCO followed. Callaghan argued for a commitment, asserting that “we should make it, as an exception to the general trend of our aid policy, and that history will judge us harshly if we do not.”⁹¹⁷ In reply, Reg Prentice at the Treasury expressed scepticism whether recent events in Lisbon suggested aid would prove effective.⁹¹⁸ They finally agreed to resolve their differences by meeting during the forthcoming Labour Party Conference.

The continued opposition by the Treasury to providing development aid from the ODM’s budget led to calls that humanitarian aid be given instead. Such an approach would resolve the dilemma of how to provide economic assistance whilst the political environment in Lisbon remained fluid, and was justified by social conditions which were worsening with the return of Portuguese nationals from Angola. The British Ambassador sent warnings that “The refugees are likely to form an increasingly unstable and discontented group.”⁹¹⁹ The appointment of a new government in Lisbon also meant that previous pledges of humanitarian aid, which were significantly smaller than those of other western states, now appeared wholly inadequate.⁹²⁰ The decision to charge the cost of fuel of the RAF transport

⁹¹³ Maud to Mason, ‘Aid to Portugal’, 7 October 1975, FCO 9/1307.

⁹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹¹⁵ Private Secretary (ODM) to FCO, ‘Aid to Portugal’, 22 September 1975, FCO 9/1308.

⁹¹⁶ The appeal was made that, “It would of course be easier to accommodate expenditure on Portugal within the framework if the Aid programme were not subjected to the 5 per cent and 10 per cent cuts in public expenditure in 1977/8 and 1978/9.”

⁹¹⁷ Callaghan to Prentice, 22 October 1975, FCO 9/1308.

⁹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹¹⁹ Trench to FCO, ‘Aid to returnees from Angola’, 24 October 1975, FCO 59/1308.

⁹²⁰ Callaghan argued, “The proposed £250,000 aid to refugees from Angola is a reasonable figure if we were also offering the Portuguese bilateral capital aid. On its own it would look too small beside, for example, Denmark’s £430,000 for the refugees and the USA’s \$35 million.” Callaghan to Prentice, ‘Aid to Portugal’, 5 November 1975, FCO 9/1307.

plane sent to assist the evacuation of Angolan refugees received particular criticism. An FCO official noted that this compared unfavourably “with the actions of other countries, in particular of the USA, France and West Germany, who have made available more or larger aircraft at less, or no cost to the Portuguese.”⁹²¹ The FCO also argued that an increase of humanitarian aid was an excellent means to promote the British national interest in Portugal. The British Ambassador advised that “the situation could be improved and HMG could simultaneously gain credit within Portugal if it gave aid to the refugees in some visible way.”⁹²² There was a pressing need for aid to arrive before the winter; the fact that “We appear to have been the first mission approached in this way so far” was evidence of Britain’s importance to the provisional government, but the Ambassador warned this would only continue if such expectations were met.⁹²³ These arguments led the ODM to agree to an increase in humanitarian aid, although they remained sceptical of its likely effectiveness given the political tensions in Lisbon.

The momentum in Whitehall towards giving economic aid, however, slowed following threats to British farmers in the Alentejo region. The British Embassy reported that “most of our farmers in the area are either being taken over, under active threat, or seriously worried about their prospects.”⁹²⁴ As a result once again the Embassy spent a disproportionate amount of time attempting to “keep up the pressure on the Government in Lisbon, keep in touch with Military Commander about physical protection if and when this is necessary, and keep in touch with the farmers themselves so that they do not feel isolated and neglected.”⁹²⁵ However, they counselled caution, believing these threats were not the result of “Revolutionary dynamism”, as the Portuguese Agricultural Minister claimed, but were a deliberate strategy by the radical left.⁹²⁶ The Embassy argued that “The Communists were no doubt pursuing two objectives. They wanted to win the support of the landless peasants by promising to make them free and rich through taking over the land of the ‘foreign exploiters’. But they also wanted to get the Portuguese Government disaffected from Britain and

⁹²¹ In a high profile operation the FCO recorded, “Since it commenced operations on 10 September, the VC10 has been making five return flights and carrying nearly 700 evacuees a week.” Holt to Treasury, ‘Evacuation of Portuguese Citizens from Angola’, 25 September 1975, PREM 16/1054.

⁹²² Trench to FCO, ‘Aid to returnees from Angola’, 24 October 1975, FCO 59/1308.

⁹²³ *Ibid.*

⁹²⁴ Ure to Baker, ‘British Farms in the Alentejo’, 29 October 1975, FCO 9/2312.

⁹²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹²⁶ Trench to FCO, ‘Land Seizures’, 30 October 1975, FCO 9/2312.

Germany, the two countries most involved.”⁹²⁷ This raised the dilemma of how to protect British business interests whilst giving support to the provisional government.

The US Embassy shared their British counterparts’ concerns over developments in the Alentejo region. A ‘study in depth’ by visiting State Department officials seen by the British Embassy concluded that “the farm take-overs were part of a carefully orchestrated communist plan, and not the result of a wild-cat action.”⁹²⁸ However, the difference was, a British official argued, that “The Americans were of course interested in these developments as evidence of the political, social and economic developments in the area; our own interest also extends to the protection of specific British interests.”⁹²⁹ This meant that the British Embassy became increasingly focused on how to defend its interests in Portugal rather than on wider concerns. The Labour Government’s distraction with domestic issues meant, an FCO official noted that, “The tactics on this whole question have been left to the British Embassy in Lisbon.”⁹³⁰ The British Ambassador approached the Portuguese Prime Minister on the 3rd November with a list of British farmers whose land had been occupied or forcibly expropriated, and called for their compensation. However, without the support of other western states, this attempt was unsuccessful and even possibly counterproductive.⁹³¹ An FCO official recorded that “Possibly as a result of ministerial action following our representations here, the Agrarian reform process in the Alentejo appears to be moving into a phase of open confrontation.”⁹³² Therefore the British Embassy’s efforts to protect British farmers undermined efforts by the Labour Government to support and encourage the new government in Lisbon.

The British farmers from the Alentejo region also sought to influence policy toward Portugal by lobbying in Westminster. Dozens of letters were sent to MPs critical of the British response, leading to their concerns being raised in both parliamentary debates and during private meetings with government ministers.⁹³³ This complicated Britain’s relations with Portugal; Foreign Office minister Roy Hattersley voiced the dilemma that although

⁹²⁷ Record of Mr Hattersley’s meeting with Fairbairn MP, 30 October 1975, FCO 9/2312.

⁹²⁸ Ure to Baker, ‘British farms in the Alentejo’, 29 October 1975, FCO 9/2312.

⁹²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹³⁰ Gullan to Baker, ‘Agricultural Occupations’, 20 November 1975, FCO 9/1704.

⁹³¹ Trench to FCO, ‘Land Seizures’, 3 November 1975, FCO 47/242.

⁹³² Trench to FCO, ‘Land Seizures’, 4 November 1975, FCO 9/2312.

⁹³³ Baker to FCO, ‘MPs letters on Portugal’, 5 November 1975, FCO 47/724. Not all members of Westminster were sympathetic to the British farmers’ situation. Lord Letherland argued, “will my noble friend bear in mind that many British nationals who have gone to live in Portugal, and have bought houses and estates there, have done so in order to dodge paying British income tax.” House of Lords Question, ‘Portugal and British Subjects’, 24 October 1975, FCO 47/1724.

“HMG would represent the interests of Mr Fairbairn’s constituents as forcefully as we could, of course we realised we might inevitably have to antagonise some people in the Portuguese Government machine. But we did not want to damage the long-term chances for democracy.”⁹³⁴ As a direct result of lobbying, Hattersley met the Portuguese Ambassador in London on the 21st October to raise concerns about the safety of British farmers. Although he had some successes, Hattersley’s planned visit to Lisbon, intended as a means to demonstrate support for the Azevedo government, became principally seen as a means of protecting British business interests in Portugal. An FCO official recorded that “Mr Hattersley said that he himself was going to Portugal next month, and would make representations about all this and stand on a few toes.”⁹³⁵

There was also criticism of the Labour Government’s approach to Portugal from left-wing members of the Labour Party. Their opposition reflected wider ideological divisions within the Labour movement during Wilson’s final term, rather than concern with developments in Portugal. In particular, relations between ministers and backbench MPs inside the National Executive Committee had fractured, with their differences being personal as much as political. This was illustrated by Callaghan’s comment, on his failure to attend a meeting, “It’s not because I’m too busy; it’s that I’ve no desire to attend a Committee which has people on it like Frank Allaun and Joan Maynard and Alex Kitson.”⁹³⁶ It also affected the NEC International Committee’s effectiveness. The minutes of one meeting recorded that “Mr T. McNally had previously been invited to the meetings of the committee as a channel of communication with the Foreign Office, but as other political advisers were not allowed to attend meetings of committees of the National Executive Committee, it was agreed that this invitation should be withdrawn.”⁹³⁷ This meant that government ministers were not present to oppose the drafting of a composite motion for the forthcoming party conference critical of policy toward Portugal. The TUC was also criticised by left-wing members for supporting Labour Government policy toward Portugal, the minutes of a meeting for affiliated trade unions expressing the intention “to give full consideration to support through international solidarity and further and if necessary to call on the Government to completely oppose any

⁹³⁴ Record of Mr Hattersley’s Meeting with Mr Fairbairn MP, 30 October 1975, FCO 47/724.

⁹³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹³⁶ The three individuals mentioned by Callaghan were part of a dissident group within the Labour Party critical of the Wilson Government during 1975. NEC Minutes, 11 November 1975 - Labour Party Archive, International Department.

⁹³⁷ *Ibid.*

intervention by N.A.T.O. forces.”⁹³⁸ There was also protest by other British far-left groups, such as the rally organised by the Portuguese Workers Co-ordination Committee held on Speakers’ Corner on the 20th September.⁹³⁹

The Labour Party Conference, which began on the 29th September, was an opportunity to express support for the new government in Lisbon. Soares attended the event as an observer and guest speaker, and was given a public statement of support from Callaghan.⁹⁴⁰ However, this notoriously bad tempered conference saw the dispute between two different versions of socialism in Lisbon shape debate within the Labour Party, meaning divisions on Portugal were publicly revealed. Left-wing MPs proposed a composite motion challenging policy towards Portugal, and disparate groups on the conference fringe, such as the Labour Party Young Socialists and the Bertrand Russell Foundation, protested at government policy and Soares’ presence.⁹⁴¹ This was the first direct meeting between the Labour Party leadership and the Portuguese Socialist leader since he had rejoined the provisional government; intended to strengthen relations, the conference caused acute embarrassment to the Labour leadership.⁹⁴² Soares’ hostile reception left a lasting impression which damaged future relations. During planning for a later meeting between Callaghan and Soares, the British Ambassador warned that “one of the points which Soares will probably bring up is the attitude of the Labour party representative at the meeting of the Socialist International two or three days ago.”⁹⁴³ Soares also recalled that “the representative (Jane or Jenny Little (sic), if I understand correctly) opposed aid to the PS, because the latter was too far to the right.”⁹⁴⁴ At a meeting on the 2nd January “both the Prime Minister and Ron Hayward went out of their way to assure him of continuing Labour Party support, the Prime Minister going so far as to tell him “to rely on the men and forget the women.”⁹⁴⁵ The embarrassment caused by the conference contributed to the breakdown in trust between

⁹³⁸ Humphreys to Hodgkins, ‘Current Situation in Portugal’, 28 October 1975, TUC Archive MSS.292D/946.1/2, 44.

⁹³⁹ Fell to SED, ‘Rally on Portugal’, 9 September 1975, FCO 9/2295.

⁹⁴⁰ Baker to Weston, ‘Resolutions on Portugal at the Labour Party Conference’, 26 September 1975, FCO 9/2295.

⁹⁴¹ An extensive selection of pamphlets from the conference fringe is held at the TUC Archive in Warwick University. TUC Collection, Warwick University archives, MSS.292/946.1/2. The Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation followed events in Portugal closely after the Carnation Revolution and financed visits by the Labour MPs Audrey Wise, Judith Hart and Tony Banks.

⁹⁴² Helmut Schmidt was also a guest at the conference during a state visit intended to deepen Anglo-German relations, including a common approach toward Portugal.

⁹⁴³ Trench to McNally, 4 December 1975, 2222:I/PSP:74-75 - Callaghan Papers, Box 136.

⁹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴⁵ McNally to Trench, 2 January 1976, 2222:I/PSP:74-75 - Callaghan Papers, Box 136.

Labour ministers and the International Department within the NEC concerning policy toward Portugal.

The chaotic organisation of the Labour Party conference also meant that Callaghan “was not, in the event, able to discuss with Mr Prentice in Blackpool the doubts Mr Prentice has exposed about the advisability of bilateral aid to Portugal.”⁹⁴⁶ During the following month dialogue between FCO and Treasury officials continued, but with Callaghan now focused on other issues, no agreement was immediately reached. The provisional government in Lisbon faced mounting opposition from the radical left which meant that they were distracted from lobbying western governments for economic aid. The British Embassy first reported rumours of a coup d’état on October 31st, the Ambassador ominously noting that “Although Lisbon is outwardly calm the political situation remains brittle. The Government’s efforts to impose their authority have not been an unqualified success.”⁹⁴⁷ The attempt by western governments to bolster the Lisbon government had failed. During the following month rumours of plots became a daily occurrence, until finally on November 25th the army mutinied.

The Labour Government had grasped immediately after the appointment of the sixth provisional government that a democratic transition was now possible, but that the continued threat from the radical left, alongside Portugal’s mounting economic difficulties, made urgent financial support essential. However, its own economic problems prevented consensus in Whitehall on how this should be achieved and the failure to resolve this issue prevented the Labour Government from having significant influence in Lisbon. The threat to British farmers also meant that the Lisbon Embassy began to put pressure on the Portuguese government rather than give support. The cohesion of British policy towards Portugal was also undermined by the Labour Government’s domestic political difficulties. Developments in Portugal were not discussed at cabinet level throughout this period, whilst the FCO planning for Hattersley’s visit to Portugal changed from giving diplomatic and economic support to the provisional government, to sending a *démarche* calling for the protection of British farmers. There was little coordination of western policy towards Portugal once events there had ceased to be a Cold War crisis. There was also only irregular contact between the Labour Government and the Ford Administration because of their policy differences on other issues. The attempted coup d’état in November would mean that Britain, alongside the United

⁹⁴⁶ Baker to FCO, ‘Bilateral Aid for Portugal’, 14 October 1975, FCO 9/1307.

⁹⁴⁷ Trench to FCO, ‘Political Situation’, 6 October 1975, PREM 16/1054.

States, would once again play a significant role in Portugal. However, the Labour Government's inability to respond effectively following the appointment of the sixth provisional government had long-term implications for Britain's diplomatic influence in Portugal.

The 25th November coup d'état attempt

The final act of Portugal's political drama was a sudden, confused attempt by the radical left to seize power. They set out to destabilise the sixth provisional government after its appointment through a series of planned and spontaneous actions. This culminated in construction workers (calling for a 45% wage increase) surrounding Parliament on the 13th November in a siege that would last for several days, leading to counter-demonstrations by supporters of the government. By the final week of November, indiscipline in the Armed Forces led the Prime Minister to admit that the government no longer had full control over Lisbon and on the 24th November, in a defining event, farmers supporting the government blocked routes into the capital. In response, a paratrooper regiment with allegiance to the radical left seized control of an airbase outside Lisbon on the following day. This led the provisional government to declare a state of emergency and, after a day of confusion in Lisbon, the mutiny was suppressed. In the months that followed the remnants of radical left influence in Lisbon were removed.⁹⁴⁸

The Labour Government received accurate and reliable information concerning Portugal throughout the November crisis; the British Embassy first reported rumours of a coup d'état on the 31st October, and sent almost daily despatches thereafter.⁹⁴⁹ These included briefings from Sa Machado, under-secretary in the Prime Minister's office and a close associate of Soares, who gave warning that the provisional government had placed the Portuguese security forces on alert in readiness for a breakdown of public order.⁹⁵⁰ This enabled the Southern European Department to conclude as early as the first week of November that "The crisis of authority is moving into an increasingly violent phase of confrontation."⁹⁵¹ Therefore, unlike during similar crises in September 1974 and March 1975,

⁹⁴⁸ For a recent account of events in Lisbon during the last week of November see General M.I. Rezola, *25 de Abril, Mitos de uma Revolução*, (Esfera dos livros, Lisbon 2007), pg. 221-270.

⁹⁴⁹ The number of rumours led the US Embassy in Lisbon to maintain a "coup clock." Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, p.182.

⁹⁵⁰ Trench to FCO, 'Political crisis', 21 November 1975, FCO 9/2274.

⁹⁵¹ Trench to FCO, 'Political situation', 7 November 1975, FCO 9/2274.

the regular and accurate reporting of the British Embassy enabled the Labour Government to predict the course of events. Wilson and Callaghan themselves were included within the Whitehall distribution of these despatches, whereas previously they had received only irregular summaries from the Southern European Department. Following the sixth provisional government's appointment, the Labour Government also began receiving regular briefings from the Portuguese Ambassador in London.⁹⁵²

Despite being aware of the threats facing the provisional government, the Labour Government did not respond by changing its policy toward Portugal. There was little attempt to influence events, as had been the case during previous crises, such as sending public messages of support, or establishing contacts within the Portuguese military. Throughout the crisis the Labour Government was convinced that any coup d'état attempt would fail, and that instead, as an FCO official argued, "A compromise - not to say muddled - solution still seems more probable than violent confrontation."⁹⁵³ The despatches sent by the British Embassy appear to have engendered a confidence that a transition to democracy remained the most likely outcome, unlike previous occasions when the Labour Government's understanding had been principally shaped by contact with Kissinger (who viewed events through the prism of the Cold War) or Soares (who exaggerated their significance to his advantage). Because the Labour Government was better informed, rumours such as that "a sizeable proportion of the government had also gone north in case of a left-wing coup in Lisbon" or that "if the communists took over Lisbon, the Azores might separate from Portugal" were dismissed without influencing decision-making.⁹⁵⁴ By contrast, the Ford Administration was more susceptible to such rumours, particularly those concerning the activity of right-wing groups operating from the north of Portugal and Spain.⁹⁵⁵

The Labour Government's muted response also resulted from an urgent need to address domestic difficulties. Barbara Castle recalls that an informal Cabinet meeting held at Chequers on the 17th November revealed "problems of almost insurmountable gloom."⁹⁵⁶ There were also problems in Northern Ireland, strikes in industry, continued divisions on Europe, factionalism within the Labour Party and an ongoing energy crisis. Moreover, the Labour Government faced the challenge, as a minority government, of ensuring that

⁹⁵² Trench to FCO, 'Demonstration against the government', 13 November 1975, FCO 9/2274.

⁹⁵³ Trench to FCO, 'Political crisis', 21 November 1975, FCO 9/2274.

⁹⁵⁴ Trench to FCO, 'Political situation', 17 November 1975, FCO 9/2274.

⁹⁵⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, 'Portugal', 12 August 1975, Ford Library, National Security Adviser, NSC Staff Files, Box 17, Portugal 1975.

⁹⁵⁶ Castle, *The Castle diaries, 1974-76*, p. 220.

legislation was passed following the opening of parliament on the 19th November. These domestic difficulties led to the Labour Government's decision to cancel a planned ministerial visit to Portugal. The proposed three day tour to be led by Hattersley and scheduled for the 26th November was cancelled on the 19th November after attendance at a House of Commons vote became necessary to ensure a government majority. This decision was not a response to the political crisis in Lisbon; rumours of a coup d'état had existed whilst the visit was planned, and its purpose had been to demonstrate public support for the provisional government. However, the need to cancel the visit proved convenient because "a visit which went off at half-cock because of Portuguese preoccupation with a domestic political crisis would be worse than none at all."⁹⁵⁷ This coincidence also meant there was little reaction in Lisbon, and therefore Britain's relationship with Portugal was not harmed.

The absence of a clear policy response may have been because a coup d'état was so antithetical to British interests that a covert operation was being planned instead. The British archival records do not support such an argument, although there are a greater number of missing files and closed documents for this period than for any other. However, the absence of an explicit response to events may be explained by a 'state within a state' of military and intelligence operatives planning an operation to thwart or reverse a left-wing coup d'état within a NATO member-state.⁹⁵⁸ This view is posited by a number of recent historians, with a number of secondary accounts by Portuguese historians, such as Gomes and Moreira de Sa.⁹⁵⁹ These accounts cannot be definitively disproved because their argument is based almost exclusively on unrecorded oral testimony and unsubstantiated sources.⁹⁶⁰ Had intervention been planned by the intelligence services with Wilson and Callaghan complicit, neither the FCO, the Lisbon Embassy, nor the Labour Cabinet had any awareness that such a programme existed. It also seems improbable that any sizeable covert operation could have been planned given the financial constraints the Labour Government faced during this period which, as we have seen, prevented bilateral assistance to the sixth provisional government. In his authorized history of the M15, Christopher Andrew also notes the antagonistic

⁹⁵⁷ Trench to FCO, 'Mr Hattersley's Visit', 14 November 1975, FCO 9/2297.

⁹⁵⁸ There were M15 and M16 operations during this period in Northern Ireland and North Yemen.

⁹⁵⁹ Mario Soares told the historian Josep Sanchez Cervelló of a "plano Callaghan" which was, he claimed, a British secret service mission to study "no caso do país ficar dividido ao meio" (how they could help if the country was divided in two). Gomes and Moreira de Sa, *Carlucci vs Kissinger*, p 355.

⁹⁶⁰ Haslam, *Russia's Cold War*, p.279-285. Morgan *Callaghan- A Life*, p.433.

relationship between the Wilson Government and the British secret services during this period.⁹⁶¹

There is a wide agreement amongst Portuguese historians that the United States planned a covert operation in Lisbon in the event of a successful coup d'état.⁹⁶² There are US archival records which support this argument, but these are currently heavily redacted and reveal neither their scale nor intention.⁹⁶³ A “special channel of communication” was established with Antunes, and an offer of unspecified assistance was given, “in the event of a tragedy.”⁹⁶⁴ During a meeting with Carlucci in December, Antunes shared that his colleagues had “in the back of their minds ‘Kissinger’s offer of assistance’”, which he had believed might be “military assistance during the heat of the fray.”⁹⁶⁵ However, there was not necessarily a US covert military programme in Lisbon; the US rejected Antunes’ request for money to buy small arms prior to the attempted coup d'état.⁹⁶⁶ The Ford Administration, like the Labour Government, was also distracted by a range of serious international and domestic issues during this period. The MPLA’s declaration of Angolan independence on the 10th November triggered South African intervention and the Cuban response which significantly increased Cold War tensions in the region.⁹⁶⁷ The ‘Halloween Massacre’ in Washington, also reduced Kissinger’s role within the Ford Administration.⁹⁶⁸ The attempt by Congress to restrict the activities of the CIA through the Church Commission also reduced any likelihood of a large-scale covert operation in Lisbon.⁹⁶⁹

The absence of regular discussions between Kissinger and Callaghan during November 1975 demonstrates that Portugal was no longer considered a Cold War crisis. The

⁹⁶¹ Christopher Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: the Authorized History of the M15* (London: Allen Lane, 2009), pp. 627-643.

⁹⁶² Antunes, *Os Americanos e Portugal*. Moreira de Sá, *Os Americanos na Revolução Portuguesa*, 138-144. Gomes and Moreira de Sa, *Carlucci vs Kissinger*, p.355.

⁹⁶³ President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Scowcroft) to President Ford, Washington, undated, ‘Covert Action Proposals for Portugal’, National Security Council Files, Ford Intelligence Files, Portugal—GRF. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 168).

⁹⁶⁴ ‘Private talk between Secretary Kissinger and Foreign Minister Melo Antunes’, 10 October 1975, National Archives, RG 59, Records of the Office of the Counselor, Helmut Sonnenfeldt, 1955–1977, Entry 5339, Box 3. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 164).

⁹⁶⁵ Telegram 7272, Lisbon Embassy to the Department of State, December 5, 1975, Ford Library, National Security Adviser, Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 11, Portugal—State Dept Tels To SECSTATE—NODIS (5). Secret. Nodis. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 169).

⁹⁶⁶ Memorandum for the 40 Committee, November 5; National Security Council Files, Ford Intelligence Files, Portugal—GRF. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 168).

⁹⁶⁷ Hanhimäki, *The Rise and Fall of Détente*, p.92.

⁹⁶⁸ Hanhimäki, *The Flawed Architect*, pp. 427.

⁹⁶⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 428-432.

Anglo-American relationship had become strained by the Labour Government's decision to cut defence spending in response to Britain's economic difficulties.⁹⁷⁰ Kissinger warned Callaghan that "America's long-term relations with the UK will inevitably have to take into account Britain's standing as a partner in our common security enterprise."⁹⁷¹ However, a successful coup d'état in Lisbon would have caused such damage to the NATO alliance that the existence of contingency planning for a covert operation is probable, and, given the close institutional ties between the US and UK intelligence services, cooperation was likely, irrespective of the foreign policy of each government.⁹⁷² There is some circumstantial evidence that Wilson and Callaghan were aware of Anglo-American intelligence cooperation on Portugal, but this was not shared with the Cabinet (some of whom opposed their support for the sixth provisional government) or relevant Whitehall departments.⁹⁷³ There is certainly no evidence of the Labour Government acting to prevent US planning of a covert operation, as had been the case following the 11th March coup d'état attempt.⁹⁷⁴ Overall, a definitive account of intelligence operations in Lisbon can only be established once documents currently subject to the Official Secrets Act are accessible.⁹⁷⁵

There is circumstantial evidence that events in Portugal were discussed during the Rambouillet conference. This gathering in France held between the 15th and 17th November was intended as a forum to coordinate the policy of western states in response to the energy crisis and the global recession. FCO planning for the conference, unlike for the Helsinki Summit in August 1975, did not include the subject of Portugal. Wilson records that the second day of the conference "began with an informal discussion between the Heads of Government on international affairs."⁹⁷⁶ Because the aim was to encourage an open forum, there was no fixed agenda or officials present, which meant that there was no record of the

⁹⁷⁰ Robb, 'The 'Limit of What is Tolerable', pp. 321-337.

⁹⁷¹ 'Message from Secretary to Foreign Secretary Callaghan on British Defense Cuts', 9 December 1975, Ford Library, National Security Adviser, Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 15, UK—State Department Telegrams. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2> (Document 239).

⁹⁷² Gomes and Moreira De Sa argued that "os Estados Unidos e o Reino Unido estavam a preparar em conjunto un plano de apoio (support) às forças anticomunistas politico-militares" (The United States and Britain were preparing together a plan to support anti-communist forces politically and militarily). Gomes and Moreira De Sa, *Carlucci vs Kissinger*, p 329.

⁹⁷³ Callaghan, *Time and Chance*, p.362.

⁹⁷⁴ Archival evidence of the Labour Government's consistent opposition to US covert activity in the Azores suggests that anecdotal accounts used by historians of British support for operations elsewhere might be the result of an unwillingness by its officials to contradict their US counterparts and so harm Anglo-American relations. Cornish to Baker, 'Possible Attempted Coup in Portugal and the Azores', 9 June 1975, FCO 9/2302.

⁹⁷⁵ During research an unsuccessful Freedom of Information request was made in August 2012 concerning a number of closed documents for this period.

⁹⁷⁶ Wilson, *Final Term*, p. 186.

meeting; Wilson wrote that “It was agreed that what was said there should not be revealed outside.”⁹⁷⁷ However, Wilson’s memoirs reveal that “After this long interval there is no harm in recalling that a good part of the talk related to Spain and the prospects of democracy there.”⁹⁷⁸ The host nation, as a neighbouring state, was increasingly concerned about events in Spain (with Franco’s health now deteriorating) and therefore became more prominent in the west’s response. Wilson recalls that “Giscard was at the time in closer touch with the Spanish session than the rest of us.”⁹⁷⁹ The likelihood that events in Portugal were raised during discussion of Spain suggests that these did not include possible covert intervention there, because Wilson would not have alluded to such an incendiary course within his memoirs.

During November 1975, the Labour Government believed that diplomatic support alone would be sufficient to ensure the provisional government’s survival. This approach was poorly executed, with little attempt being made, unlike in previous crises, to coordinate policy with other western allies. This was partly because the Labour Government was distracted by domestic difficulties, but they were also much better informed of developments in Lisbon which meant they were confident throughout the crisis that any coup d’état attempt would fail. Britain’s economic weakness (the ODM eventually agreed to provide £10 million of development aid) also meant that, although the Labour Government remained a significant diplomatic actor in Lisbon, its influence was less than immediately after the April Revolution⁹⁸⁰, an FCO official arguing that “the relatively modest amount of aid that the UK have been able to provide, while constituting some demonstration of UK support for the Portuguese, gives us no particular leverage with them.”⁹⁸¹

The actual course of events during the November coup d’état attempt remains a cause of controversy amongst historians of the Carnation Revolution.⁹⁸² It is still unclear whether the radical left was intending to seize power, or whether the provisional government deliberately triggered a response, to allow its suppression. There was no direct British intervention in Lisbon during the coup d’état attempt. The Embassy was principally

⁹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸⁰ Manning to FCO, ‘Aid to Portugal’, 22 September 1975, PREM 16/1054.

⁹⁸¹ Goodison to FCO, ‘The Mutiny of the 25th November’, 23 February 1976, FCO 9/2412.

⁹⁸² Manuel, *The Uncertain Outcome*, pp. 124-127. Gomes and Moreira, *Carlucci vs Kissinger*, pp. 335-357. Maxwell, *The Making of Portuguese Democracy*, pp.155-157. Robert Harvey, *Portugal: Birth of a Democracy*, pp.86-92.

concerned with the safety of British subjects, the Ambassador reporting that “We are instructing wardens in the Lisbon area to keep in touch with their flocks, reassure them, and remind them of the normal precautions to be taken in a disturbed situation.”⁹⁸³ The British Embassy was in contact with the provisional government throughout the final crisis, which meant it was fully aware of its political strength.⁹⁸⁴ The British Embassy was able to send a number of despatches to London during the crisis. The outcome of events in Lisbon brought renewed optimism that parliamentary democracy could be established in Portugal. The Embassy report that “There is an atmosphere of immense relief in Lisbon itself”, led the FCO to conclude that whilst “The events of 28 September 1974 and of 11 March 1975 were both serious setbacks”, this crisis “appears to have been a decisive victory to the forces of moderation, law and order, and resistance to Communism.”⁹⁸⁵

The 25th November coup d'état attempt was the decisive turning point of the Portuguese Revolution.⁹⁸⁶ The provisional government was able to consolidate its authority and hold elections the following year, whilst the radical left's influence declined, never again to achieve office. This outcome was welcomed by the Labour Government. A principal foreign policy aim of Wilson's final term – the establishment of parliamentary democracy in Portugal – was achieved, whilst the threat to British interests, particularly the expropriation of land, could be resolved. However, the Labour Government's decision not to intervene in Lisbon during the November crisis, along with its previous failure to provide substantial economic aid, meant that British influence in Portugal declined. Ironically, this also meant that they were unable to accrue any benefit from previous support for political moderates, and during the final stage of Portugal's transition to democracy, the Labour Government, increasingly distracted by domestic political and economic difficulties, did not play an important role in supporting moderate politicians in Lisbon.

⁹⁸³ Trench to FCO, ‘Political Situation’, 26 November 1975, FCO 9/2274.

⁹⁸⁴ Trench to FCO, ‘Political Crisis’, 21 November 1975, FCO 9/2274.

⁹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸⁶ An FCO official recorded that “André Malraux had written a sad statement to the effect that Portuguese Socialists had shown the world that Mensheviks could sometimes win over Bolsheviks.” Wright to Weston, ‘Call on the Prime Minister by Dr Mario Soares’, 22 December 1975, PREM 16/1054.

“An 11 March in reverse”⁹⁸⁷

The outcome of the coup d'état attempt removed any further danger of the radical left seizing power in Lisbon. During the following months, the sixth provisional government consolidated its hold on the institutions of power, enabling Parliamentary and Presidential elections to be held on the 25th April and 27th June. These revealed that an overwhelming majority of the Portuguese electorate supported moderate democratic parties. Melo Antunes (whose role within the AFM had been crucial during the Hot Summer) now became isolated; his commitment to “preserve some communist influence, so that this could act as a counterweight to any movement towards the right”, alongside his fellow military commanders’ withdrawal from politics, meant that he lacked any political power base.⁹⁸⁸ This political stability, however, now revealed Portugal’s economic problems, particularly of rampant inflation and rising unemployment, meaning that “it would still be necessary to stabilise the economy if the Portuguese were to achieve political stabilisation as well.”⁹⁸⁹

The British Embassy viewed events in Lisbon as a decisive step towards establishing parliamentary democracy. The British Ambassador reported “a lengthy conversation yesterday with Dr Mario Soares, who was in a buoyant mood, declaring that all danger of a communist seizure of power had now been removed.”⁹⁹⁰ The British Embassy argued that evidence of renewed military discipline was highly significant, observing that “the image which the army is trying to project since these recent events is of a taut, disciplined and tough force rather than the over-confident hoi polloi they had become.”⁹⁹¹ The British Ambassador noted the significance of the radical left losing “the power to interfere in the Constitution”, which he saw as “a practical recognition of the changing balance of power.”⁹⁹² However, there was concern at the excessive optimism then prevalent in Lisbon, leading the British Ambassador to observe that “The economy is run down; foreign exchange has run out; unemployment figures have run up at the economic situation.”⁹⁹³ An FCO official concluded, “But I fear that when the current wave of elation has worn off some disillusionment will set in. The fact is that all the problems that were there before the mutiny still exist today.”⁹⁹⁴ The British Ambassador warned that “it will not be easy to convince everyone that Portugal needs

⁹⁸⁷ Trench to FCO, ‘Political Situation’, 4 December 1975, PREM 16/1054.

⁹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸⁹ Wright to Weston, ‘Call on the Prime Minister by Dr Mario Soares’, 22 December 1975, PREM 16/1054.

⁹⁹⁰ Trench to FCO, ‘Political Situation’, 4 December 1975, PREM 16/1054.

⁹⁹¹ Ure to Baker, ‘First reflections after the Paratrooper Mutiny’, 4 December 1975, FCO 9/2273.

⁹⁹² Clark to Baker, ‘Constituent Assembly’, 1 April 1976, FCO 9/2412.

⁹⁹³ Ure to Baker, ‘First reflections after the Paratrooper Mutiny’, 4 December 1975, FCO 9/2273.

⁹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

a government of moderates unable to deliver what revolutionaries have promised.”⁹⁹⁵ These concerns led the British Embassy to stress that despite changed political circumstances, protecting British interests in Portugal was a necessity. The British Ambassador concluded that the significance of recent political events would depend on the sixth provisional government’s response to these concerns, arguing that “This will be the test of the pudding.”⁹⁹⁶

There was debate within the Labour Government, following the attempted coup d’état, as to the exact course of events during November 1975. In particular, confusion arose as to the role of the PCP, an FCO official noting that “A number of signs point to at least some degree of PCP involvement. But on the other hand the party as such failed to come out into the open to follow up on the paratroopers’ action.”⁹⁹⁷ The Labour Government, however, immediately grasped the significance of events: the opportunity to remove radical left influence from Lisbon, leading an FCO official to conclude that events were “an 11 March in reverse.”⁹⁹⁸ This statement demonstrated that events in Portugal were now understood through an analysis of previous crises since the April Revolution, rather than through historical parallels such as the 1948 communist seizure of power in Czechoslovakia (which had previously been the case). The isolation of the radical left in Lisbon also meant that developments were no longer narrowly viewed through the prism of the Cold War. The British Ambassador, wary of Soviet involvement in Portugal, argued that the PCP was now being encouraged to remain in government, because “objective conditions did not exist for a seizure of power by the Communist Party.”⁹⁹⁹ He observed that since “Senhor Cunhal has in fact led his Party as though it was marching towards an October Revolution,” following the 25th November “the PCP seems to have been at sixes and sevens.”¹⁰⁰⁰ This changed analysis meant that the Labour Government was now principally concerned with narrowly pursuing the British national interest in Portugal. There was a greater determination to ensure the protection of British farmers in the Alentejo, with any further assistance to the provisional government dependent on a resolution of the issue.

The renewed optimism in a democratic outcome also meant that the Labour Government once again began supporting moderate parties and democratic institutions in

⁹⁹⁵ Baker to FCO, ‘Lisbon Despatch on the Mutiny of the 25th November’, 29 December 1975, FCO 9/2273.

⁹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹⁷ Trench to FCO, ‘Political Situation’, 26 November 1975, FCO 9/2274.

⁹⁹⁸ Trench to FCO, ‘Political Situation’, 4 December 1975, PREM 16/1054.

⁹⁹⁹ Hibbert to FCO, 4 January 1976, FCO 9/2412.

¹⁰⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

Portugal. There was a re-evaluation of those ties with Melo Antunes established during the Hot Summer, an FCO official noting that although his “personal stature has been increased by recent events”, the AFM’s role “has become harder to define if ‘pure politics’ are no longer to be the proper function of military men.”¹⁰⁰¹ Franco’s death on the 20th November made events in Spain the more urgent crisis on the Iberian peninsula. However, this gave greater urgency to efforts to establish democracy in Portugal, with a wide consensus within the Labour Government that “Portugal could exert considerable influence on Spain.”¹⁰⁰² In particular, following experience after the Portuguese Revolution, there was a belief that “Spain should be included on the agenda” at the Socialist International, particularly because her significance “made it even more important to try to develop a united Social Democratic approach to Spain.”¹⁰⁰³

The opportunity to promote democracy in Portugal coincided with the Labour Government facing a worsening domestic economic and political crisis. Wilson recalls that “December 1975 was by far the most hectic and harrowing month I experienced in nearly eight years as Prime Minister, indeed in the eleven years and over of my Cabinet experience.”¹⁰⁰⁴ The need for further public spending cuts caused bitter divisions within the Labour Cabinet, whilst British borrowing at the IMF had “used up all that was available to her on easy terms”, meaning that a loan with conditionality was likely during 1976.¹⁰⁰⁵ The Labour Government also faced domestic political difficulties, particularly in Northern Ireland, and the constant challenge of managing a minority government. This meant that despite political change in Lisbon there was no progress on bilateral aid. There was also noticeably less interest in Portugal amongst the members of the Labour Cabinet.

The difficulty of pursuing a coherent foreign policy towards Portugal whilst addressing Britain’s domestic problems became evident during Soares’ visit to London on 22nd December. This was a final stop during a tour of west European capitals, and was the first opportunity to repair any damage to relations caused by the critical reception Soares received at the Labour Party Conference.¹⁰⁰⁶ During a meeting with Wilson and Callaghan, Soares sought to elicit further support from the Labour Government, stressing that “If Europe was going to help, it was now or never,” and strengthening his case by arguing that “likely

¹⁰⁰¹ Ure to Baker, ‘First reflections after the Paratrooper Mutiny’, 4 December 1975, FCO 9/2273.

¹⁰⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰⁴ Wilson *Final Term*, p. 200.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Burk and Cairncross, *Goodbye Great Britain*, p.7.

¹⁰⁰⁶ ‘Secretary of State’s Meeting with Dr Soares’, 22 December 1975, PREM 16/1054.

changes in Spain made it even more important that Portugal should achieve democratic stability, since there was a close connection between Portuguese and Spanish problems.”¹⁰⁰⁷ His principal request was for further economic assistance, an FCO official recording that they had already asked for “our help in obtaining loans from the IMF.”¹⁰⁰⁸ Soares once again raised the subject of British imports of Portuguese textiles (EEC tariffs affected many Portuguese products)¹⁰⁰⁹; an FCO official recorded that Wilson explained his inability to make concessions by arguing, “If there were not a world economic slump we could perhaps have weathered this, but the decision to restrict imports in this field had been taken by Cabinet and the Prime Minister saw no opportunity of reopening the question.”¹⁰¹⁰

Soares also requested renewed support from the Labour Party to the PSP before campaigning for the forthcoming elections began. He expressed dissatisfaction “with the state of Labour Party/PSP relations at medium and lower levels”, comparing these unfavourably with those of other west European states.¹⁰¹¹ Soares also expressed concern that whilst “the Socialists were now wrestling control of the trade unions from the Communists”, relations “were not as good as they might be with the TUC”, and again requested “closer contact at both local and regional level.”¹⁰¹² Throughout this meeting, Soares was more assertive than on previous occasions, negatively comparing the support being offered by Wilson and Callaghan against that of other west European states.

Despite the fact that “Dr Soares expressed satisfaction with his visit”, expectations of support were raised which the Labour Government was unable to meet, and relations with the future Portuguese Prime Minister began to deteriorate.¹⁰¹³ Harold Wilson’s final involvement in Portugal before his resignation was at the Socialist Conference held in Elsinore, Denmark, in January 1976. The gathering was intended to garner support for the PSP before forthcoming parliamentary and presidential elections, enabling the PSP “to appear to be intent on putting distance between themselves and the parties to the left and the right.”¹⁰¹⁴ Wilson’s main contribution was a response to Mitterrand’s call for partnership with the

¹⁰⁰⁷ Wright to FCO, ‘Call on the Prime Minister by Dr Mario Soares’, 22 December 1975, PREM 16/1054.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Goodison to FCO, ‘Call by the Portuguese Ambassador on the PUS’, 18 December 1975, FCO 59/1307.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Portugal and the Mediterranean: South of the Border’, *The Economist*, 10 May 1975.

¹⁰¹⁰ Wright to FCO, ‘Call on the Prime Minister by Dr Mario Soares’, 22 December 1975, PREM 16/1054.

¹⁰¹¹ McNally to Hattersley, ‘Secretary of State’, 22 December 1975, PREM 16/1054.

¹⁰¹² *Ibid.* The TUC had intentionally limited their activities in Lisbon during 1975 because previously these had “proved difficult and possibly sometimes counter-productive, leading to some allegations of unwarranted interference for political ends by ‘capitalistic’ organisations’.” ‘Trade Union Developments in Portugal’, 19 January 1976, TUC Collection, Warwick University (MSS.292D/946.1/2).

¹⁰¹³ McNally to Hattersley, ‘Secretary of State’, 22 December 1975, PREM 16/1054.

¹⁰¹⁴ Ralph to FCO, ‘The Socialist Party’, 29 January 1976, FCO 9/2273.

Eurocommunist movement, reciting the limerick “There was a young lady from Riga/Who went for a ride with a tiger”, which incensed both the French delegation and left-wing members of the National Executive Committee.¹⁰¹⁵ Wilson’s speech on Portugal supports the recent argument that a “Chilean shadow of neo-authoritarian reaction” existed within west European politicians’ understanding of Portugal.¹⁰¹⁶ Wilson told delegates that the critical issue was whether “the economy be stabilised in such a way as to establish social democracy”, warning that “there was a danger of right-wing reaction, which must be prevented.”¹⁰¹⁷ Despite attending the Socialist International meeting, increasing domestic problems meant that the Labour Government was unable to play any significant role, alongside other west European states, in supporting moderate political parties and democratic institutions in Portugal. During early 1976, operational policy towards Portugal was conducted by middle ranking officials within the FCO’s Southern European Department. Their approach was essentially the one they had pursued immediately after the April Revolution, until the Hot Summer made Portugal a Cold War crisis and therefore Wilson and Callaghan’s preserve.

The first strategy was to develop institutional relationships between the British military and their Portuguese counterparts. They were largely unconcerned with the continued role played by the military in Lisbon, arguing that since the 25th November “The AFM for all practical purposes no longer exists.”¹⁰¹⁸ The FCO noted that the continued role of the military was not surprising, given that “it was the military who brought about the downfall of the previous regime”, and also considering “the long tradition of military presidents in Portugal.”¹⁰¹⁹ The removal of the radical left from positions of command after the attempted coup d’état, and the return of those who had served in the overseas territories, allowed the restructuring of the Portuguese military as first proposed after the Carnation Revolution. This gave the opportunity for Portugal’s NATO allies to provide aid and expertise, an FCO official noting that “various parts of NATO are stirring with ideas about how to employ, and eventually reduce, armed forces which were developed to hold down a large Colonial empire, at the cost over recent years of the largest share of GDP in the entire

¹⁰¹⁵ Austen Morgan, *Harold Wilson*, pg. 525.

¹⁰¹⁶ Del Pero, “Which Chile, Allende?” Henry Kissinger and the Portuguese revolution’, p. 25.

¹⁰¹⁷ ‘Extract from meeting of European Social Democratic leaders in Copenhagen’, 18 January 1976, PREM 16/1054.

¹⁰¹⁸ Ure to FCO, ‘Violent Demonstrations’, FCO 9/2412.

¹⁰¹⁹ Trench to FCO, ‘Constitutional Pact’, 1 March 1976, FCO 9/2412.

Alliance.”¹⁰²⁰ However, Britain’s economic weakness meant that any support would be on a limited scale, whereas the US was able to begin a programme of military training in which “they wish to encourage closer contacts between the Portuguese armed forces and those of other Allied nations as a means of instilling greater professionalism in the Portuguese military.”¹⁰²¹ The subsequent development of closer relations with other NATO members, alongside the departure of Marxist military officers, meant that the Portuguese military could be encouraged against further intervention in domestic politics. These contacts meant that during increased tension in Lisbon during early 1976, the British Embassy was able to report that “Both we and other Western Embassies have been approached in recent weeks by a variety of officers from all three of the Armed Forces seeking help or advice in unearthing and countering the plots of their opponents.”¹⁰²²

The Labour Government also returned to providing the Portuguese security services with training and riot control equipment. This proved controversial, particularly after the Labour MP, Tom Litterick, witnessed their use in Lisbon during a visit sponsored by the pacifist Russell Tribunal Group. This incident received considerable international press coverage, alongside fatal shootings during a Porto demonstration.¹⁰²³ The British military attaché in Lisbon was summoned “to discuss measures for the control of the civil order”, leading to a Whitehall policy review as to whether further support should be given.¹⁰²⁴ An FCO official outlined the dilemma accordingly, writing that “As a result of stringent measures, especially rising prices, demonstrations would be arranged principally in Lisbon and Porto to provoke confrontations with the aim of discrediting the Government and the forces of Law and Order, demonstrations with which those same forces have only rudimentary ideas of dealing.”¹⁰²⁵ The British military attaché in Lisbon forcefully argued that “if we are able to help Portugal weather this storm, immediate internal security assistance becomes almost as important as slower-to-arrive economic aid.”¹⁰²⁶ The Whitehall review eventually concluded that, although “Deplorable as these incidents are”, the Portuguese security services “would be less likely to resort to shooting if they had alternative, non-lethal

¹⁰²⁰ Peters to Sleight, ‘Portugal: a new role for the Armed Forces’, 10 December 1975, FCO 41/1694.

¹⁰²¹ The FCO official noted that “In this connection, I would like to point out that the United States Government has doubled its budget for the training of Portuguese military personnel from \$500,000 in 1974 to \$1 million in 1975.” *Ibid.*

¹⁰²² Ure to Goodison, ‘Uneasiness in Portugal’, 5 February 1976, FCO 9/2412.

¹⁰²³ Ure to FCO, ‘Violent demonstrations’, 2 January 1976, FCO 9/2412.

¹⁰²⁴ Huggan to MOD, ‘New Year roundup’, 2 January 1976, FCO 9/2412.

¹⁰²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰²⁶ *Ibid.*

equipment.”¹⁰²⁷ Therefore a request was made to Scotland Yard “for appropriate films to be sent” which would assist with “the planning and execution of crowd control operations.”¹⁰²⁸

Despite political change in Lisbon following the coup d'état attempt, protecting British agricultural interests remained a clear priority of the Labour Government. There were continued threats to British farmers in the Alentejo region, although not on the previous scale. The British Embassy expressed concern after the PCP retained a junior ministerial post on agrarian affairs.¹⁰²⁹ Its understanding of the Alentejo region was also badly affected by the sudden death of Tom Spence, an attaché whose brief included Portuguese agriculture.¹⁰³⁰ The Embassy's analysis reached the pessimistic conclusion that the provisional government was “more concerned to protect itself against possible accusations that it is about to betray the Revolution by putting a stop to agrarian reform.”¹⁰³¹ Despite the general improvement in their circumstances, lobbying in Westminster by British farmers became more effective as other concerns with the political situation in Lisbon decreased. There was a series of written Parliamentary questions calling for intervention to support British farmers.¹⁰³² These culminated in calls by the Conservative opposition minister, William Whitelaw, to withhold further British aid to Portugal. An FCO official noted that “there are Parliamentary pressures on Ministers here which mean that they cannot be appearing to be neglecting these problems.”¹⁰³³ Therefore, despite the need to continue support for the provisional government, the Labour Government maintained that “HMG have a responsibility towards British farmers and businessmen who have patiently held on through recent months of uncertainty.”¹⁰³⁴ This led to an unsuccessful attempt by the British Ambassador “to obtain the agreement of the Portuguese Government to a general statement on their part (promising reinstatement, or compensation), which British Ministers could use in Parliament.”¹⁰³⁵

There was concern within the Labour Government that scheduled elections might be postponed after renewed political tension in Lisbon during January 1976. The British Embassy had been reporting that “the Government has so far proved rather disappointing in

¹⁰²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰²⁹ Ure to FCO, ‘Political Situation’, 5 January 1975, FCO 9/2412.

¹⁰³⁰ Baker to Ure, ‘Anglia Television: Possible Programme on Farming in Portugal’, 12 April 1975, FCO 9/2417.

¹⁰³¹ Trench to FCO, ‘British Farmers in the Alentejo’, 18 December 1975, FCO 9/2313.

¹⁰³² A series of Parliamentary Questions on British agriculture interests in Portugal are held in the file, ‘Property of British Subjects’, FCO 47/875.

¹⁰³³ Goodison to Ure, ‘The mutiny of the 25th November’, 12 January 1976, FCO 9/2412.

¹⁰³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰³⁵ Goodison to Parliamentary Unit, ‘British Property in Portugal’, 25 March 1976, FCO 47/875.

the slowness with which it is managing to cope with fundamental economic and social problems besetting the country.”¹⁰³⁶ The resulting political disturbances included a series of bomb incidents across Portugal, particularly in the northern regions and major cities.¹⁰³⁷

There was also apprehension that constitutional arrangements for the elections, agreed when the electoral commission had to “carry out their appointed task in the face of pressure from the Communists and extreme Left”, meant that there was “a Marxist flavour to many of the Constitution’s provisions.”¹⁰³⁸ Likewise doubts were expressed as to whether Portugal could hold free-and-fair elections, with particular unease regarding the Portuguese media’s independence (after measures to reduce the radical left’s influence proved ineffectual) and concern at the ability of the Portuguese security services to maintain political order.¹⁰³⁹

Despite such concerns the British Ambassador basically remained optimistic, reporting that “I know I have painted a gloomy picture. By doing so I do not want to give you the impression that we are losing heart about the Portuguese Revolution.”¹⁰⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the announcement on the 26th February by President Costa Gomes that scheduled Parliamentary and Presidential elections would be held as planned was greeted with relief by the Labour Government.¹⁰⁴¹

Despite the importance of the Portuguese elections to the Labour Government’s foreign policy, they coincided with a further deterioration in Britain’s economic circumstances, alongside the political drama of Wilson’s sudden resignation and the subsequent leadership election.¹⁰⁴² As a result little sustained attention was given to events in Lisbon, with no specific British policy response during election campaigning in Portugal. The Labour Government cancelled another proposed visit by Hattersley to Lisbon on the 1st April as it coincided once again with a crucial Commons vote.¹⁰⁴³ During 1976 (apart from attending the Socialist International meeting in Elsnore) Wilson played no role in British policy-making towards Portugal.¹⁰⁴⁴ Although it was a closely guarded secret, Callaghan was informed on the 15th March, several days before the Labour Cabinet, of Wilson’s decision to

¹⁰³⁶ Ure to Goodison, ‘Uneasiness in Portugal’, 5 February 1976, FCO 9/2412.

¹⁰³⁷ Brooks to Fell, ‘Bomb Attacks’, 25 March 1976, FCO 9/2412. Historians have since ascribed these actions to opposition groups based in Spain, of which at the time the British Embassy in Lisbon was not aware.

¹⁰³⁸ Trench to FCO, ‘The New Portuguese Constitution’, 21 April 1976, FCO 9/2413.

¹⁰³⁹ Ure to Goodison, ‘Uneasiness in Portugal’, 5 February 1976, FCO 9/2412.

¹⁰⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴¹ Ralph to Fell, ‘Elections’, 5 March 1976, FCO 9/2412.

¹⁰⁴² Burk & Cairncross, *Goodbye Great Britain*, pp. 33-35.

¹⁰⁴³ For an account of parliamentary business, see Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, p.678.

¹⁰⁴⁴ This would support speculation that Wilson resigned as a consequence of fatigue and deteriorating health.

resign.¹⁰⁴⁵ Thereafter Callaghan focused on his leadership campaign, until his eventual success on the 5th April, following a second ballot.¹⁰⁴⁶ The new Prime Minister immediately faced “an exchange crisis and a growing domestic political crisis.”¹⁰⁴⁷ Therefore Callaghan played no direct role in policy-making toward Portugal during this period.

The electoral strategy of the PSP was to present itself as the party best able to manage a sound economy because its close relationship with other West European states meant further economic assistance was assured. This made public demonstrations of support from west European leaders a crucial element of electoral campaigning. The climax of this strategy was the Socialist International conference held in Porto on the 13th and 14th March.¹⁰⁴⁸ This brought together leading politicians from across Western Europe, “making this an extraordinary occasion for the diffusion of a favourable image of Portugal and the PS, both internally and internationally.”¹⁰⁴⁹ However, although fully aware of its significance, domestic political difficulties meant that neither Wilson nor Callaghan, nor indeed any leading member of the Labour Party, was able to attend. This gives clear support to the argument of revisionist historians of the 1970s Labour Government that its political weakness affected the coherence and effectiveness of its foreign policy.¹⁰⁵⁰ The British Ambassador sent Callaghan’s message of support to Soares, containing an apology and an appeal that “I hope he will understand that we have a lot on at this particular moment.”¹⁰⁵¹ Such an impersonal and perfunctory message, given the significance of the conference to the PSP and Callaghan’s previous commitment to Portuguese democracy, demonstrates the scale of the Labour Government’s domestic political difficulties. This would have reinforced Soares’ perception that the Labour Government had reneged on its promise of support given immediately after the April Revolution. The Labour Government’s absence from the conference would also have been noted by its Western European allies, shaping their perception of Britain’s importance in the region.

The inability of the Labour Government to provide significant support to the PSP during election campaigning was in contrast to that given by other western states. The Ford

¹⁰⁴⁵ For an account of Wilson’s resignation, see Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, pp.681-685.

¹⁰⁴⁶ During this period Callaghan also had a particularly demanding schedule as Secretary as State, see James Callaghan, *Time and Chance*, p.393.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Burk and Cairncross, *Goodbye Great Britain*, p.20.

¹⁰⁴⁸ António Simões Do Paço, ‘Friends in High Places – O Partido Socialista e a ‘Europa Connosco’’, pp. 122-124.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Mario Del Pero, ‘Which Chile, Allende?’, p. 53.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Robert Skidelsky, ‘The Worst of Governments’, pp.316-320

¹⁰⁵¹ Callaghan to FCO, ‘Socialist Meeting in Oporto’, 11 March 1976, FCO 9/2412.

Administration, although less involved in Lisbon than during the Hot Summer, was able to provide material aid after amending the 1976 budget to allow "extraordinary assistance to Portugal."¹⁰⁵² The Dutch and German Social Democratic parties increased support to the PSP immediately after the Socialist International conference.¹⁰⁵³ The West German government, believing economic stability to be the most important element for achieving a transition to democracy in Portugal, organised a visit to Lisbon by Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher which was supported by economic diplomacy.¹⁰⁵⁴ As a result, whereas the influence of the Labour Government declined, support provided by other west European states during this period was widely appreciated in Lisbon.¹⁰⁵⁵

During election campaigning in Portugal the most significant role played by Britain came from actors outside the Labour Government. Thus the greatest commitment to the CDS was made by the British Embassy in Lisbon, the British Conservative Party and *The Economist*, rather than the Labour Government. The British Ambassador welcomed the official Conservative Party delegation to the CDS Conference held on 1st April, which included leading MPs such as "Baroness Elles, Douglas Hurd MP and Rob Shephard of Central Office research department."¹⁰⁵⁶ British media reporting of events in Lisbon continued to have a high profile and shaped public discourse across Portugal during election campaigning. During March 1976, the British Ambassador noted that the "'prognostications that the PPD would take the lead over the Socialists in the election'" (within *Financial Times* and *Daily Express* editorials) led to similar speculation within "weekly newspapers here today."¹⁰⁵⁷ The Lisbon Embassy particularly expressed concern that British press coverage was focused on the "poster-wars", which meant journalists, such as Christopher Reed, an influential correspondent of *The Guardian* and *Daily Express*, were reporting that "politics have become more violent now than they were a year ago", even though "we think his judgement may be coloured by his desire to give more spice to his coverage of the election

¹⁰⁵² Mario Del Pero quotes from Bernard D. Nossiter, 'Socialists Plan Portugal Aid, 06.09.1975', *Cold War History*, p. 53.

¹⁰⁵³ The FRG was channelling support through the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. See, Fonseca, 'The Federal Republic of Germany and the Portuguese Transition to Democracy', p. 41.

¹⁰⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵⁶ Brooks to Fell, 'The CDS National Conference', 1 April 1976, FCO 9/2411. Hurd's aptitude for foreign languages was noted by the FCO, who noted that "Although all speeches by foreign delegates were simultaneously translated, Hurd was the only one to include a few phrases in Portuguese which won him a standing ovation." *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵⁷ Ralph to Fell, 'Elections', 5 March 1976, FCO 9/2412.

campaign.”¹⁰⁵⁸ British press coverage of events in Lisbon was less controversial now than during the Hot Summer, because the absence of a clear Labour Government policy toward Portugal meant that reporting was not seen as an element within a wider strategy of British intervention.

During the final weeks of election campaigning there was a sudden predicament for the Labour Government after former President Spínola, on the 9th April, requested an entry visa to the United Kingdom. Spínola had recently been linked with an arms deal supposedly intended to allow his supporters to seize power in Lisbon.¹⁰⁵⁹ The British Ambassador warned that “Spínola’s recent behaviour suggests that he is under considerable illusions about the extent of his support here and that he continues (despite undertakings to host governments) to lend himself to plots against the regime.”¹⁰⁶⁰ He therefore advised that “A brief visit to the UK, while seeking a more permanent refuge elsewhere, might not give rise to serious criticism here, but a prolonged stay would probably cause adverse comment, particularly during the present electoral campaign.”¹⁰⁶¹ This led Foreign Office minister, Hattersley, to conclude that “despite the UK’s tradition of political asylum for deposed Heads of State, the FCO should on this occasion advise the Home Office that General Spínola should not be admitted”, a view endorsed by Prime Minister Callaghan, who added that “we should keep out of this.”¹⁰⁶² The incident demonstrated particular sensitivity toward the provisional government and Portuguese public opinion, given that the former South Vietnamese President Thieu had recently been granted a temporary visa.¹⁰⁶³

The British Ambassador on the eve of the parliamentary elections, scheduled for the 25th April, reported that “the general state of Portugal remains calm and the level of political excitement, as compared with last year at this time, is distinctly lower.”¹⁰⁶⁴ He reported that “It is widely expected that there will be some decline in the percentage turn out for the polls compared with last year. The novelty of free elections has to some extent worn off and many are disillusioned with the results of exercising a free vote.”¹⁰⁶⁵ The likely reduction in PSP support led the Southern European Department to attempt, alongside Britain’s western allies,

¹⁰⁵⁸ Brooks to Fell, ‘Political Violence’, 1 April 1976, FCO 9/2412.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Brooks to Fell, ‘Election Campaign’, 13 April 1976, FCO 9/2412.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Trench to FCO, 9 April 1976, FCO 9/2410.

¹⁰⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶² Goodison to Trench, ‘General Spínola’, 12 April 1976, FCO 9/2410.

¹⁰⁶³ Goodison to FCO, ‘General Spínola’, 26 May 1976, FCO 9/2410.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Trench to FCO, ‘Eve of Election Round-Up’, 23 April 1976, FCO 9/2413.

¹⁰⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

to manoeuvre the PSP into a coalition with other moderate parties before the elections.¹⁰⁶⁶ The British Embassy was aware that the East German government (who they considered to be “acting as a cat’s paw for the Soviet Embassy”) had also approached the PSP, encouraging them to form a pact with the PCP.¹⁰⁶⁷ Although the Labour Government did not fear communist representation in government, they believed that a majority socialist government would be best able to tackle the land reform question.¹⁰⁶⁸ However, there was no direct attempt by the Labour Government to encourage Soares to consider forming a coalition, and the issue was not raised with him when he dined with the British Ambassador soon after the election on the 6th May. Therefore, unlike previous occasions during the Portuguese Revolution, no confidential political advice was given to Soares by the Labour Government.¹⁰⁶⁹

The outcome of the Parliamentary election was broadly similar to the Constituent Assembly election the year before. The PSP remained the largest party with 34.97% of the vote, although there was some decline in their support. There was a slight increase in the PCP’s vote to 14.56%, whilst the greatest successes were those of the centre-right moderate parties who had suffered discrimination during the previous election.¹⁰⁷⁰ The British Embassy expressed satisfaction at the result, which allowed the PSP to form a government without support from the radical left. It considered that given Portugal’s economic crisis, the PCP would be most disappointed with the outcome. There had been no contact with Soares during the election campaign, and although the Labour Government’s preference was for a coalition of political moderates, there was no attempt to influence the Portuguese leader in his decision. This reflected both Prime Minister Callaghan’s distraction by domestic issues and the fact that the new Secretary of State, Anthony Crosland, did not consider Portugal a priority. There is no evidence of any congratulatory note being sent to the new government in Lisbon which, if the case, illustrates how domestic difficulties affected basic diplomatic courtesies during this period. It also demonstrates Soares’ increasing self-confidence as a leader, which meant that he no longer consulted his western supporters before reaching important decisions. Following the parliamentary result there was discussion of potential candidates for the forthcoming presidential elections. His recent success led to calls for

¹⁰⁶⁶ Ralph to FCO, ‘Centre Social Democrats’, 22 January 1976, FCO 9/2412.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Ure to FCO, ‘Communist Approaches to Portuguese Socialists’, 18 March 1976, FCO 9/2412.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Trench to FCO, ‘Dr Soares’ views’, 6 May 1976, FCO 9/2413.

¹⁰⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁰ Manuel, *The Uncertain Outcome*, p.128.

Soares to stand as candidate. The FCO judged that this would serve the British national interest, given that “despite recent ups and downs, there is no doubt that in the case of Soares, his links with the British Labour Party would be very substantial dividend as long as that Party is the governing one in the UK.”¹⁰⁷¹ In the event General Eanes, a moderate military leader, stood in the Presidential election on the 27 June and won with 61% of the vote.¹⁰⁷² The Labour Government expressed satisfaction that two years after the April Revolution, Portugal had made a successful transition to parliamentary democracy.

During the months after the 1976 elections the new government in Lisbon struggled to address Portugal’s mounting economic problems. The Labour Government similarly wrestled with its own economic difficulties which culminated in the 1976 IMF crisis. As a result, despite the close relationship between Callaghan and Soares, there was little meaningful contact during this period, as indicated by the marked decrease in the number of FCO documents concerning Portugal in the British National Archives. Portugal was not a close concern of Anthony Crosland, Callaghan’s successor as Foreign Secretary, with the first official meeting not taking place until November 1976, in marked contrast to the regular contact which had followed the April Revolution. Therefore, despite Portugal having made a successful transition to parliamentary democracy, the Labour Government had no clear vision of its future relationship with Lisbon. By contrast, Washington played a prominent role in establishing a multinational ‘Jumbo Loan’ and supported the reorganisation of Portugal’s armed forces through the provision of military equipment.¹⁰⁷³ There was concern within the FCO that Lisbon might approach the Labour Government for diplomatic support (as the ‘oldest alliance’) during an application to join the EEC, because Portuguese membership would directly harm Britain’s economic interests. Hence the decision was made to publicly dissemble on the issue of Portuguese membership.¹⁰⁷⁴ The Labour Government also gave no direct support to Portugal’s approach to the International Monetary Fund, fearing that this might undermine Treasury planning for a possible British emergency application.

The successful transition to democracy in Portugal meant that only the Southern European Department now followed developments in Lisbon. The emphasis of policy was to develop cultural contacts in Portugal, particularly with educational and cultural exchanges, designed to counter the initiatives pursued by Eastern bloc countries after the April

¹⁰⁷¹ Ure to Baker, ‘Civilian Presidential Candidate’, 23 March 1976, FCO 9/2412.

¹⁰⁷² Manuel, *The Uncertain Outcome*, p.129.

¹⁰⁷³ Gomes and Moreira, *Carlucci vs Kissinger*, pp. 383-392.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Crosland to PM, ‘Portuguese Entry into the Community’, 8 August 1976, PREM 16/1624.

Revolution (characterised as “Cossack dancers and the like”).¹⁰⁷⁵ Thus the British Council provided the Portuguese government with information on the British Open University system.¹⁰⁷⁶ This was an area in which the British Government, compared with other states, could assert great influence in Lisbon, but such initiatives were undermined by appeals for FCO funding being rejected.¹⁰⁷⁷ Therefore whilst the Anglo-Portuguese relationship had been transformed since early 1974, Britain’s continuing political and economic difficulties meant it was unable to take full advantage of the opportunities that now existed to advance the national interest in Lisbon, as had appeared likely immediately after the April Revolution.

Britain and Portugal’s transition to democracy

The appointment of the sixth provisional government was the turning point of the Carnation Revolution; after the radical left’s attempt to seize power on the 25th November, Portugal ceased to be a Cold War crisis and, following elections in 1976, a parliamentary democracy was established. The emergence of a moderate government in Lisbon had been the Labour Government’s principal aim throughout the Hot Summer, but maintaining influence thereafter would prove to be its greatest challenge since April 1974. During previous crises Wilson, Callaghan and the FCO had played an important role in supporting moderate politicians in Lisbon and coordinating the western response. The new government urgently needed western assistance to address Portugal’s economic crisis and prevent the radical left from seizing power, but this proved impossible given the Labour Government’s own economic difficulties. This was particularly damaging because, as the British Ambassador observed, “the Portuguese expect us to give the Anglo-Portuguese relationship greater practical content than we have been in the habit of doing in recent years.”¹⁰⁷⁸ It also made protecting British interests more difficult, even as the political situation in Lisbon improved. By 1976 proposed IMF and EEC assistance to Portugal even threatened to undermine the Labour Government’s plans to address Britain’s economic crisis.¹⁰⁷⁹

The Labour Government’s policy towards Portugal was also affected by its domestic political difficulties. Wilson and Callaghan gave less attention to Portugal than had been the

¹⁰⁷⁵ Allison to Ralph, ‘British Council in Lisbon’, 14 July 1976, FCO 13/831.

¹⁰⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁷ Trench to Morgan, ‘The British Council in Portugal: Annual Report, 4 August 1976, FCO 13/831.

¹⁰⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁹ Sassoon, One Hundred Years of Socialism, p.614.

case during the Hot Summer, and as a result their close personal relationship with Soares had reduced significance; Anthony Crosland, Callaghan's replacement as Foreign Secretary, demonstrated no interest in Portugal. This meant that the Labour Government's approach to Portugal lacked coherence. The cancellation, twice, of proposed visits to Lisbon by Hattersley (because of being a minority government) damaged relations with Portugal. Britain's economic crisis gave the Treasury greater influence over foreign policy, and as a result economic aid to Portugal was opposed. Ideological factionalism within the Labour movement prevented unambiguous support being given to the PSP. The far-left's control of the NEC's International Committee led exasperated government ministers, such as Tom McNally, to absent themselves from meetings on Portugal (a confrontation which foreshadowed those within the Labour Party during the following decade). These difficulties demonstrate that to be effective, British foreign policy required strong leadership from the Prime Minister; otherwise Parliamentary Sovereignty would undermine its cohesion.

There was less cooperation between the Labour Government and the Ford Administration on Portugal during this period, principally because events in Lisbon were no longer considered a Cold War crisis. With the exception of the political crisis in November 1975, British and American defence and intelligence officials did not collaborate as closely on Portugal as they had during the Hot Summer. The United States was increasingly concerned with the activities of the Soviet Union elsewhere, particularly in Angola, which did rapidly become a Cold War crisis. However, the Labour Government's principal aim in southern Africa remained bringing to an end white minority rule, rather than preventing the spread of communism. This difference in approach from that of Washington (which was in contrast to their close cooperation on Portugal during the Hot Summer) supports the view that the Labour Government had a conception of the Cold War which was principally concerned with the balance of military forces in Europe.

The Labour Government and the Ford Administration, although both committed to establishing parliamentary democracy in Lisbon, no longer closely coordinated their approaches to Portugal during this period. The Labour Government's inability to provide substantial economic assistance to Portugal contributed to a wider deterioration in relations with the United States. By contrast, West Germany became more significant in the United States' foreign policy towards Portugal. This supports a recent study of the Anglo-American

relationship which contends that deterioration began even prior to the 1976 IMF crisis.¹⁰⁸⁰ The reestablishment of close Anglo-American relations had been a principal aim of Callaghan after his appointment as Foreign Secretary (the previous government had allowed its decline). By 1975 events in Portugal were no longer seen by the Labour Government as a means to repair ties with Washington. A close personal rapport still existed between Callaghan and Kissinger, but this was no longer the primary aim of British foreign policy. Their differences on Portugal immediately after the provisional government's appointment demonstrate that, although a divergence of opinion existed between the US and Britain, because this was within the spectrum of opinion held by their officials, in this case there was no damage to Anglo-American relations. Their cooperation on Portugal during the 25th November crisis also shows the value of their relationship during periods of acute political crisis.

The emergence of a moderate government in Lisbon gave West European states a crucial role in supporting democracy in Portugal. This was made clear in the final declaration of the PSP conference which concluded that "Portugal belongs to Europe – Europe must recognise its responsibilities towards Portugal."¹⁰⁸¹ Del Pero even suggests that there was a distinctly west European approach to Portugal which differed from that of the United States.¹⁰⁸² Thus the European Council expressed hopes that "What the Community had to show the Portuguese was that steps towards pluralistic democracy would lead to the maximum possible assistance from the Community."¹⁰⁸³ The Labour Government would have been expected, as a West European state and governing socialist party, to give significant support to the new government in Lisbon. It clearly understood the importance of developments; in a speech to other West European leaders Soares noted that "the country had said yes to socialism and no to dictatorship."¹⁰⁸⁴ However, Britain's economic weakness prevented the Labour Government from playing a significant role within the West European response; its proposal for EEC funding was a means of advancing British interests in Lisbon, rather than grasping the potential of a European foreign policy. The expressions of support for the radical left by members of the Labour Party prevented the Labour Government from articulating a clear vision of social democracy in Portugal. Therefore a distinctly European

¹⁰⁸⁰ Robb, 'The 'Limit of What is Tolerable', pp. 321-337.

¹⁰⁸¹ Fonseca, 'The Federal Republic of Germany', p.54.

¹⁰⁸² Del Pero, 'A European Solution for a European Crisis', p.40.

¹⁰⁸³ Acland to FCO, 'Preliminary Restricted: Portugal', 6 October 1975, FCO 9/1307.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Extract from meeting of European Social Democratic leaders in Copenhagen', 18 January 1976, PREM 16/1054.

approach on Portugal, rather than being an opportunity, proved a challenge for the Labour Government. In contrast, West Germany was able to confidently lead other states in their support of democracy in Lisbon. Hence, although West European assistance proved crucial to the democratic outcome in Portugal, this did not include a substantial amount from the Labour Government.

The Labour Government's failure to play a significant role in events in Lisbon also challenges accounts of the Portuguese Revolution which stress the role of outside powers in ensuring a democratic outcome.¹⁰⁸⁵ The Labour Government's support for political moderates was certainly less significant in this period than during the Hot Summer. The perception of British support, however, remained important in Lisbon. This allowed informal British actors, such as the media and trade unions, to have greater influence. The potential of such an approach (the contemporary concept of Soft Power) was not clearly understood, with the Labour Government giving no direct encouragement to the activity of such groups.¹⁰⁸⁶ The experience of supporting democracy in Portugal did, however, influence the FCO's approach to Spain, recognising that previously "The Labour Party response, quite frankly, was deplorable."¹⁰⁸⁷ Thus assistance was given to moderate parties in Spain immediately after Franco's demise, and the Madrid Embassy sought "to acquaint ourselves with the widest possible range of elements in the opposition."¹⁰⁸⁸ Therefore, although the Labour Government's support of democracy in Portugal was largely inadequate, its experience meant that there was an embryonic understanding of how democratic transitions occur which would influence its response elsewhere, such as Eastern Europe during the 1990s.

The period after the appointment of the sixth provisional government saw significant changes to how Britain's foreign policy towards Portugal was made. The emergence of a government in Lisbon dominated by political moderates meant relations could be conducted through state-to-state diplomacy. This allowed the British Embassy, which had often struggled to understand developments in Lisbon, to work closely with the provisional government. It became far more effective, giving both accurate predictions and demonstrating greater initiative defending British interests. The FCO's analysis of events also became more cogent, being informed by an understanding of events in Portugal since the

¹⁰⁸⁵ Geoffrey Pridham, ed., 'Securing Democracy- Political Parties and Democratic Consolidation in Southern Europe', (London: Routledge, 1990), p.1.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Joseph S. Nye, Jr. Soft Power, pp. 5-8.

¹⁰⁸⁷ McNally to Wright, 23 July 1975, PREM 16/1053.

¹⁰⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

April Revolution rather than by making historical comparisons. However, the continued threat to British farmers in the Alentejo region meant that the Labour Government was concerned with the radical left's activities even after its influence in Lisbon declined following the 25th November coup d'état attempt. Thus paradoxically, despite the improvement in the political situation in Lisbon, lobbying by British farmers in Westminster became more urgent. The role of the British intelligence services during this period remains unclear; although they appear to have been active in Portugal, this seems to have been separate from, rather than integral to, the Labour Government's approach.

During the period after April 1974, the Labour Government was an important diplomatic actor in Lisbon; once democracy was established, however, although its foreign policy objectives in Portugal were largely achieved, British influence declined. By the end of 1976, relations with Lisbon were similar to those in the period during the 1960s, when Britain's traditional relationship with Portugal was undermined by wider policy differences. This reflected a crisis in British foreign policy which resulted from its economic weakness. It was only in 'soft power' that the opportunity existed to restore British influence in Portugal. This was recognised by the British Ambassador in Lisbon, who argued, concerning an ODM programme, that "I hope that as it gathers momentum we can put more resources into it, not only for the sake of the spread of British culture, but because in the long run it will pay commercial and political dividends."¹⁰⁸⁹

¹⁰⁸⁹ Trench to Morgan, 'The British Council in Portugal: Annual Report, 4 August 1976, FCO 13/831.

Chapter IX - Conclusion

The Labour Government's response to the Carnation Revolution was shaped not only by developments in Portugal but by wider domestic and international circumstances. The 1970s were a period of transition in Britain's world role, and its response to the Portuguese Revolution shows it adjusting to these new realities; in particular there was on occasions a clear gap between its goals and its capabilities. It was also a period of domestic instability (resulting from the minority government), unique given its recent history and the nature of its voting system. Immediately after the April Revolution participants in Britain, Portugal and elsewhere believed Britain would play an important role in the outcome of events, but its ability to intervene in Lisbon steadily dwindled. By late 1975, British foreign policy was conducted in circumstances where "ministers had to be yanked out of official visits to fly back for crucial divisions in the House of Commons" and in which "the lack of resources hung over any attempt to pursue foreign policies, which might require something more than words to back them up."¹⁰⁹⁰ Britain's inability to respond effectively to events in Lisbon made its decline as a power obvious to other states. Thus although the eventual outcome of the Portuguese Revolution served her interests, Britain was no longer considered a leading player in Lisbon.

This thesis has shown that the Labour Government's response to events in Portugal had two distinct stages. The first was the period after the April Revolution when its main objective was to encourage immediate independence for Portugal's overseas territories. The principal motivation for this policy was that if Mozambique were to achieve independence, sanctions against Rhodesia might be fully enforced, giving the prospect of a resolution to a foreign policy issue which had bedevilled successive British governments. Chapter I revealed that the persistence of the Portuguese Empire had been a recent campaigning issue for sections of the Labour movement and the British electorate, as recent studies have shown.¹⁰⁹¹ Therefore encouraging Lusophone decolonisation was also a means of challenging the widespread criticism of the 1970s Wilson Government, as identified by historians of the

¹⁰⁹⁰ David Hannay, 'British Foreign Secretaries from Callaghan to Cook', British Foreign Secretaries since 1945, p.269.

¹⁰⁹¹ Norrie, MacQueen, 'Belated decolonization', pp. 29-56. Norrie MacQueen and Pedro Aires Oliveira, 'Grocer meets Butcher': Marcello Caetano's London visit of 1973 and the last days of Portugal's Estado Novo', Cold War History 10:1 (February 2010), pp.29-50.

Labour Party, that it ceased to be idealistic once in office.¹⁰⁹² Chapter II shows that Britain's commitment to political change in Lisbon should not be considered separately from its objective of encouraging Lusophone decolonisation. Its support for the PSP in Lisbon, rather than being merely partisan as suggested in a recent article by António Simões Do Paço, was intended to encourage immediate independence in the overseas territories.¹⁰⁹³ This approach was detrimental to the Labour Government's relations with President Spínola, whose resignation and replacement by the radical left damaged its interests in Portugal. Despite its commitment to restoring a close Anglo-American relationship, the Labour Government's approach to Portugal after the April Revolution differed from that of the Nixon administration, which considered events as a solely Cold War concern (particularly its implication for the Azores military bases and the integrity of the NATO alliance), given the presence of communist ministers in the government in Lisbon.

The first stage in its response to events in Portugal supports the argument of revisionist historians that the Labour Government did have an effective foreign policy during this period.¹⁰⁹⁴ The immediate improvement of Anglo-Portuguese relations after the April Revolution showed the continued status of Britain in Portugal. Chapters II and III show that Britain was able to provide much of the policy expertise required by the new government in Lisbon, especially concerning the decolonisation process, but also with regard to electoral law, security issues and public administration.¹⁰⁹⁵ The Labour Government also held a series of bilateral meetings with the provisional government and its western allies on events in Portugal, including Callaghan's visit to Lisbon in February 1975.¹⁰⁹⁶ The immediate response therefore gives support to the argument that Britain continued to have relevance as a global actor during this period. The election of a Labour Government in February 1974 was also significant. The Labour Party was unequivocally committed to political change in Lisbon, especially through its opposition to Caetano's 1973 London visit (in contrast to the Heath Government which was compromised by its relationship with the regime). The Labour Government's policy towards Portugal was strongly influenced by the group of radical left-wing ministers, appointed by Harold Wilson, who had led protests against the Caetano

¹⁰⁹² Chris Wrigley, 'Now you see it, now you don't: Harold Wilson and Labour's foreign policy 1964-70', *The Wilson Governments 1964-1970*, p.123

¹⁰⁹³ Do Paço, 'Friends in High Places', pp. 117-138

¹⁰⁹⁴ Ann Lane, 'Foreign and Defence Policy', *New Labour, Old Labour*, p. 154. Kenneth O.Morgan, 'Was Britain dying?', *New Labour, Old Labour*, P. 306.

¹⁰⁹⁵ See Chapter II, p. 113.

¹⁰⁹⁶ See Chapter II, p. 123.

regime and its colonial policies. The Labour Party's archival records and Callaghan's private papers demonstrate that they were in regular contact with leading Portuguese politicians in Lisbon and with national liberation movements in Lusophone Africa, playing a critical role in facilitating the first negotiations on independence. The Labour Government's immediate response to the Portuguese Revolution supports Anne Hall's argument that the 1970s Labour Government demonstrated a unity of purpose on foreign affairs based on social democratic values.¹⁰⁹⁷

The second stage of the Labour Government's response was motivated by the Cold War implications of events in Portugal. The activity of the radical left in Lisbon after Spínola's resignation alarmed the Labour Government, but the sudden attempted 11th March coup d'état and the direction thereafter brought an urgent reassessment of its approach to Portugal. The Labour Government remained optimistic that, if elections were to be held, Portugal would become a parliamentary democracy, but the possibility, however remote, of a Marxist government became the most important influence on Britain's policy. Its primary concern was the threat to NATO were Portugal either to remain in the alliance with communist ministers in government, or to leave, and even invite the Soviet military into the Iberian Peninsula. There was also increasing concern with protecting British business interests in Portugal, especially following lobbying of MPs in Westminster. The perceived depth of the crisis is clearly shown in Callaghan's hand-written jottings on an FCO document, which outline possible scenarios in Portugal including civil war and communist intervention.¹⁰⁹⁸ This led the Labour Government to raise concerns about communist activity in Portugal with the Soviet Union at the Helsinki Summit. It also sought to give more support for political moderates in Lisbon and provide assistance to the Portuguese economy. However, this thesis has demonstrated that it became increasingly difficult (for domestic reasons) for the Labour Government to have an effective policy towards Portugal in contrast to that of its other western allies, especially the United States and West Germany.

This second stage of Britain's response provides support for the argument of historians that the Labour Government lacked effective instruments for an independent foreign policy during the 1970s. Despite the seriousness of developments in Lisbon, which directly threatened Britain's interests, there was a marked decrease in its diplomatic activity

¹⁰⁹⁷ Lane, 'Foreign and Defence Policy', p 154.

¹⁰⁹⁸ See Chapter V, p. 183.

in Portugal during the Hot Summer. This is most clearly seen in Britain's inability to respond to urgent requests from the provisional governments in Lisbon for economic assistance through the promise of bilateral aid, but was also the case on other occasions such as its refusal to remove tariffs on Portugal's textile imports.¹⁰⁹⁹ The impact on Britain's military power of economic decline is seen in the RAF's limited role in the evacuation of Portuguese nationals from Angola. The domestic political instability facing the Labour Government during the Hot Summer also undermined its approach to Portugal. There were crucial points when the Labour Government was distracted by domestic crises, which led to the cancellation of ministerial visits to Lisbon. Its approach to Portugal also exacerbated divisions within the Labour movement, where democratic socialist members were sympathetic to the cause of the radical left in Lisbon.

In assessing the Labour Government's response it is important to consider that this was a period of significant difficulties for governments across the western world. Despite the limitations imposed on its foreign policy the Labour Government continued its support for parliamentary democracy throughout the period. There were also occasions when the Labour Government acted firmly and effectively, particularly when raising Soviet intervention in Portugal at the Helsinki Summit and its contact with the United States during late 1975. Britain's economic weakness meant that it increasingly acted through multilateral and supranational organisations, especially the EEC and Socialist International, and thereby contributed to assistance which historians have argued was the critical factor in Portugal's transition to democracy.¹¹⁰⁰ By encouraging British non-governmental actors such as trade unions and the opposition parties to play a role in Portugal, the Labour Government also showed an awareness of the possibilities of British soft power. There was also closer cooperation with the Ford administration on Portugal now that Kissinger's Cold War concerns were shared.

The response of the Labour Government to events in Portugal shows that it remained a relevant diplomatic actor in Lisbon throughout most of the revolution, although this declined with its worsening domestic problems during 1975. Its response to the Portuguese Revolution gives support both to a traditional and a revisionist interpretation of the Labour Government. There was undoubtedly a decline in Britain's global influence during the 1970s,

¹⁰⁹⁹ See Chapter VI, p.198.

¹¹⁰⁰ Do Paço, 'Friends in High Places', pp. 117-138.

but this was not a collapse, as has been argued by some historians.¹¹⁰¹ There was a determination to be a leading player, even if this was in cooperation with other states and not as an independent actor, and there was a greater realism in its foreign policy response. This supports the argument of those revisionist historians who argue that the 1970s Labour Government had a number of impressive achievements, particularly in foreign relations, which (given domestic political weakness and Britain's economic and military decline) demonstrated the political capabilities of its front-bench ministers.

Britain's response to events in Portugal had three interesting components. The first was the continued relevance of the 'oldest alliance' to Anglo-Portuguese relations. Although regularly cited by British officials, this was never a primary motivation in shaping policy towards Portugal and its tenets were never clearly articulated or its contemporary relevance explained. Recent historical research has detailed the difficult relationship between Britain and the Caetano regime.¹¹⁰² However, the 'oldest alliance' was significant and neither party dismissed its relevance. The ambiguity of the concept, which existed almost outside of state relations, allowed its continuation almost irrespective of events. Hence the 'oldest alliance' was an unquestioned substructure to the Anglo-Portuguese relationship which, although not clearly expressed, was nonetheless believed to shape contemporary relations. It was analogous to the Anglo-American alliance: an asymmetrical, sometimes difficult, but nonetheless constant friendship, with clear areas of common interests and shared cultural values. The Anglo-Portuguese relationship was based on geopolitics and history. Both were Atlantic-orientated, global trading states on the periphery of continental Europe. Their emergence concurrently as nation-states, habitually in cooperation, occasionally in competition, meant they had faced recent historical challenges together. This led to a close transnational relationship, largely unexplored in this study of state-to-state relations, with regular travel and trade, leading to deep ties (such as the fortified wine industry established in Porto during the eighteenth century). Hence whilst never a principal motivation of the Labour Government, the 'oldest alliance' meant Britain's participation in events was never questioned.

The second component was the Labour Government's commitment to establishing parliamentary democracy in Portugal. This appears an obvious stance given Britain's political

¹¹⁰¹ Skidelsky, 'The Worst of Governments', *New Labour, Old Labour*, pp.316-320.

¹¹⁰² MacQueen and Oliveira, 'Grocer meets Butcher', 29-50.

values in the 1970s, but it was a distinct feature of its policy response. The opinion was widely held amongst western political scientists and commentators that parliamentary democracy was not compatible with Catholic, southern Mediterranean (and Latin American) societies, similar to the contemporary debate concerning the Islamic world.¹¹⁰³ This attitude was shared by a number of FCO officials but Labour ministers always expected Portugal to become a parliamentary democracy. There was never a calculation made as to whether a democratic government would best serve British interests, in marked contrast to the United States who contemplated supporting another right-wing authoritarian government after the April Revolution.¹¹⁰⁴ Therefore the Labour Government's response to events in Portugal appears to support Peter Jones's argument that there were "elements of a socialist foreign policy" which meant that "it should adopt a position in opposition to dictatorial and undemocratic regimes."¹¹⁰⁵ It is interesting that the option of another authoritarian government was not considered by the Labour Government despite the seriousness for Western Europe were Portugal to have a Marxist-orientated government.

The Labour Government's support for democracy demonstrated awareness that Portugal was essentially a conservative country, particularly in the north, where attraction to Marxist left-wing ideas was an understandable reaction to fifty years of reactionary authoritarian rule. Its support for Portuguese democracy challenged British public cynicism with regard to the Labour Government and was a conduit for the political idealism of the Labour movement.¹¹⁰⁶ This thesis has demonstrated the strength of the Labour Party's anti-imperial tradition. There was a generation of internationalist Labour ministers whose political views were shaped by the events of the mid-twentieth century, particularly the anti-colonial struggle, for whom the relevance of democracy to all peoples was unquestioned. An interesting counter-factual consideration is Britain's likely policy response had the Conservative Party won the February 1974 election; it had greater links with the previous regime and British interests in Portugal. It might have supported the PSP as the party with the best prospect of bringing democracy to Portugal, but it would not have had a close relationship based on shared values. The Labour Government, however, sought the establishment of a parliamentary democracy on the Westminster model and a process of

¹¹⁰³ Wiarda and Macleish, *Catholic Roots and Democratic Flowers*, pp. x-xii.

¹¹⁰⁴ Del Pero, 'Which Chile, Allende?', p. 631.

¹¹⁰⁵ Jones, *America and the British Labour Party*, p.20.

¹¹⁰⁶ Anthony Seldon notes that "Socialist hopes in twentieth-century Britain have flourished best in opposition." *New Labour, Old Labour*, p.1.

decolonisation in Lusophone Africa based on the British experience. Its approach to supporting democracy was based on Britain's immediate post-war practice, with an emphasis on press freedom and independent trade unions. It was not influenced by the emerging ideas of human rights and civil society prominent in the 1970s, which hold interest for political scientists studying the Portuguese Revolution.

The third interesting component of the Labour Government's response was its conduct of a parallel foreign policy of formal state relations with the provisional governments in Lisbon and informal support for the PSP through close partisan ties. The Labour Government's goal of achieving Lusophone decolonisation meant providing support to Soares, the PSP leader, who as Foreign Secretary led Portugal's negotiations. Its overt support for the socialist party therefore reflected not only partisan ties but also the pursuit of Britain's national self-interest. Chapter III shows that following the resignation of President Spínola its support for the PSP remained not only partisan but the best means of ensuring a democratic outcome in Portugal. However, following the PSP's resignation from government during the *República* affair, the Labour Government faced the difficulty of continuing its support for the PSP when it was in open confrontation with the provisional government; this was a situation which was complicated by a need to defend British business interests in Portugal by lobbying the government in Lisbon (which would not be effective if it was seen to be actively supporting its opponents). It therefore served Britain's national interest for support to be given to the PSP through the Labour Party (and Socialist International). The Labour Party archival records, alongside Callaghan's private papers, reveal that the Labour Government conducted a parallel approach to relations with Portugal during the Hot Summer, which was separate from the formal institutions of policy making in Whitehall. Its approach, however, was undermined by the divisions within the Labour Party during this period, particularly within the International Department of the NEC, on wider domestic and international issues (which the power struggle in Portugal reflected). These divisions became public after visits by radical left Labour MPs to Portugal and protests at the Labour Party Conference and these damaged the Labour Government's relationship with Soares and the PSP.

This study also contributes to our understanding of the nature of British foreign policy during the mid-1970s. The Anglo-American relationship is a critical factor in explaining the Labour Government's response to events in Portugal. It had atrophied following Britain's

withdrawal from overseas military commitments and Edward Heath's attempted reorientation of Britain's foreign policy towards Europe. The principal foreign policy goal of the Wilson government after its election was to reinstate close relations with the United States; as one of the most significant international crises of the period, the Portuguese Revolution was an opportunity to pursue this foreign policy goal. This thesis therefore argues that the regular and close cooperation on Portugal between Callaghan and Kissinger in late 1974 and early 1975 was partly the result of a desire to improve Anglo-American relations. The Italian historian Del Pero has shown that there was a fundamental disagreement between the Western European states (including the Labour Government) and the United States in their response to the Carnation Revolution. But policy differences on Portugal were subsumed within the wider Anglo-American relationship. In particular, the Labour Government sought to facilitate US diplomacy within the NATO alliance even when it disagreed with its approach. This supports the view of historians who stress that the Anglo-American relationship was based on close institutional ties which were maintained irrespective of the national interest on a particular issue.¹¹⁰⁷ It also suggests that the importance of Britain's relationship with the United States had increased as its global influence decreased and that Britain's decline as a power increased the asymmetrical nature of their relationship.

The Labour Government was largely successful in establishing a close relationship with the US Administration. This supports the argument made by Peter Jones and Kenneth Morgan that in the post-war era Labour Governments have often been most successful in establishing close ties.¹¹⁰⁸ Kissinger and Callaghan, as both their memoirs assert, had a close personal relationship despite differing political values (much like that between George W. Bush and Tony Blair). Their open and robust discussions on Portugal, evident in the archival record, support the view that shared cultural values underpin the Anglo-American relationship.¹¹⁰⁹ The exchange of information on Portugal also demonstrates the existence of a close institutional relationship between their diplomatic, intelligence and defence communities, cooperation which occurred irrespective of the stated policy goals of each government. Although there were fundamental differences between Britain and the United States on Portugal, this did not harm the Labour Government's approach to relations with Washington and it continued to seek to work closely on Portugal. The Labour Government was also aware of differences (although not their extent) over

¹¹⁰⁷ John Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship*.

¹¹⁰⁸ Jones, *America and the British Labour Party*. Morgan, *Ages of Reform*.

¹¹⁰⁹ Dimpleby and Reynolds, *An Ocean Apart*.

Portugal between Kissinger and the State Department. But it did not seek to use this knowledge to influence the policy process in Washington, only to facilitate diplomatic relations.

However, while the April Revolution coincided with a period of improving Anglo-American relations, Britain's worsening economic crisis at the end of 1975 reduced its usefulness to Washington. Despite regular discussions on Portugal there was not a common Anglo-American response, even though the establishment of the sixth provisional government both enabled and necessitated western assistance. This supports the argument that the United States began to work closely with other leading Western European states. Jones argues that "successive American administrations effectively dealt with Europe as a whole unit and, in consequence, took note of the views of other European leaders, almost, if not equally, as much as those expressed by Britain."¹¹¹⁰ In particular, it is significant that the Ford Administration did not seek to work through the Labour Party in order to coordinate with the Socialist International. Instead the US archives show that it held discussions with the officials from the FRG and Sweden. This demonstrates that the Anglo-American relationship went through another period of transition during late 1975, supporting recent historical research which argues that improved Anglo-American relations had begun to decline even before the 1976 IMF crisis (as previously argued by historians).¹¹¹¹

The Cold War was also a primary factor in shaping the Labour Government's foreign policy during this period. Britain was more sceptical of Soviet motives during east-west détente than any other leading participant and this is clearly shown in its response to events in Portugal. After the April Revolution the Labour Government believed that the leftward direction of events was the result of indigenous causes, principally the understandable reaction of the Portuguese public to several decades of reactionary authoritarian rule. By contrast, the Nixon Administration immediately viewed developments in Lisbon through the prism of the Cold War. The Labour Government remained sanguine about the influence of the PCP in Lisbon following the resignation of President Spínola, and during the visit to Moscow showed that it was more concerned with improving relations with the USSR than protesting its involvement in Portugal. However, following the 11th March coup d'état attempt, the Labour leadership and highest ranking officials within the FCO expressed concern at the Cold War repercussions of events in Portugal. It led to the decision to raise these concerns with the Soviet Union in Helsinki, an intervention which features prominently in existing historiography of the western response to the

¹¹¹⁰ Morgan, *Ages of Reform*, p.177.

¹¹¹¹ Robb, 'The 'Limit of What is Tolerable', pp. 321-337.

Portuguese Revolution.¹¹¹² This study has shown that this was the result of developments before the Helsinki Summit rather than concerns immediately after the April Revolution. The depth of its apprehension during the summer of 1975 is demonstrated by Britain's willingness to discuss events in Lisbon bilaterally with the Soviet Union, which was in contrast to other western states.

The principal Cold War concern after the 11th March coup d'état was the potential military implications for the NATO alliance. This was of more concern to Britain than the presence of communist ministers in Lisbon immediately after the April coup d'état and the establishment of post-independence Marxist governments in Lusophone Africa, and shows the continuing critical importance of the NATO alliance to post-war British foreign and defence policy. The political implications of the Portuguese Revolution on the western alliance have not yet been fully explored by diplomatic historians, with research yet to be completed in the NATO archives, but this study demonstrates its significant impact on wider British foreign policy. It did not share the United States' immediate concern that the appointment of Communist ministers to the provisional government endangered the security of the NATO alliance, fearing instead the consequences in Lisbon were the west to appear to intervene in Portugal's internal affairs (after all, the Salazar regime had been welcomed into the western alliance). The Labour Government initially sought to dissemble on the issue of Portuguese representation within NATO's planning councils. However, after the 11th March coup d'état attempt, the possibility (albeit remote) of Soviet military bases on the Iberian Peninsula was viewed as entirely unacceptable by the Labour Government and it changed its policy response to the Portuguese Revolution. This demonstrates that the military balance between east and west was its primary concern, rather than the political cohesion of the NATO alliance, and that in spite of détente the Soviet Union remained a military threat to Western Europe. This is shown by its willingness to raise events with the Soviet leadership during their bilateral meeting at the Helsinki Summit. It was clearly a touchstone issue for the highest echelons of the British Government, demonstrating the continuance of traditional Cold War attitudes on the European balance of power amongst the Labour leadership and FCO officials (left-wing members of the Labour Party invariably opposed continued membership of NATO). It is illustrative that there was not the same concern with developments in Angola during 1975, as shown by Geraint Hughes in a recent article.¹¹¹³

The Labour Government's reaction to events in Portugal shows the importance of multilateral organisations in the conduct of Britain's foreign policy during this period. Its

¹¹¹² MacQueen and Oliveira, 'Grocer meets Butcher', pp. 29–50.

¹¹¹³ Geraint Hughes, 'Soldiers of Misfortune', p. 499.

response was shaped by Britain's recent membership of the supranational EEC. Despite its divisions on membership and scepticism towards further integration, the Labour Government encouraged its embryonic foreign policy institutions to play a role in Portugal. This included, in particular, supporting an evolution of the EIB's mandate to allow the provision of economic assistance to non-member states. The Labour Government encouraged a role for the EPC foreign policy institutions in Lusophone Africa and Portugal, which supports the argument that James Callaghan came to see their value, despite wider scepticism at European integration.¹¹¹⁴ Therefore the mid-1970s was a period when the EEC and other European institutions were an influence on British policymaking. However, this cannot be seen as evidence of an enthusiastic approach to the European project, and despite their differences on policy, the Labour Government was more willing to work with the US administration on Portugal than with its European partners. The appeal of the West European social model was critical to the democratic outcome of the Portuguese Revolution, particularly during the 1976 election campaigns.¹¹¹⁵ Britain's increasing economic and political problems, by comparison with other West European states, meant it was less able to present a clear alternative vision for their future which would resonate with the Portuguese public.¹¹¹⁶ However, the assumption within the Labour Government immediately after the April Revolution that a democratic outcome in Lisbon was assured provided elections were held, showed an optimism that Western Europe now shared a common set of political values, and that the Portuguese people would embrace the same political system as other states.

The encouragement of Lusophone African independence immediately after the April Revolution demonstrates the continued importance of the British Commonwealth to the Labour Government. Despite initial expectations that it might retain global influence through the Commonwealth, Britain's relationship with the organisation was damaged by its failure to act decisively against the white racist regimes of southern Africa. On returning to office in 1974 the Labour Government sought to re-establish these ties through regular consultations with Nigeria, Zambia and Tanzania, the leading African Commonwealth members. This supports the view of historians that Britain still had a role outside Europe during the 1970s, and that the Commonwealth continued to shape policy.¹¹¹⁷ The Labour Government's concern in southern Africa was the assistance that these states might bring to a resolution of

¹¹¹⁴ Möckli, *European Foreign Policy*, p. 306.

¹¹¹⁵ Stewart, *Life and Labour*, p.230.

¹¹¹⁶ Do Paço, 'Friends in High Places', p.303.

¹¹¹⁷ Young, *Britain and the World*, p. 224.

the Rhodesian question. Its response also showed that it was concerned with its reputational damage at the OAU and the UN General Assembly. This demonstrates that the Labour Government was aware of the increasing importance of the developing world in global politics, particularly within multilateral organisations, and the potential damage to its relations elsewhere if it did not take their interests into account.

Britain's response to events in Portugal demonstrates that multilateral organisations were increasingly influential in its approach to foreign policy. This thesis shows that the Labour Government's response was a pragmatic reaction to Britain's declining power, rather than a distinctively new internationalist approach to foreign policy as historians have suggested. The Labour Government did not grasp the full potential for the use of its soft power in Portugal, and still thought largely in terms of a traditional approach to foreign policy. The Labour Government's initial response to events in Portugal was conducted bilaterally, reflecting its confidence and unity during 1974. It was only when developments in Lisbon became a political crisis during 1975 with wider implications for international politics that the Labour Government worked through western multilateral organisations. The most significant factors shaping Britain's foreign policy remained the Cold War and the Anglo-American relationship, but its means of achieving its foreign policy objectives involved working through multilateral organisations, particularly alongside West European states in the EEC and Socialist International. However, its reliance on multilateral diplomacy compromised its policy towards Portugal because of the need to reach agreement with other sovereign powers, many of whom had greater diplomatic influence, or were without the depth of political and economic crisis facing the British government. Hence its first instinct was to achieve its aims through bilateral action (whilst closely consulting the United States) before actively promoting a role for multilateral organisations during the Hot Summer as events became a greater threat to Britain's national interest.

However, the importance of multilateral organisations is demonstrated by its concern with maintaining Britain's reputation amongst member states, especially its desire to be seen as a facilitator between western states. Its multilateral approach also means that discerning its exact role within the response is a challenge for diplomatic historians. This served to limit the damage to Britain's relations with Portugal. It is illustrative that Portuguese historians argue that the assistance given by the EEC was critical to the eventual democratic outcome but do not explore the role of particular states. There is evidence that its economic weakness meant that Britain could not take a leading role within western organisations.

This thesis has also allowed a consideration of the foreign policy making process in Britain during the mid-1970s. It has looked at the influence of actors both inside and outside government and at how decisions were reached. The dominant individual in Britain's response to events in Lisbon was James Callaghan, the Foreign Secretary until his resignation in April 1976. Although he informed the Prime Minister and Cabinet of his approach to Portugal and always considered advice from Whitehall and Labour ministers, the development of British policy and critical decisions were invariably his alone. His personal papers held at the Bodleian Library also show that he had a clear personal interest in the Portuguese Revolution and the success of the PSP which went beyond the immediate pursuit of the British national interest. There is no evidence that Callaghan had a similar interest in any other foreign policy issue during this period. By contrast, his successor, Anthony Crosland, showed little interest in events in Portugal (which confirms the view that he avoided stating a strong position on any issue until he had carefully considered the evidence).¹¹¹⁸ Hence the personality, background and capability of individual Foreign Secretaries and their interpretations of the role, rather than just the formal constitutional processes of decision making, are crucial to foreign policy making.

This study supports the view that the role of Foreign Secretary became an extremely challenging one during this period. There were a number of occasions when Callaghan was distracted from his Cabinet role, such as when campaigning for the General Election and the Labour Party leadership elections, or when events such as the Cyprus crisis or the EEC referendum claimed his attention, to the detriment of his concentration on events in Lisbon. Callaghan's personal papers include the exact record of every telephone conversation he made whilst Foreign Secretary.¹¹¹⁹ These are a fascinating insight into both the myriad issues he faced during this period and the difficulty of addressing them simultaneously. This contrasts with the impression given by reading the chronologically ordered official records organised by foreign policy area at the National Archives. The lack of a clear structure to daily business meant that policy making was influenced as much by other issues at the time as by the evolution of a particular foreign policy concern. This demonstrates the weakness of the British foreign policy making process where there is no clear deputy official, or parallel department like a National Security Council, empowered to lead on foreign policy.¹¹²⁰ Overall, it appears that Callaghan saw Portugal as an important issue which the Labour Government could influence, but it was one that was often overwhelmed by other events or political imperatives.

¹¹¹⁸ Kevin Jeffreys, *Anthony Crosland* (London: Politico's, 2008), p.200.

¹¹¹⁹ Callaghan Papers, Box 136.

¹¹²⁰ Dickie, *Inside the Foreign Office*, p.294.

The Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, was only an intermittent participant in policy making towards Portugal. This supports the argument that his prime ministerial style during his third term was to allow ministers a large degree of policy independence. By this stage he clearly had a close personal relationship with Callaghan, with regular contact with his office. He also did not have the same level of interest in foreign policy that he had shown during his 1960s governments. However, Wilson's personal encouragement of talks on Lusophone decolonisation indicates his particular interest in resolving the Rhodesian question which had caused him and the Labour Party such political difficulties during his previous term. His direct involvement in policy making was often when there were front-page reports on Portugal in the British press, such as immediately after the April Revolution and during the Hot Summer. During 1975 a series of international gatherings of Heads of State increased the role of the Prime Minister.¹¹²¹ Harold Wilson often led discussion on Portugal at international conferences and during bilateral meetings, although he was briefed carefully prior to the meetings by Callaghan or the FCO rather than expressing his personal views. His forceful and impassioned performance on these occasions does not support the view that his physical and mental capacities were in decline prior to his resignation, as is often claimed.¹¹²²

The Labour Cabinet did not play a direct role in Britain's response. Developments in Portugal are only mentioned in Cabinet minutes on seven occasions during the revolution.¹¹²³ These largely consisted of statements by the Foreign Secretary summarising both the situation in Portugal and Britain's policy response. Its concerns were mainly the Cold War implications of events during 1975, alongside Britain's contribution to the evacuation of Portuguese citizens from Angola. Despite the seriousness of the situation and its impact on British interests elsewhere, there was no extended discussion of the Labour Government's policy approach. It is illustrative that Tony Benn only mentions events in Portugal twice in his diaries, and despite being a minister of the radical left who was often in confrontation with the Labour leadership during this period, he did not express an individual opinion on the Labour Government's response.¹¹²⁴ This supports the argument of historians who downplay the significance of the Cabinet on foreign policy making during this period, although an interesting feature of the Labour Government's response was the role of individual ministers, many of whom took a close interest in events in Portugal

¹¹²¹ Young, *Britain and the World*, pp 166-167.

¹¹²² Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, pp.681-685.

¹¹²³ CAB 128 - 54/14, 54/25, 56/8, 56/6, 56/16, 57/7, 57/12.

¹¹²⁴ Tony Benn, *Against the Tide*, pp. 315-315, p. 423.

even though these did not directly relate to their ministerial area.¹¹²⁵ The House of Commons and Lords held a series of foreign policy debates which mentioned the Portuguese Revolution, especially during those concerned with détente and the Helsinki Summit. A series of questions on Portugal were asked by MPs expressing concern at threats to British business interests. This alongside other forms of lobbying had a discernible impact on the Labour Government's policy response, particularly its decision to approach the sixth provisional government to protect British interests in Portugal in late 1975 (giving some support for Theakstone's argument that "the impact of Parliament on the conduct of foreign policy and the behaviour of FCO ministers should not be underestimated").¹¹²⁶

The Labour Party remained extremely influential in policy making towards Portugal throughout the Carnation Revolution. Callaghan's private papers reveal that there was continuous correspondence on Portugal between party members and Labour Party ministers, such as Tom McNally and Ron Hayward, much of which was completely separate from the FCO. The London talks between the new government in Lisbon and the PAIGC in 1974 were organised by party officials independently of the Labour leadership. Support for the PSP was given through the Labour Party and the Socialist International rather than the British Government. This was not for partisan reasons only (although the Labour Party had strong links with their Portuguese counterparts before the April Revolution), rather that conducting policy through party institutions allowed democracy to be promoted without leading to accusations of intervention in Portugal's sovereign affairs. It was also politic to support the PSP rather than other moderate parties because the Portuguese electorate were not likely to vote for parties further to the right after decades of authoritarian rule. Hence supporting the PSP was in the British national interest, and doing so through existing partisan ties made the Labour Government's policy more effective. However, the resolute support for the PSP among certain ministers does suggest that events in Portugal had a strong emotional resonance within the Labour movement because of their implications for Spain, whose Civil War had been a powerful formative experience for that generation. This appears to have been the motive of the TUC's involvement in Portugal; the personal archive of Jack Jones for the mid-1970s includes regular correspondence with Spanish civil war veterans.¹¹²⁷

The increasing disunity in the Labour Government between the Labour leadership and more radical democratic socialist members, which would cause a schism within the Labour

¹¹²⁵ Theakston, *British Foreign Secretaries*, p.34.

¹¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.36.

¹¹²⁷ MSS 126/385 – Jack Jones Correspondence.

movement during the early 1980s, are present in the response to the Portuguese Revolution. In particular the International Department of the National Executive Committee pursued a course at variance to that of the Labour leadership. The reports published after visits by committee members to Portugal during the Hot Summer argued that Labour Governments should support social revolution rather than the establishment of parliamentary democracy.¹¹²⁸ This made it more difficult for the Labour Government to pursue a coherent approach towards events in Lisbon. In particular, its relations with Soares during late-1975 were damaged by ideological factionalism within the Labour Party. Overall, these differences on Portugal within the Labour Party foreshadowed disagreements on NATO membership and relations with the United States in the 1980s.

The Conservative Party actively supported Portugal's transition to democracy. This appears to demonstrate the British convention of bipartisan cooperation on foreign policy issues of national importance. However, there was no all-party collaboration on Portugal. The Conservative Party supported the centre-right CDS rather than the PSP. It was also on occasions critical of the Labour Government's approach to Portugal during parliamentary debate. There were private discussions between the Labour Government and the Conservative Party on supporting the moderate political parties in Lisbon before the 1975 constituent assembly elections. The FCO also gave practical assistance to the Conservative Party's efforts to support the CDS. However, its initiatives were pursued separately from the Labour Government and without regular consultation. There was no antagonism between British parties, partly because the political situation in Lisbon meant that no party to the right of the CDS had any chance of winning, or even the opportunity of contesting, an election in Lisbon. It meant the Conservative Party had to accept, like Kissinger in Washington, that the success of the PSP was critical for a democratic outcome in Portugal.

The FCO was not always able to operate effectively during the Portuguese Revolution. The British Embassy and the Southern European Department had not been working to remove the previous regime and were compromised by their decision to support Caetano's proposed visit to London in 1973 despite public protests. The British Embassy failed to predict the April Revolution and the likely course of events thereafter. This was exacerbated by the appointment of

¹¹²⁸ Audrey Wise, *Eyewitness in Revolutionary Portugal* (Nottingham : Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation for Spokesman Books, 1975).

a new ambassador in Lisbon immediately before the revolution. The British Embassy was largely reactive to developments in Portugal; although it became better informed, the Labour Government often relied on British press reports or its contact with Soares for information, which had a detrimental impact on its understanding of developments in Portugal. There are otherwise inexplicable gaps in the FCO files at important points during the Portuguese Revolution which suggest that there was not always a sustained interest in unfolding events. This meant that the Labour Government's approach to Portugal was characterised by periods of indecisiveness punctuated by rapid decisions made in response to events. In particular this is seen where Soares was often able to intervene in the policy making process with a warning or request which would lead to a reaction by the Labour leadership, rather than through the reporting of the British Embassy. During 1975 the Embassy became increasingly concerned with protecting British business interests rather than with the wider implication of events on the national interest.

The debate within Whitehall on how to respond to events in Portugal does not support the international relations Bureaucratic Politics model.¹¹²⁹ The outcome of the dispute on the provision of financial assistance to Portugal during 1975 was a compromise between different departments, despite Harold Wilson's personal intervention, but this was a rare occurrence and demonstrates more the immense and perennial influence of the Treasury within Whitehall.¹¹³⁰ There were no differences on the fundamental British national interest in Portugal, which remained the establishment of a parliamentary democracy, although a range of other influences did shape British policy at various stages of the revolution (such as the protection of its farmers in the Atlentejo region at the end of 1975). It is also difficult to apply the Bureaucratic Politics Model because leading Whitehall officials are not party appointees and are expected to accept the political direction of their ministers. There was a strong consensus on Portugal among Labour Ministers and therefore the national interest was decided after internal debate rather than being a compromise between government departments with differing approaches.

The seriousness of the political situation in Lisbon shaped how policy towards Portugal was made within the Labour Government. During the most significant crises the Labour leadership decided its approach alongside the highest ranking FCO officials. They demonstrated greater concern with the wider international implications of the Portuguese Revolution than did the British Embassy and the Southern European Department, both of

¹¹²⁹ Allison, 'Bureaucratic Politics', pp. 40-79.

¹¹³⁰ See Chapter VI, p.199.

which stressed the indigenous causes of events. The influence of Soares on the Labour Government was also crucial in determining whether developments in Lisbon were seen as a Cold War crisis. It appears that FCO officials concerned with the wider Cold War believed that the threat of Soviet intervention was a reality (based on their understanding of its intentions during *détente*), whereas those whose concern was narrowly with events in Portugal understood the actual significance of communist intervention (which although significant would not determine the outcome of events in Lisbon). This supports the argument that leading FCO officials should be considered the ‘last Cold Warriors’ of British foreign policy, and that the Labour leadership was concerned primarily with maintaining a close relationship with the United States.¹¹³¹ The difference in their approach is most clearly seen during the attempted coup d’état of November 1975, when the British Embassy and the SED remained sanguine in facing the possibility of communist takeover whilst the Labour leadership appears to have held discussions with the Ford Administration on possible covert intervention.

The Labour Government’s approach to the Portuguese Revolution was also shaped by actors outside government. The British media was not a significant influence on the Labour Government’s approach, but there were occasions when its coverage caused difficulties in its relations with politicians in Lisbon. There were varied British business interests in Portugal (and Lusophone Africa) resulting from its historic relationship. British businesses in the north of Portugal were not directly harmed by the revolution, reflecting both the political stability of the region and their local influence through long established ties. However, British farmers in the southern Alentejo region faced expropriation during the Hot Summer. This led to lobbying of the Labour Government (either directly or through Westminster MPs), which had some influence on its policy, especially on bilateral relations with Lisbon. The British Embassy also gave an increasing amount of time to the protection of British interests. However, despite the damage to its interests during the Portuguese Revolution, defending them was never a priority for the Labour Government. Indeed, Britain often appeared reluctant to defend its interests in Lisbon, fearing (considering its past close economic relationship with the Salazar regime) that this would antagonise the provisional government and the Portuguese public, and thereby undermine British diplomatic influence. It was also sanguine concerning the possibility that the Marxist national

¹¹³¹ Hamilton, ‘The Last Cold Warriors’, pp. 1-5.

liberation movements in Lusophone Africa might introduce nationalisation programmes that would harm British interests.

The recent release of government records for the period has allowed a study of Britain's policy towards the Portuguese Revolution, but a definitive account can only be written once documents currently subject to the Official Secrets Act are made accessible. In particular the role of MI6 remains unclear. It has not admitted to being involved, but given the seriousness of the situation in Portugal it is unlikely that there were no operatives in Lisbon. There are historical accounts which refer to its involvement, but these are not substantiated by public sources. The National Archives hold a number of documents on the Portuguese Revolution which remain closed, although this might be to avoid compromising politicians still active in Portugal, such as Mario Soares, rather than being evidence of the existence of covert operations. The US archives include reference to covert activity, but these documents are redacted, giving little detail of either their scale or significance. They give no evidence of close cooperation with the Labour Government. British government records for the period make no mention, or even allusion, to the role of the secret services. At present it is only possible to speculate on the role of MI6, and while its archives remain closed this will remain the case; but the recent publication of its official history suggests that future historians might be given access to documents from this period.

The democratic outcome in Portugal is seen to be hugely significant by political scientists studying late-twentieth century democratic transitions. This study has considered the evolution of British policy towards developments in Lisbon. There would be value in further research into its response to similar democratic transitions in the following decades, from Spain in the late 1970s to Eastern Europe during the 1990s, to assess what influence its policy towards Portugal had on its approach to future developments. It would be interesting to investigate whether there was closer cooperation between the main Westminster parties in supporting emerging parties elsewhere, and whether there was an evolution in the role of the BBC from reporting events to encouraging political change. Britain's response may have been shaped by the increasing importance of human rights and civic action groups. It would also be of interest to assess whether Britain sought to influence the military leadership in these states to ensure a democratic outcome. Finally, it would be interesting to explore whether the British government gave greater bilateral economic assistance during periods of stronger economic performance or whether it continued with a multilateral approach.

The Portuguese Revolution was considered to be an extremely significant foreign policy episode in Britain. This is also the case in contemporary media coverage. Ben Pimlott, a British freelance journalist in Lisbon (later the biographer of Harold Wilson), speculated: “It may be premature to place the 1974 Portuguese coup d’état alongside the Fall of the Bastille or the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand, as a key turning point in history. Perhaps in ten years’ time the idea will not seem so fanciful.”¹¹³² Instead, Portugal became a stable, prosperous democracy firmly in the western alliance, and as a result the Labour Government’s response to the Carnation Revolution has not received the scholarly attention that it deserves.

¹¹³² Writing in *New Society*, 12th January 1978, quoted from Pimlott, Frustrate their Knavish Tricks, p.273.

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Appendix 1: Persons

Antunes, Melo (Portugal) leading member of the AFM, Portuguese Minister of Foreign Affairs, March, 1975 – July, 1976.

Brandt, Willy (West Germany) Former West German Chancellor, President of the Socialist International, 1972-1992.

Brezhnev, Leonid (USSR) General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 1964-1982.

Brimelow, Alison (UK) Permanent Under-Secretary in the FCO, 1973-1975.

Caetano, Marcelo (Portugal) Portuguese Prime Minister, 1968 - April, 1974.

Callaghan, James (UK) Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, March 1975 – March 1976, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, April 1976 – 1979.

Carlos, Palma (Portugal) Prime Minister, first provisional government, 16 May 1974 – 18 July 1974.

Carlucci, Frank (US) Ambassador to Portugal, 9 December 1974 – 5 February 1978.

Carrington, Lord (UK) Leader of the Opposition in the House of Lords, 1974-1979.

Churchill, Winston (UK) Secretary of the Conservative Foreign Affairs Committee.

Costa Gomes, Francisco (Portugal) President of Portugal, 30 September 1974 – 13 July 1976.

Crosland, Anthony (UK) Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, April 1976 – February 1977.

Pinero De Azevedo, José Baptista (Portugal) Portuguese Prime Minister, 19 September 1975 – 23 June 1976.

Ennals, David (UK) Minister of State for FCO, March 1974 – April 1976

Ford, Gerald (US) President of the United States, 9 August 1974 – 20 January 1977.

Gonçalves, Vasco (Portugal) Prime Minister of Portugal, 18 July 1974 - 19 September 1975.

Gromyko, Andrei (USSR) Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1957 - 1985.

Hart, Judith (UK) Minister of Overseas Development, 1974-1975, National Executive Committee member.

Hattersley, Roy (UK) Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, March 1974 – 10 September 1976.

Hayward, Ron (UK) General Secretary of the Labour Party, 1972 - 1982.

Jones, Jack (UK) Chief Economic Spokesman, Trade Union Council, 1969 – 1978.

Kaunda, Kenneth (Zambia) President of Zambia, 1964 – 1991.

Killick, John (UK) Deputy Permanent Under-Secretary at the FCO, 1973-1975

Kissinger, Henry (US) National Security Advisor, January 1969 – 3 November 1975, Secretary of State, September 1973 – January 1977.

Kosygin, Alexei (USSR) Chairman of the Council of Ministers, 1964 – 1980.

Little, Jenny (UK) International Secretary of the Labour Party, 1974 -1987.

Lestor, Joan (UK) Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 8 March 1974 – 12 June 1975.

McNally, Tom (UK) Political Advisor to Secretary of State, James Callaghan.

Nixon, Richard (US) President of the United States, 20 January 1969 – 9 August 1974.

Nyere, Julius (Tanzania) President of Tanzania, 1964 – 1985.

Otelo, Carvalho (Portugal) leading member of the AFM movement.

Palme, Olof (Sweden) Prime Minister of Sweden, 14 October 1969 – 8 October 1976.

Ramsbotham, Edward (UK) British Ambassador to the United States, 1974 – 1977.

Rippon, Geoffrey (UK) Shadow Foreign Secretary, March 1974 – February 1975.

Salazar, António (Portugal) Prime Minister of Portugal, 1932 – 1968.

Schmidt, Helmut (West Germany) Chancellor of Germany, 16 May 1974 – 1 October 1982.

Senghor, Léopold (Senegal) President of Senegal, 1960 – 1980.

Soares, Mário (Portugal) leader of PSP, Minister of Foreign Affairs, May 1974 – March 1975.

Spinola, António (Portugal) President of Portugal, 15 May 1974 – 30 September 1974.

Trench, Nigel (UK) British Ambassador to Portugal, 1974 – 1976.

Wilson, Harold (UK) Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, 4 March 1974 – 16 March 1976.