

## A BOOK SHAKES LISBON

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A R3,00 book by a General seeking to make his pen as mighty as his sword, has changed the face of Portuguese politics. The book is called *Portugal and the Future* (South African edition of *Portugal e o futuro*, by Perskor, Johannesburg), and it burst upon a startled Portuguese public on February 22, 1974, like a bomb. It not only constituted a slashing attack on the war that Portugal has conducted for 13 years in her African territories, but it also came from a man highly honoured for his contribution to that war. And the General held the second highest post in the country's defence organization.

Gen. António de Spínola, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Portuguese armed forces, and suddenly Portugal's most successful author, was dismissed on March 14, 1974, under pressure from an outraged right. The right has controlled the country's political, military and business life for close to 50 years. Dismissed with General Spínola was General Francisco de Costa Gomes, the Chief of Staff who had supported his viewpoint.

Then came April 25, 1974. The Lisbon regime of Marcello Caetano was ousted in a military *coup* by General Spínola. Shortly afterwards Spínola became President and took over the government with a Cabinet consisting of army officers and civilian politicians representative of all Portuguese political factions.

General Spínola's book reads like a programme of government by somebody who wants power because he feels it is urgent to find a solution for a 13-year-old war that he argues cannot be won by military means. The note of urgency is set in the opening lines: "Portugal is living today, without doubt, one of the gravest hours, if not the most grave of her history." He goes on to say that never has the very essence of the nation faced such dangers as now.

The first edition had a print order of 50 000, a phenomenal number in a country where a serious work is considered a best-seller if 3 000 copies are sold. Many bookshop owners applauded it as "the book of the year". The public reception reflected not only interest in the subject but also long pent-up yearnings for a way out of a political, economic and military morass.

The feelings were pent up because censorship has long been a daily fact of life for Portuguese news media and freedom of expression has not been known for two generations. Freedom to express an opinion opposed to the war in Africa has been particularly limited, and those who have sought to use that freedom have been branded as Communist subversives and often imprisoned and tortured.

When opposition candidates sought to criticize the war in the elections for the National Assembly last October, the police moved in and broke

up the meetings. The candidates then withdrew from the election, leaving the official party to monopolize the Assembly, the country's only official forum of debate for many decades.

"One does not debate the fatherland, one defends it" was the official thesis; the African provinces of Mocambique, Angola and Portuguese Guinea — the latter known as the Republic of Guinea-Bissau to Black nationalists — were integral parts of Portugal, and when the armed forces fended off guerilla forces armed and supported by the Communist world, they were considered to be defending Portugal herself.

The attack on the war has had a shattering effect in Lisbon, because for the first time it came from someone who could not be branded as subversive and was beyond reproach on the grounds of patriotism. For four years he defended Portuguese Guinea as Governor and commander of the forces there, and when he returned to Portugal last summer he was given the nation's highest award and moved to a defence post specially created for him.

General Spínola says Portugal cannot abandon Africa and thus agrees with official thinking that Portugal all by herself would be swallowed up by Spain or, at best, count for very little in Europe. But he asserts that neither can Portugal go on indefinitely with the war, for she risks losing Africa the way she lost Goa and other Indian possessions in 1961. He therefore proposes that the country take the risk, through a process of self-determination, of proposing by referendum the formation of a federation of states in which Portugal would be one entity among equals.

After his take-over, General Spínola said in a statement: "For a long time I have pointed out that in Portugal there is confusion between the principle of self-determination and the principle of independence. It is impossible to deny the principle of self-determination. All people have the right to it as soon as they achieve a cultural level that expresses itself in true self-awareness. Our objective is to bring the overseas people to self-determination alongside the Portuguese flag. If they choose independence, it will be recognition of our inability, but I am one of those who believe in our ability as Portuguese to achieve grand tasks. If we succeed, we shall also demonstrate not only to people in our times, but also to our ancestors, that we maintain the dignity of our history and so of our past. What is indispensable is authenticity so that the world will give us credit and the African will believe in us."

Opposition critics in Lisbon said that Spínola's promises were too little and too late. The General acknowledged in his book that the policy might not work, but said that it was preferable to the "present one". He pointed to Portugal's steady impoverishment in men and resources, to the illusory nature of the surface prosperity in Portugal and to the country's isolation in the world.

These arguments were not new but prior to February 22, 1974, they have been timidly expressed and officially repressed. More than 40 percent of the Portuguese budget went to defence and a tenth of the

population has deserted Portugal to seek work abroad, so that the country's resident population is less now than in 1960. What prosperity exists is fed by worker remittances, tourist expenditures and government outlays. And inflation is severe: from December 1972 to December 1973, the rise in living costs was estimated at 19 percent. Financially, therefore, Portugal could not continue the war in Africa.

As for Portugal's political isolation, the General examines the official argument that the country is not only fighting in her own interests, but also in those of the Western world. If this is true, he asks, how is that Portugal's friends and allies have been so reluctant to support her?

### *Problems of decolonization*

General António de Spínola's new regime now (August, 1974) knows that it is easier to announce a decolonizing policy than to achieve it. The main reason is that Portugal, having delayed adopting this new policy for too long, must now negotiate from a position of weakness after the attrition inflicted by the African colonial wars in her overseas territories. Lisbon cannot by herself lay down the conditions for transferring power. But another important difficulty stems from the differences among the Black leaders in the Portuguese territories which make it harder to conduct talks.

Nevertheless, by September 1974, it had become clear that President Spínola continues to show an ability to learn from past history and present fact. This was reflected in his declared readiness to grant independence to Guinea-Bissau, Angola and Mocambique, African territories the previous Lisbon regime tried to retain despite the passing age of colonialism. As pointed out above, the military figures after their seizure of power first talked of something less than early independence. Self-determination would take time, they said, holding out some kind of federation with Portugal as a possible solution.

The result was a dramatic Spínola decision to discard experiments with the kind of formal political links that other European colonial powers found untenable a decade and a half ago. There was to be nothing like the ill-fated French Union or the shortlived British Central African Federation for the Portuguese president. Nor was he going to be dragged into a hopeless conflict to put down insurgent movements that were bound to win anyway. Instead, Spínola did the sensible thing which, unsurprisingly, might also prove to be the right political thing. His promise of early independence might well consolidate his position in Lisbon, reassure restive Portuguese troops in Africa, give the African movements greater incentives to seek practical arrangements and lessen the dangers of chaos and bloodshed.

Although these are hopeful prospects, they are only prospects. The transition to independence in Africa has never been easy, and there is no reason to believe that Guinea-Bissau, Angola and Mocambique will be exceptions. The Portuguese have ill prepared the African populations for self-rule. They have pursued repressions and committed atrocities

that will not soon be forgotten. The economics of the territories have been distorted for the benefit of Portugal itself.

And yet, the record of the Portuguese is not wholly bleak. While harsh in their general treatment of black Africans, their basic racial attitudes have been more tolerant than those of other European colonisers. Intermarriage, integrated public facilities, mixed housing — all these phenomena are accepted in Portuguese Africa as they never were in French or Belgian Africa. Indeed, these attitudes may prove to be Portugal's greatest resource during the difficult days ahead. If conditions allow them to do so, it will be to the benefit of an independent Guinea-Bissau, Angola or Mocambique. Portuguese language, culture, skills and investment are assets these new countries will surely need.

A last question is why the Caetano government in the first place allowed Spinola to open this particular Pandora's box. Unlike newspapers and periodicals, books are not subject to prior censorship in Portugal, but they can and have been seized. This has not happened in this case.

Dr. Caetano appeared to think that General Spinola wanted to go too far too fast. Caetano himself championed a policy that would allow a slow, cautious move toward greater autonomy in Africa. In fact, one report stated that Caetano read the book before it appeared on sale and was not against opening up debate a little. In the second week of March, Caetano went before the National Assembly after resisting pressure from 79-year-old President Américo Thomaz, the leader of the rightist faction, to dismiss both Spinola and Costa. In the Assembly, Caetano attacked the general's theses without mentioning him, but in a way that left doors open for other options. At one point he suggested that accelerated change might be worth considering. Caetano's position has thus been seen as equivocal — not with the general nor with his enemies.

In the end, Caetano, to save his own position, was led to dismiss both generals.

## PUBLIKASIES VAN DIE R.G.N.

### *Diary of a National Scout*

Die jongste in die reeks bronnepublikasies met die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog as tema wat deur die Instituut vir Geskiedenisnavorsing van die Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing uitgegee word, het pas verskyn. Dit is getiteld *Diary of a National Scout* (onder redaksie van J. P. Brits) en bevat die oorlogsherinneringe van P. J. du Toit, wat voor die uitbreek van die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog 'n klerk in die kantoor van die Myn-kommissaris in Klerksdorp was.

Hierdie dagboek is uniek in dié opsig dat dit die daaglikse oorlogswedervaringe van 'n persoon wat aan Boere- sowel as Britse kant geveg het, beskryf. Du Toit se dagboek begin op 5 September 1900 toe hy vir die derde keer deur die Boereopperbevel opgekommandeer is. Sy onderdrukte maar groeiende verset teen die oorlogspoging skemer telkens in sy aantekeninge deur; nietemin vervul hy sy pligte as privaatsekretaris van genl. P. J. Liebenberg tot 31 Mei 1901. Hy skets in hierdie tydperk verskeie skermutselinge met die Britse magte in die omgewing van Potchefstroom-Gatsrand, plundertogte deur die vyand, die onverbiddelelike optrede van die Boere-bevelvoerders teen "handsuppers" en verraaiers, asook die bekende veldslag by Frederikstad op 25 Oktober 1900.

Sy oorgawe in Mei 1901, die motivering vir hierdie stap, sowel as sy besluit om daadwerklike steun aan die Britse magte te verleen, word breedvoerig in die dagboek opgeteken. Hierdeur verkry die gewone leser sowel as die navorser 'n kykie in die gemoedstoestand en gedagtwêreld van hulle wat in hierdie oorlog verraad gepleeg het. In diens van die Britse magte as patrolliegids, beskryf Du Toit sy omswerwinge in die noordwestelike Transvaal, Noord-Natal en Oos-Transvaal. Benewens die oorlogsmart, wat 'n onuitwisbare indruk op sy sensitiewe gemoed maak, gee hy 'n relaas van die Britse operasies in die streke waar hy saam met hulle beweeg. Interessant is ook sy beskrywing van die aktiwiteite in twee Britse militêre hospitale, dié by Wakkerstroom en Charlestown, waar hy 'n geruime tyd met ingewandskoors deurgebring het. Ten slotte beskryf hy sy kortstondige verblyf in Durban (om na sy siekte aan te sterk) en dan die langverwagte vrede waarna hy deurgaans so gesmag het.

Met hierdie verskyning van *Diary of a National Scout* het die Instituut vir Geskiedenisnavorsing van die RGN 'n tweërlei doel bereik: eerstens, om sy reeks bronnepublikasies oor die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog, waarvan H. C. Bredell se dagboek die eerste gevorm het, aan te vul met 'n tweede, wat die oorlog vanuit 'n ander hoek beskryf; tweedens is lig gewerp op 'n aspek wat tot dusver in die geskiedskrywing oor dié oorlog weinig aandag geniet het, te wete die anti-oorlog-faktor, 'n faktor wat wel deeglik sy invloed op die afloop van die oorlog laat geld het.

*The Descendants of Richard and Maria Peacock*

Na baie jare se navorsing in Suid-Afrika en Rhodesië, het mnr. Vyvian William Hiller, O.B.E., voormalige direkteur van die Rhodesiese Staatsargief nou in die aand van sy lewe 'n publikasie oor sy eie familie, naamlik *The Descendants of Richard and Maria Peacock, 1820 Settlers*, gereed gemaak. Hy gee 'n interessante beskrywing van die herkoms van Richard Peacock en sy vrou Maria Johnson, hul reis na en hul vestiging in Suid-Afrika en die talle probleme waarmee hulle en ander Britse Setlaars te kampe gehad het. Sy boek handel verder nie slegs oor Richard en Maria se Peacock-nageslag nie, maar ook oor aangetroude families soos Joseph, Perkins, Marriot, Orpen, Grellert en vele ander. Oor verskeie lede van die verskillende families word allerhande interessante wetenskaplike waardighede meegedeel wat ook vir die gewone historikus waardevol kan wees. Die trek van die eerste Peacocks wat hulle in Rhodesië gaan vestig het, word beskryf aan die hand van 'n dagboek wat deur 'n sekere H. Rodwell bygehou is. 'n Uitgebreide kronologie oor gebeure in die lewe van Richard en Maria Peacock, 'n reeks interessante familiefoto's uit die vorige eeu en 'n volledige naamindeks is waardevolle toevoegings.

Mnr. Hiller is in King Williamstown gebore, maar het sy opvoeding in Rhodesië ontvang, waar hy ook vir baie jare aan die staatsargief in Salisbury verbonde was. As akademikus en kultuurleier het hy op verskeie terreine bekendheid verwerf en onder andere as hoofargivaris van Rhodesië en Sentraal-Afrika 'n belangrike bydrae gelewer tot die *Oppenheimer Series* en die *Documents of the Portuguese in Mozambique and Central Africa, 1497-1840*.