

---

# From Enemies to Allies?

---

## Portugal's Carnation

---

### Revolution and

---

### Czechoslovakia, 1968–1989

---

PAVEL SZOBI

*This article analyses the relationship between Portugal and Czechoslovakia between 1968 and 1989, with a specific focus on the influence of the Carnation Revolution. This analysis includes the Portuguese communist migration to Czechoslovakia, the contact between the Portuguese and Czechoslovak communists during Portugal's transition process, a diplomatic incident in 1982 and the specific conditions within the Portuguese student community at Czech and Slovak universities. The article also explores the fact that Czechoslovak communists, despite hopes that southern Europe might 'go socialist', did in fact very little to support communist forces in Portugal after the collapse of the Caetano regime. Likewise, the post-dictatorial governments in Portugal did little to help Eastern European dissidence. Instead, political players in both countries saw each other much more in terms of economic advantage and realpolitik.*

The Czech lands and Portugal, countries with few commonalities in the history of the European continent, underwent turbulent changes in the twentieth century which were marked by coups and major revolutions – first the military coup in Portugal in 1926 and the communist coup in Czechoslovakia in 1948, then the third wave of democratisation which commenced with the Carnation Revolution in 1974 and (almost) concluded with Velvet Revolution in 1989.<sup>1</sup> These countries began interacting in the 1920s, developing cultural and business relations. The Portuguese canning industry saw Czechoslovakia as a major export destination for fish products, while Czechoslovak factories planned to export weapons for the Portuguese army.<sup>2</sup> The progress of this cooperation was halted by the creation of a corporative Salazar regime in Portugal and the country's support for Franco in the Spanish Civil War,

Institute of Technology and Business in České Budějovice, Faculty of Corporate Strategy, Okružní 10, 370 01 České Budějovice, Czech Republic; [pavel\\_szobi@post.cz](mailto:pavel_szobi@post.cz)

<sup>1</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave. Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 21–4.

<sup>2</sup> Checoslováquia, mercados, M2I, 3<sup>o</sup> piso, A 25 Pr<sup>o</sup> N<sup>o</sup> 436, I, Arquivo Histórico Diplomático, Lisboa; Jan Klíma, *Salazar, Tichý diktátor* (Praha: Aleš Skřivan ml., 2005), 122–3.

combined with the outcome of the Second World War and the February 1948 coup d'état in Czechoslovakia. These historical events turned the countries into ideological enemies and members of two competing political blocs.

Between 1948 and 1968 Czechoslovakia used its strategic position between Paris and Moscow to accommodate communist exiles from several countries in Southern and Western Europe, including Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal.<sup>3</sup> Their political activity made Prague a kind of 'communist Geneva' – a metaphorical but fitting term used by the Czech historian Karel Bartošek.<sup>4</sup> Throughout this period the Czechoslovak government contributed, as did other Eastern Bloc countries, materially and financially to the Portuguese communists' fight against the right-wing authoritarian regime of António de Oliveira Salazar. On several occasions Czechoslovakia indicated the possibility of normalising its relations with Portugal, which had severed diplomatic relations with Prague in 1937, but Lisbon insisted on Czechoslovak acceptance of the colonial status of Portuguese territories in Africa and Asia as a quid pro quo. Ideological differences and the low level of commercial exchange made a further rapprochement between the two states impossible.

This article examines the interconnectedness of the events of 1968, 1974 and 1989 in Czechoslovakia and Portugal. I argue that, in the context of détente and the political transitions in both Southern and Eastern Europe, the two countries were brought together in specific ways: Czechoslovakia supported a democratic transition in Portugal in the mid-1970s, whereas Portuguese democratic governments criticised the politics of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia in the normalisation period.<sup>5</sup> 1968 saw the Prague Spring, as well as the replacement of Salazar with Marcelo Caetano, a technocrat and modest reformer. Developments that year dramatically changed the role of Prague for the Portuguese exiles – some turned away from the ideals of communism and left Czechoslovakia, and for the conservative, pro-Soviet Portuguese communists, Prague was no longer a secure place. The officials of the Portuguese Communist Party (*Partido Comunista Português*; PCP) turned instead to Budapest and Bucharest. Although Portuguese media coverage of the Warsaw Pact invasion in August 1968 was sympathetic towards the Czechoslovak forces of reform, the Marcelist government paid little attention to the normalisation regime in subsequent years. This situation remained unchanged until the Portuguese Carnation Revolution of April 1974, which led to a prompt restoration of official diplomatic relations between the two countries. Czechoslovakia was again the focus of Portuguese media attention in spring 1974 when Portuguese communists were

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Kateřina Králová and Konstantinos Tsivos, *Vyschly nám slzy... Řečí uprchlíci v Československu* (Praha: Dokořán, 2012); Vladimír Nálevka, 'Španěle v poválečném Československu', in Martin Kovář and Vladimír Nálevka, eds., "Dvacáté století". *Ročenka Semináře nejnovějších dějin Ústavu světových dějin Filozofické fakulty Univerzity Karlovy v Praze 2005* (Praha: Filozofická fakulta, Univerzita Karlova v Praze, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Karel Bartošek, *Zpráva o putování v komunistických archivech: Paříž–Praha (1948–1968)* (Praha: Paseka, 2009), 103.

<sup>5</sup> The term normalisation and the development of its meaning after 1968 were very well analysed in the work of Pavel Kolář and Michal Pullman, *Co byla normalizace? Studie o pozdním socialismu* (Praha: NLN, ÚSTR, 2016), 72–85.

accused of preparing a 1948-style ‘Prague coup’.<sup>6</sup> From this point onwards there was much greater political interaction between these countries. Czechoslovak authorities carefully observed the developments in Portugal and used the newly re-established relations to promote mutual trade, offer education programmes for Portuguese students in Czechoslovakia and support leftist economic reforms.

This article will – on one level – address the role of Czechoslovakia in Portugal's Carnation Revolution and the subsequent so-called Ongoing Revolutionary Process (*Processo Revolucionário Em Curso*; PREC). How did the Czechoslovak government perceive the changes in Portugal? Was Czechoslovakia willing to support a possible communist coup d'état? Was the possibility of the Eastern Bloc ‘acquiring’ Portugal ever realistic? Many leaders across the Eastern Bloc fervently hoped for this outcome.<sup>7</sup> The US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, feared it, believing the 1974 ‘Carnation Revolution’ might be a replay of the February 1917 Russian Revolution, with Mário Soares playing the role of Alexander Kerensky and paving the way for a radical or Bolshevik takeover.<sup>8</sup> The article will then discuss whether there were serious Czechoslovak attempts to use its experience and solidarity with Portuguese communist exiles prior to 1968 to strengthen the role of communists in Portuguese politics after 1974. It will explore the changing attitude of Portuguese democratic governments towards the Czechoslovak communist regime in the late 1970s and in the 1980s. Was there a strategy to use the experience of the Carnation Revolution to liberalise Czechoslovakia in the 1980s? Did the Portuguese play a role in the Velvet Revolution of November 1989?

### The Crushing of the Prague Spring and its Aftermath

The protest movements that marked the 1960s were not limited to the West. Such activism manifested itself in authoritarian countries in the East and South of the continent too.<sup>9</sup> These resulted in hesitant changes of politics, not only in Czechoslovakia, which witnessed its ‘spring’ of reforms, but also Portugal, which went through a relative liberalisation of the political and economic system under Caetano, which was also dubbed a ‘spring’. In both cases there were sections of both societies opposed to liberalisation. In Portugal, Caetano was an example of the technocratic second generation of the authoritarian elite, who were willing to let others share power with the state apparatus as long as it would help the country modernise and remain stable.<sup>10</sup> In Czechoslovakia, Alexander Dubček moulded a

<sup>6</sup> For more information about the political strategies of the PCP after April 1974, see Raquel Cardeira Varela, ‘Cunhal não foi Carrillo? Estratégia e Tática do Partido Comunista Português durante a Crise Revolucionária de 1975’, *Hispania. Revista Española de historia* 72, 3 (2012), 670.

<sup>7</sup> See James Mark in this volume.

<sup>8</sup> Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 4–5.

<sup>9</sup> See James Mark, Nigel Townson and Polymeris Voglis, ‘Inspirations’, in Robert Gildea, James Mark and Anette Warring, *Europe's 1968: Voices of Revolt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 72–106.

<sup>10</sup> See Caetano's interpretation of the reforms in his memoirs, Marcelo Caetano, *Depoimento* (Rio de Janeiro: Distribuidora Record, 1977), 47–93.

new consensus which gained popular support and turned the Communist Party into the 'voice' of the people, creating a more democratic 'socialism with a human face'. Neither of them were able to manage the changes they started. In the case of Portugal, Caetano introduced moderate reforms from 1968 to 1974 and then lost control of the situation, primarily due to a long colonial war in Africa. In addition Portugal faced an economic crisis with high inflation and unemployment, aggravated by the Oil Crisis in 1973. Caetano admitted in his memoirs that the economic situation in 1972–1974 was almost unmanageable, and, in addition to the high costs of the war, he blamed the high prices of food and consumer products imported from the European Economic Community and the United States.<sup>11</sup> In Czechoslovakia, Dubček was given much less time; he was backed by a wave of enthusiasm within the population, but lacked the trust of allies in Moscow, who were afraid he would eventually lose control of the situation. The advance of Czechoslovak reforms was stopped after the Soviet invasion in August 1968, and Dubček was soon ousted from high politics.<sup>12</sup>

The PCP was paying a close attention to the events in Prague and it is therefore important to follow the Portuguese, predominantly political, exiles in Czechoslovakia, who were deeply affected by their experience of 1968. This would later affect their role as intermediaries between the Eastern Bloc and the Carnation Revolution. Although exiles remained few in number – certainly in comparison with Portuguese communities in Western European countries like France or Luxembourg – there were a number of important political figures among the twenty political exiles living in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s. Whereas Portuguese emigrants who primarily sought better employment living standards had gone to Western Europe, those political exiles who sought safety and asylum found it in Czechoslovakia – a country which was generally ignored by the Portuguese intelligence service.<sup>13</sup> The migrants in Czechoslovakia were offered student slots, jobs at universities and radio stations with foreign broadcasting and employment as workers in local factories.

The political culture of the Portuguese communist diaspora, which had developed already in the early 1950s, was represented by two key figures in Prague. The first was Cândida Ventura, a member of the PCP Central Committee, who had been imprisoned by Portuguese authorities for several years before coming to Czechoslovakia for medical treatment and eventually deciding to stay in 1965. She replaced Georgette Ferreira, the local head of the PCP, who had lived in Prague in the first half of the 1960s. Ventura later stated in an interview with Portuguese journalist Adelino Cunha that she was shocked by the reality of socialism during her first visits but accepted that she should stay given the offer of the International Office of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (*Komunistická strana Československa*; CCP) in

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>12</sup> Zdeněk Doskočil, *Duben 1969. Anatomie jednoho mocenského zvratu* (Brno: Doplněk, 2006), 175–6, 196–8.

<sup>13</sup> This can be deduced from the lack of documents concerning Czechoslovakia in the PIDE/DGS materials that can be found in the Portuguese Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo, except for data concerning African students from Portuguese colonies.

Prague. 'I wanted to know everything up to the end', she recalled.<sup>14</sup> In Prague, she was the head of the PCP cell and editor of the *World Marxist Review*.<sup>15</sup>

The second figure was Flausino Torres. He was a renowned historian and communist veteran who taught at the Faculty of the Arts at Charles University in Prague, where he published a textbook of Portuguese history for Czech students.<sup>16</sup> Álvaro Cunhal, the Secretary General of the PCP from 1943, who remained in political asylum in Moscow until 1965 and after that in Paris, regularly checked on the party members in Prague, especially on Ventura, with whom he had a strong friendship. According to some sources Cunhal had his own secret apartment in Prague, which he used for undercover meetings under the name 'Duarte', a nickname from the time of his earlier clandestine activities in Portugal.<sup>17</sup> During his visits to Czechoslovakia he observed with growing concern that there were visible changes in the behaviour of CCP members. He was worried about the growing discontent among Czechoslovak communists under the leadership of President Antonín Novotný, and he stated to his friends in Portugal that the 'opening' they were hearing about was nothing but 'an atmosphere of great evil'.<sup>18</sup> Another important PCP official, Carlos Brito, observed during his visits to Czechoslovakia that 'there were no signs of poverty, in contrast to other Eastern European capitals. People seemed

<sup>14</sup> Adelino Cunha, *Álvaro Cunhal. Retrato pessoal e íntimo* (Lisboa: A Esfera dos Livros, 2010), 431.

<sup>15</sup> Her activities in the review were followed by the Portuguese government although only under her undercover name Catarina Mendes. *Actividade política de portugueses no estrangeiro: artigo de Catarina Mendes, Membro do Comité Central do Partido Comunista Português na 'Revista Internacional'*, 6 Dec. 1972, AHD, PEA 707.

<sup>16</sup> Flausino Torres, *Portugal, uma perspectiva da sua história* (Porto: Afrontamento, 1973). It is interesting that the Portuguese authorities did not know – or rather did not care – too much about the communist emigrants in Czechoslovakia, but at the same time, not only did they know the names of all Angolans and Mozambicans studying in the ČSSR, but in some cases they even knew their exact addresses in Prague. See Portugal, *Província de Moçambique, Serviços de centralização de informações – Estudantes da África Negra a estudar nos países Comunistas*, 25 Jul. 1965, K/4/2/12/1, 13, f. Política em relação a África – Checoslováquia, Arquivo Nacional Torre de Tombo; *Funcionamento em Praga, Checoslováquia, de escola especial para jovens de África*, AOS/CO/NE-21, p. 264, ANTT, *Relações comerciais luso-checas*.

<sup>17</sup> This claim was made by the Czech scholar Jaroslav Střihavka, who was affiliated with the Portuguese diaspora in Czechoslovakia during the 1950s and 1960s. See L. Kunderátová, 'Os contactos da oposição portuguesa antialazarista com a Checoslováquia entre 1933–1974. Contribuição para o estudo das relações luso-checas', 11, available at <http://www.premioiberoamericano.cz/cz/ganador2003.php> (last visited March 2016). The British historian Harold V. Livermoore goes further and claims that Cunhal spent most of his exile in Czechoslovakia. See Harold V. Livermoore, *A New History of Portugal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 356. In a similar undercover way, Ernesto Che Guevara lived in Prague as an 'Uruguayan merchant' for four months in 1966, planning his guerilla expedition to Bolivia. See, for example, Jaroslav Fiala, 'Che Guevarova pražská záhada: Po stopách revolucionářova deníku', *Dějiny a současnost* 32, 1 (2010), 18–9. Based on the story, Argentinean writer Abel Posse wrote his novel *Los cuadernos de Praga* (Buenos Aires: Atlandida, 1998).

<sup>18</sup> Carlos Brito, *Álvaro Cunhal. Sete fôlegos do combatente. Memórias* (Lisboa: Edições: Nelson de Matos, 2010), 29. Unlike Cunhal, Cândida Ventura remembered the Prague Spring as a positive process involving the renaissance of communist ideas and their realisation through public approval, which had not been the case in the Eastern Bloc before. See an interview with Cândida Ventura for the newspaper *O jornal*, 5 Feb. 1982, 4–5; Rui Perdigão, *O PCP visto por dentro e por fora* (Lisboa: Fragmentos, 1988), 80.

to live well. Well-fed, well-clothed. But Prague was an elusive and grey city and the Czechs appeared to be reserved and sad people . . . I realised that not everything was going well.<sup>19</sup> According to Eva Schalková, a student of the Portuguese language at Charles University in the late 1960s, the Portuguese communists in Prague did not trust each other, and Torres personally suspected her of spying on him for Ventura.<sup>20</sup>

The hopes of the Prague Spring ended with the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact. Cunhal's good relationship with the Soviets meant the PCP Central Committee decided to support the invasion and justified it with the official claim that it was necessary to preserve authentic Marxism-Leninism in Czechoslovakia. After CCP officials were forced to sign the Moscow Protocol on the temporary stay of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia on 27 August 1968, the PCP Central Committee expressed in a communiqué that the 'normalisation' process after the invasion meant 'a real fragmentation of the anti-socialist counter-revolutionary forces'.<sup>21</sup> Portuguese sympathy with the Soviet invasion did not find any support among the other Western European communist parties. The non-communist Portuguese opposition understood Cunhal's approach as an attempt to obtain more aid for the PCP from Moscow.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, the PCP's underground activity could not have proceeded any further without money and materials for copy machines, pamphlets and fake documents. In the light of visible ruptures in the socialist camp, namely by the Sino-Soviet conflict, a condemnation of Moscow could have also meant a loss of authority for the Soviet Union and of credibility for socialism more generally.<sup>23</sup> The Portuguese commitment to the Soviet version of proletarian internationalism also had strong domestic roots. During the early 1960s, when Cunhal had barely re-established the effective leadership of the party after his imprisonment, pro-Maoist agitation within the ranks began to divide the party, ending in several expulsions in 1964.<sup>24</sup>

The Portuguese communists residing in Czechoslovakia decided to speak their own minds; Mercedes Ferreira, who lived in Czechoslovakia with her husband and two children, came to Torres on the morning of the invasion on 21 August.<sup>25</sup> They sat together, and, as recorded in Torres's diary, everybody thought: 'Is it possible? The Soviet Union, the Motherland of Socialism, as we all used to call it . . . has invaded a

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Carlos Brito, 13 Nov. 2011, author's archive.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Eva Schalková, 18 Apr. 2014, author's archive.

<sup>21</sup> According to the press release of the Soviet Press Agency TASS: 'Zájem o moskevské jednání. Stanoviska libanonských a portugalských komunistů', *Rudé právo*, 17 Oct. 1968, 6.

<sup>22</sup> Francisco Martins Rodrigues, 'Comunismo sem fronteiras: "Quando Cunhal aplausou a invasão da Checoslováquia"', *Política operária* 14, 4 (1998), 20–1; José Pacheco Pereira, *Álvaro Cunhal. Uma Biografia Política. O Secretário-Geral* (Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores, 2015), 432–3.

<sup>23</sup> Alessandro Brogi, 'France, Italy, the Western Communists, and the Prague Spring', in Günter Bischof, Stefan Karner and Peter Ruggenthaler, eds., *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2011), 291–2.

<sup>24</sup> Alex Macleod, 'Portrait of a Model Ally: The Portuguese Communist Party and the International Communist Movement, 1968–1983', *Studies in Comparative Communism* 17, 1 (1984), 35–6.

<sup>25</sup> Mercedes Ferreira emigrated first to Algeria, but neither she nor her husband could find any work, and since their younger son suffered from asthma, they decided to move to Czechoslovakia – for work and good healthcare. João Céu e Silva, *Uma longa viagem com Álvaro Cunhal* (Porto: Asa, 2005), 126.

friendly country!’<sup>26</sup> On 16 September they wrote and signed a proclamation which fully backed the reforms in Czechoslovakia and condemned the invasion. Besides Ferreira and Torres, Álvaro Bandarra, a student of the Faculty of the Arts, also signed the proclamation, but Ventura did not. She later stated that she had declined to sign it out of respect for Cunhal and wanted to explain to him the position of the Czechoslovak cell personally.<sup>27</sup> That said, she was a close friend of well-known Czech writer and pre-war member of the CCP, Lenka Reinerová, who was imprisoned by the communist government in 1952 on fabricated allegations of Trotskyism and Zionism. She warned Ventura not to sign any proclamation and not to even dare oppose the party, which clearly could have dramatic consequences for Ventura.<sup>28</sup> Cunhal came to Prague in person to discuss the situation with the diaspora. After a very emotional meeting with the whole group, he condemned the proclamation and stated that nobody would pay any attention to it back in Portugal.<sup>29</sup>

The meeting not only engendered Ventura's disillusionment with Cunhal but also with the party and the whole idea of communism in general. In 1969 the families of Ferreira and Torres left Czechoslovakia, as did Bandarra. Ventura stayed in Czechoslovakia until 1975 but remained bitter about what had happened in 1968.<sup>30</sup> In the 2012 edition of her memoirs she wrote about the reform process during the Prague Spring period: ‘those who watched that intense work could not be deaf to the importance that it had and is continuing to have, not only for the people of the East in the fight for independence, but also for all the people of the world’.<sup>31</sup> According to her daughter Rosa, who spent several years with her mother in Prague, Ventura was traumatised when she saw her former Czech colleagues who were fired from government and party positions, and later forced to drive trams or clean streets, because of their support for the Prague Spring.<sup>32</sup> Despite her inner turmoil Ventura represented the PCP in Czechoslovakia until 1975, when she decided to return to Portugal during the tumult of the Carnation Revolution. She went to work for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but regularly returned to Czechoslovakia to fulfil her duties as the PCP ambassador in the country. Ultimately, like the other comrades in Prague after 1968, she abandoned the party. She then began teaching at a high school in the city of Portimão.<sup>33</sup> For many of her friends back in Portugal it was

<sup>26</sup> Flausino Torres, *Diário da batalha de Praga. Socialismo e humanismo* (Porto: Afrontamento, 2008), 19.

<sup>27</sup> Cândida Ventura, *O socialismo que eu vivi*. 1st ed. (Lisboa: O Jornal, 1984), 153–5, 232. Pereira, Álvaro, 482–3. Another Portuguese emigrant, a paper factory worker named Valdemar Pinho, did not sign the letter because he was not a member of the PCP, although he got a lot of interim information based on a good friendship with Flausino Torres. See Kunderátová, ‘Os contactos’, 23.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Eva Schalková, 18 Apr. 2014, author's archive.

<sup>29</sup> Ventura, *O socialismo*, 155; Paulo Torres Bento, ed., *Flausino Torres. Documentos e fragmentos biográficos* (Porto: Afrontamento, 2006), 309–11. See also Pereira, Álvaro, 440–3.

<sup>30</sup> The Portuguese ambassador in Vienna reported to Lisbon that the Czechoslovak authorities tried to make the departure of those who aimed to leave difficult. Letter of Ambassador Gonçalo Caldeira Coelho to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 20 Jul. 1969, AHD, PEA 575.

<sup>31</sup> Cândida Ventura, *O socialismo que eu vivi*, 2nd ed. (Lisboa: Bizâncio, 2012), 152.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Rosa Glutz Ventura, 1 Sep. 2015, author's archive; Interview with Jaromír Štětina, 11 Dec. 2016.

<sup>33</sup> Ventura, *O socialismo*, 1st ed., 181.

obvious that she had stayed in Czechoslovakia so long only because she enjoyed her direct access to the highest levels of the CCP and the benefits that ensued.<sup>34</sup> Both the disillusionment of the Portuguese exile communities in Prague and the support for the Soviet intervention on the part of the PCP became important factors in mediating the next major challenge in these two countries' relationship, presented by the collapse of the Portuguese dictatorship and the so-called 'Carnation Revolution' of 1974.

### The Carnation Revolution and the Ongoing Revolutionary Process

Even before the collapse of the Salazar regime, the Czechoslovak government recognised de facto the authoritarian regimes of the Iberian Peninsula as legitimate governments, and economic exchange both within Europe and across the Portuguese Empire began to grow.<sup>35</sup> Portugal was interested in Czech chemical production, porcelain and glass, while Czechoslovakia needed rare metals. In 1968 the Czechoslovak organisations responsible for foreign trade decided to develop a sophisticated wolfram mine complex together with a Portuguese company Sociedade Mineira. The Czechoslovaks intended to invest 2,000,000 US dollars in mining machinery. The official paper of the CCP, *Rudé právo*, began to tone down its attacks on Caetano and Franco.<sup>36</sup> In the case of the Franco regime, relations with Eastern Bloc countries became increasingly friendly, not only within the framework of détente but also because of the open hostility which existed between the Soviet Union and the Eurocommunist Spanish Communist Party.<sup>37</sup>

Economic links began to grow in the Portuguese Empire too. Certainly, Czechoslovak criticism of Portuguese attempts to suppress the fight for African independence continued to be very strong, at least rhetorically. When the British paper *The Daily Telegraph* wrote in May 1971 about the Czechoslovak involvement in the construction of the Cabora-Bassa Dam in Mozambique, Prague reacted with a strong denial. Czechoslovakia did not want to be connected with Portugal as a henchman in one of its colonies.<sup>38</sup> The evidence on this particular issue is inconclusive; nevertheless, Czechoslovakia had a long history of business exchange with Portuguese companies in African colonies, especially Angola in the 1960s.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Rosa Glutz Ventura, 1 Sep. 2015, author's archive.

<sup>35</sup> Nálevka, 'Španěle', 95. News about important political events of the left in Portugal were either ignored or broadcast with a considerable delay, such as a major strike by employees in the transport company CARRIS on 24 Oct. 1969. The news was broadcast on Czechoslovak radio on 26 Dec, but not before. See 'Os trabalhadores da Carris realizaram uma importante concentração em Santo Amaro', *Boletim de informação* 1969, 12, supplement, p. 1, cx. 580, ANTT, f. Secretário do Nacional de Informação, Cençura.

<sup>36</sup> Letter of Gaspar Queiroz to António de O. Salazar, 6 Mar. 1968, ATT, PT/AOS/CO/EC-29; Sankce vůči Portugalsku, 20 May 1973, f. TO Portugalsko, 1970–1974, Archiv Ministerstva zahraničních věcí, Praha.

<sup>37</sup> Maud Bracke, *Which Socialism, Whose Détente? West European Communism and the Czechoslovak Crisis of 1968* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2007), 346.

<sup>38</sup> Sankce vůči Portugalsku (Šifry ZÚ Londýn), 20 May 1973, AZMV, f. TO Portugalsko, 1970–1974.



Czechoslovak enterprises exported trucks and machine tools to this Portuguese territory and imported iron ore. When asked in 1965 by the pro-independence People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (*Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola*; MPLA) to boycott trade with Portugal, the Czechoslovak authorities refused, arguing that they had no intention of changing trade policies which had been successfully developed over the preceding years.<sup>39</sup>

Despite this development of economic relations, the Czechoslovak government nevertheless initially viewed the collapse of the Salazar regime as an opportunity to support the development of socialism similar to the Eastern European variant on the Iberian Peninsula. At first the military coup of 25 April 1974, which was a climax of socio-economic and political tensions in Portugal, took the CCP by surprise, as shown by Czechoslovak media coverage and uncertainties about which ideological line to take. *Rudé právo* recounted the coup in a rather vague and non-committal report, copied from *Le Monde*, as an 'uprising of captains against generals', referring to the mid-ranking officers who had organised themselves into the Armed Forces Movement (*Movimento das Forças Armadas*; MFA).<sup>40</sup> Over the following days the Portuguese military was shown to have been the ultimate source of Caetano's power. The coup brought into open the disaffection with the regime felt by the majority of Portuguese society. This resulted in the immediate collapse of the regime, its government and security structures.

Although from an ideological point of view the uncertain political situation in Portugal after the fall of the dictatorship was not initially grasped by Eastern Bloc communists as an opportunity to bring the whole country into the 'family of socialism', the revolution certainly evoked sympathies in the Kremlin and amongst its allies.<sup>41</sup> These sympathies grew in June 1974 when the MFA insisted on naming a pro-communist military officer, Colonel Vasco Gonçalves, the new prime minister of the interim government. The conservative President António de Spínola, who had been a colonial war hero and opponent of Caetano before 25 April, tried to block the ascent of the communists and socialists, as well as the shift to the left within the MFA. He adopted a Gaullist leadership style and attempted to organise a rally which would show the support from the 'silent majority'. When the left-wing parties and organisations promptly reacted by erecting barricades in Lisbon, Spínola called off his supporters and resigned from the presidency on 30 September.<sup>42</sup> Portugal moved further to the left when Spínola was replaced with the ideologically flexible General Costa Gomes. Czechoslovak diplomats did not hide the enthusiasm in their reports. 'The most recent political developments have shown that the interim government

<sup>39</sup> Petr Zídek and Karel Sieber, *Československo a subsaharská Afrika 1948–1974* (Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, 2007), 23.

<sup>40</sup> 'Vojenské povstání v Portugalsku', *Rudé právo*, 26 Apr. 1974, 7.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, the argumentation of Raquel Varela in *A História do PCP na Revolução dos Cravos* (Lisboa: Bertrand Editora, 2011), 79–83, 298.

<sup>42</sup> The events were analysed in detail by Robert Harvey in his work *Portugal: Birth of a Democracy* (London: The MacMillan Press, 1978), 24–6.

... with the support of the broad democratic masses is able to consequently fulfil the progressive programme of the Armed Forces Movement'.<sup>43</sup>

After decades of closure, embassies in Lisbon and Prague were reopened and business relations were developed on the basis of new intergovernmental agreements, abandoning several limits for mutual trade that had been set in the Marcellist era. One of the high ranking diplomats of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jindřich Tuček, was sent to Lisbon in August 1974 to prepare the infrastructure for the embassy and to assemble intelligence reports about political developments in Portugal.<sup>44</sup> The first Portuguese ambassador to Prague, António de Magalhães Colaço, was enthusiastically received by Czechoslovak government officials during his first weeks in office in the late 1974.<sup>45</sup> In contrast to other Western European diplomats, he maintained contacts with CCP officials and valued his meeting with Alois Indra, the president of the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly, who had played a central role in the normalisation process after the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion.<sup>46</sup>

However, many figures within the Czechoslovak government were in fact lukewarm in their support for a communist future in Portugal. Part of the reason for this lay in the fact that between 1968 and 1974, the relationship between the Portuguese and Czechoslovak communists had cooled considerably, due to the improvement of commercial contacts between both countries, which was met by the PCP leadership with a silent disapproval. Furthermore, the personal animosity between Cunhal and Vasil Biľak, the Secretary of International Relations of the CCP Central Committee, complicated the relationship between both parties: Cunhal was an intellectual and artist, Biľak a former worker lacking in education and charisma.<sup>47</sup> The international context of détente did not play well either in the thoughts of a support for communist takeover in Lisbon. Nor were Czechoslovak travellers to the Iberian peninsula during this period much impressed by the PCP. Many scholars and students of the Portuguese language, who were invited by the PCP and Portuguese universities, remarked on the naïveté and idealism of the young communists in Portugal, who dreamed of a utopian future while Czechoslovak students were still recovering from the 'cold shower' of the Soviet invasion and the country's subsequent normalisation.<sup>48</sup>

After 25 April 1974, based on Soviet advice, the Czechoslovak authorities did not expect the Portuguese to carry out a socialist revolution and join the Eastern

<sup>43</sup> Informace o politické situaci v Portugalsku, 10, 28 Sep. 1974, Inv. č. 111, kr. I, AMZV, f. TO Portugalsko 1970–1974.

<sup>44</sup> Task letter for Jindřich Tuček from 12 Aug. 1974, Inv. č. 413, kr. I, AMZV, f. TO Portugalsko 1970–1974.

<sup>45</sup> Information for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 16 Dec. 1974, AHD, f. PEA, Proc. 28/74; 'Mezinárodní styky', *Rudé právo*, 3 Dec. 1974, 2.

<sup>46</sup> Záznam z rozhovoru s. Suju s titulárom Portugalska v ČSSR p. Colaço, 27 Aug. 1976, inv. č. 117, ka. 3, AMZV, f. TO-T Portugalsko 1975–1979; Letter of Ambassador António Colaço to the Portuguese Minister of Foreign Affairs, 16 Dec. 1974, AHD, PEA 28/74.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Carlos Brito, 13 Nov. 2011, author's archive.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Jaroslava Jindrová, 10 Apr. 2014, author's archive.

Bloc; nevertheless, they did support the PCP election campaign, both financially and materially.<sup>49</sup> But the general rule set by the Czechoslovak government – to maximise attempts to bring Portugal as close as possible to the socialist countries – was disturbing to some Czechoslovak officials. The Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Miloslav Růžek, bluntly questioned the possible outcomes of the Czechoslovak approach toward Portugal: ‘if things get fucked up there, what then?’<sup>50</sup> Růžek’s note on one of the Lisbon embassy reports is evidence about the uncertainty they discerned, especially regarding détente and the Helsinki Process, concerning how Czechoslovakia and the other socialist countries should react if the communists and left-wing military took power in Portugal. The Minister for Foreign Trade, Andrej Barčák, by contrast, was quite enthusiastic about Portuguese developments and planned to open a relatively large commercial department at the embassy in Lisbon.<sup>51</sup> The interest is easily explicable – Portugal was still a country where agriculture and light industry had dominant roles. Czechoslovak enterprises had the potential to play a significant role in the economic modernisation of the country.<sup>52</sup> In this regard Czechoslovak communists actually appeared more interested in Portugal as a market for their own expertise than for its revolutionary potential. This economic interest extended to Portugal’s former colonies in Africa too. As Caetano’s Empire collapsed alongside the implosion of his regime in Portugal, Czechoslovak officials redirected financial and material support packages to Angola in particular. They soon recognised the potential of this country, whose enormous reserves of oil and diamonds, alongside its highly valued coffee, cocoa and cotton, could help to fulfil the natural resource needs of Czechoslovakia. In return the Czechoslovak government could deliver arms and other military equipment to the government in Luanda, which was trying to bring the entire Angolan territory under control.<sup>53</sup>

In Portugal, support from Moscow and Prague for communists was worrying to other political groups. Social Democrats from various Western European countries, for instance, met with the Socialist leader Mário Soares just days after the Helsinki Conference in August 1975 to discuss the problems of Eastern Bloc financial aid to

<sup>49</sup> Among other forms of support, the Czechoslovak communists agreed to provide the PCP with technical equipment for a mobile cinema. Příloha III: Zpráva o návštěvě delegace Portugalské komunistické strany v ČSSR ve dnech 16.–17. února 1976, sv. 186, a.j. 187, b. 19, f. KSČ-ÚV-02/1, Národní archiv České republiky, Prague.

<sup>50</sup> A handwritten note on the draft of general rules for the Czechoslovak politics towards Portugal. Zaměření a hlavní úkoly československé zahraniční politiky vůči Portugalské republice – pro poradú kolegia ministra, 10 Nov. 1974, Ka. 1, inv. 112, AMZV, f. TO Portugalsko 1970–1974.

<sup>51</sup> Letter of Andrej Barčák to Bohuslav Chňoupek, 13 Aug. 1974, Ka. 1, inv. 112, AMZV, f. TO Portugalsko.

<sup>52</sup> The possibility of wolfram mine joint ventures, which had been proposed to the Portuguese government in 1968, was discussed again. Letter from Rudolf Krejčí, Ministry of Foreign Trade, to Pavel Džunda, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 20 Jul. 1970, inv. č. 211, ka. 1, AMZV, f. TO Portugalsko 1970–1974.

<sup>53</sup> For the development of military and economic aid and cooperation see Zidek and Sieber, *Československo*, 19–49.

the PCP.<sup>54</sup> According to the British historian Kenneth Maxwell, the Soviet Union sent 45 million US dollars to the PCP in 1974–75.<sup>55</sup> The fear that anti-democratic Marxist-Leninists could consolidate their power in an alliance with left-wing military officers was also very present in the US State Department. Kissinger complained that the influence of communists in state institutions, media and trade unions was so large that Portugal was probably lost to the West.<sup>56</sup> US Vice President Nelson Rockefeller described events in Portugal as probably ‘the most tragic of all in terms of the future of freedom in the world’.<sup>57</sup> The CIA authorised donations for Soares’s Socialists of between 2 and 10 million US dollars per month.<sup>58</sup> These fears, however, were overstated, as in fact the Soviets were acting cautiously, careful not to derail détente and endanger the Helsinki Accords by gambling on a communist revolution in Portugal. During a trip to the Soviet Union, Minister of Labour Major Costa Martins was told by the Soviets that Portugal had by all means to remain in NATO. The Polish leader, Edward Gierek, urged Gonçalves and Cunhal to avoid actions that could polarise the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, and damage détente. The Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko repeatedly reaffirmed to his Western counterparts that the Portuguese events were entirely home grown and that the Soviets were not interfering.<sup>59</sup> The British Ambassador to Moscow, Terence Garvey, stated that the Kremlin did not desire ‘an early takeover’ of the PCP. The problem was to define what control the Soviets were able to exercise on Cunhal and the PCP. ‘Portugal must be a serious headache for Moscow, both in the Westpolitik context and in the CPU’s relations with West European communist parties’, Garvey concluded.<sup>60</sup>

Nor did the Portuguese political exiles in Prague advocate strongly that the Eastern Bloc support a communist Portugal. Its leaders, such as Torres, supported the democratisation process after 25 April, but he was worried about the deep involvement of the army in it. He refused to join the Socialist Party and died in December 1974.<sup>61</sup> Cândida Ventura and her nephew Joaquim, who stayed in Czechoslovakia until 1976, continued to work for the PCP for some time, but eventually left the party and politics. Only Georgette Ferreira kept her seat in the PCP Central Committee and became a deputy in the Constitutional Assembly.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>54</sup> David Castaño, ‘A Practical Test in the Détente: International Support for the Socialist Party in the Portuguese Revolution (1974–1975)’, *Cold War History*, 15,1 (2015), 1–26, 17.

<sup>55</sup> Kenneth Maxwell, *The Making of Portuguese Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 153.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>57</sup> Mario del Pero, ‘“Which Chile, Allende?” Henry Kissinger and the Portuguese Revolution’, *Cold War History* 11, 4 (2011), 635.

<sup>58</sup> Maxwell, *The Making*, 153.

<sup>59</sup> Del Pero, ‘Which Chile, Allende?’, 634.

<sup>60</sup> According to Del Pero, ‘Which Chile, Allende?’, 636–7.

<sup>61</sup> Bento, *Torres*, 341–2.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Joaquim Ventura, 4 Sept. 2015, author’s archive; Atividade de Deputado – Georgette Ferreira, available at <http://www.parlamento.pt/DeputadoGP/Paginas/ActividadeDeputado.aspx?BID=3378&Lg=II>. (last visited 10 Apr. 2017).

The former foreign policy aide to the later Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev, Anatoly C. Chernyaev, aptly described Soviet policy in the following manner: ‘nobody really wanted to talk about Portugal. I think that . . . because of the almost intangible lines of the interest spheres with the Americans (Czechoslovakia – ours, Portugal – yours)’.<sup>63</sup> This interpretation is confirmed by activities of the Czechoslovak embassy in Lisbon. Six months after its opening, Ambassador Miloslav Hruža, who was an experienced diplomat and the deputy minister of foreign affairs before his appointment to Lisbon, asked the employees of the embassy to write down their ideas about possible ways to use Czechoslovak exports and credits for Portugal, in order to support its path to socialism. Not all of the employees believed that such a future would be possible for Portugal. The ambassador then defended the opinion of one of the employees: ‘he’s right. Portugal won’t take the direction of socialism.’<sup>64</sup> The issue of the Soviet and Czechoslovak support can be summed up in the words of the British historian, John P. D. Dunbabin: ‘certainly the USSR provided the Portuguese (and other) communists with financial aid (and presumably advice), as the West Germans did their socialist competitors. But there is no evidence that they went much further.’<sup>65</sup>

Despite the lack of more substantial Soviet assistance, the PCP got the chance to play a central role in Portuguese politics after the unsuccessful right-wing coup of General Spínola in March 1975. It reaffirmed the position of the MFA which, with the help of President Gomes, introduced a new parallel government institution, the ‘Council of the Revolution’, and strengthened the PCP position in a new, fourth interim government, even ousting Mário Soares from the position of minister of foreign affairs. When the first free election, held on 25 April 1975, which created the Constitutional Assembly, brought the communists only 12.5 per cent of the votes against 40 per cent for the socialists,<sup>66</sup> Cunhal, in an interview with an Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci, stated with confidence: ‘this election has nothing . . . to do with the dynamics of the Revolution . . . I can promise you that there won’t be any parliament in Portugal’.<sup>67</sup> In the turbulent summer of 1975, when the tensions between pro-socialist and right-wing groups increased, the Portuguese embassy in Prague received letters from Czech and Slovak workers’ collectives supporting the

<sup>63</sup> A.S. Chernyaev, ‘Proekt. Sovetskaya politika 1972–1991 gg. – Vzglady iz nutri. 1975 god’, 34, available at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/rus/Chernyaev.html>. (last visited 10 Mar. 2016). Cited from Varela, ‘Cunhal não foi Carrillo?’, 687. Nothing indicates that, even during the last years of the Second World War, the Soviet Union brought active pressure on its allies to move against the Salazar regime. See Tom Gallagher, ‘Controlled repression in Salazar’s Portugal’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 14, 3, (1979), 392.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with a former employee of the Czechoslovak embassy in Lisbon from 24 Aug. 2015, author’s archive.

<sup>65</sup> J. P. D. Dunbabin, *The Cold War. The Great Powers and Their Allies*, 2nd edition (Harlow: Pearson Education, 1998), 385.

<sup>66</sup> Although Czechoslovak diplomats showed some disappointment about the results for the Communists, the success of Socialists in the elections in both 1975 and 1976 was welcomed as they were regarded as ‘progressive’, with socialism in their programme.

<sup>67</sup> ‘Oriana Fallaci põe “Cunhal a nu”’, *O Caso da República*, 27 Jun. 1975, 6.

'democratic development' and the fight against 'counter-revolutionary groups'.<sup>68</sup> The ambassadors of socialist countries organised regular closed meetings to further discuss a mutual approach in the political development.<sup>69</sup>

The unsuccessful coup d'état attempt on 25 November 1975, in which a group of far-left military paratroopers tried to oust the government, mobilised the Portuguese public in support of democracy and prevented further PCP infiltration of the military, media and public enterprises. On 5 December 1975 Cunhal publicly denied that the party was responsible for the leftist armed coup but admitted that, following the coup, 'some failures and losses in the recent position are inevitable'.<sup>70</sup> The Czechoslovak officials regarded the events of 25 November as an impulsive and unorganised action of far-left soldiers which resulted in the PCP being suspected of the support for the coup.<sup>71</sup> Partly because of conspiracy theories, the PCP received only 14 per cent of the vote in the parliamentary elections in 1976, a result which dashed any fantasies of making Portugal a member of the 'socialist camp'. In this regard, diplomatic correspondence between Prague and the Czechoslovak embassy in Lisbon shows that the Czechoslovak authorities were relieved that the political turbulence was settled without violence and possible complications for East–West relations.<sup>72</sup>

Although the communists had hoped to play a key role in the newly democratic Portugal, and worked strategically and with discipline to achieve their goals, the actions of far-left army officers and the impulsive politics of new pro-communist, socialist parties and movements probably cost them a significant amount of electoral support.<sup>73</sup> When the socialists formed a minority government in July 1976 it was clear that the PCP had definitely lost momentum.<sup>74</sup> In a November 1991 interview, Zita Seabra, a former PCP member, explained the attitude of the PCP toward the new democratic regime: 'the Party had an ambiguous political line. Namely, in asserting that the revolution was ongoing, and at the same time that it was not through playing the electoral game that we would achieve power. . . . But for us it was clear that there would never be an armed revolution or a coup d'état in Portugal and that the

<sup>68</sup> Odboráři 3. ZDŠ Uh. Hradiště a ZDŠ Mařadice, Resoluce k situaci v Portugalsku, 30 Sept. 1975; Cópia de telegrama de 7 June 1975, Účastníci členskej schôdze odborovej organizácie pri VSL riaditeľstve spojov Košice, AHD, f. PEA/36.

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, the Report of the Meeting of the Representatives of Socialist Countries from 15 Sept. 1975, inv. č. 111, ka. 1, AMZV, TO-T Portugalsko 1975–1979.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Álvaro Cunhal, available at <http://www.pcp.pt/entrevista-de-alvaro-cunhal-jornal> (last visited 3 Mar. 2017); Josef Kalvoda, *Role Československa v sovětské strategii* (Praha: Díllo, 1999), 256.

<sup>71</sup> Zpráva o průběhu událostí 25. a 26. listopadu 1975, inv. č. 111, ka. 1, AMZV, f. TO-T Portugalsko 1975–1979.

<sup>72</sup> See political reports of the Czechoslovak embassy from 1975 and 1976, AMZV, f. TO-T Portugalsko 1975–1979.

<sup>73</sup> See Maxwell, *The Making*, 160–3.

<sup>74</sup> It is striking that the first report of the Czechoslovak ambassador to Lisbon about the election results was very positive, as he anticipated the creation of a coalition with socialists and communists in the government. Výsledky voleb do zákonodárneho shromáždění, 4 May 1976, inv. č. 111, ka. 1, AMZV, f. TO-T Portugalsko 1975–1979.

revolution had ended.<sup>75</sup> Although this implies that, at least from 1976 on, Portuguese communists resigned themselves to a parliamentary democracy, it does contradict what she told Marina Lopes, a Portuguese language lecturer in Prague, during her visit to Czechoslovakia in May 1981. On this occasion, Seabra claimed that only an armed revolution could still turn Portugal into a socialist country.<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, Cunhal's party was weakened and gradually assumed a rather defensive position in Portuguese politics. The Western democratisation of Portugal was obvious, its allegiance to NATO was not in doubt and the PCP's orientation toward Moscow did not play well for moderate leftist voters nor for any ideas of a coalition with other Portuguese parties – in contrast to Spain or other Western European countries where communist movements supported Eurocommunism. This difference was brilliantly pointed out by the British novelist, Graham Greene, by the main characters in his novel, *Monsignor Quixote*:

- 'Cunhal is a better man than Carrillo.
- I thought Carrillo was a good man as communists go.
- You can't trust a Euro-Communist.'<sup>77</sup>

The loyalty of the PCP to the Kremlin was appreciated, but the Soviets would not go against the will of the official Portuguese representatives. When the Czechoslovak Ambassador Hrůza met his Soviet counterpart Arnold I. Kalinin in September 1976 to discuss relations with Portugal, the Soviet ambassador pointed out that the Soviet Union 'will henceforth develop them in all spheres of mutual interest, but it will make sure that . . . regarding the Soviet special interest, it will not unilaterally pursue for realisation unless the Portuguese counterpart is willing to'.<sup>78</sup> The communists in Lisbon received only limited support from their Soviet comrades while European Economic Community members and the United States, with the help of generous credits and the weight of NATO, actively backed Mário Soares and his Socialists. Recognising this, the PCP became a loyal opposition, respecting the legal, Socialist government.<sup>79</sup> The Czechoslovak government, for its part, continued to offer only lukewarm support – perceiving the demands of East–West rapprochement, and the advantages of penetrating the markets of both Portugal itself and its former colonies, as more important factors in the development of their longer-term relationship with a multi-party democratic Portugal.

<sup>75</sup> Anna Bosco, 'The Communist Successor Parties of Central and Eastern Europe', in Nikiforos P. Diamandouros and Richard Gunther, eds., *Parties, Politics, and Democracy in the New Southern Europe Social Science Research Council (U.S.)* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 424. Cf. Zita Seabra, *Foi assim* (Lisboa: Alêtheia, 2007), 394.

<sup>76</sup> Interview with Marina Lopes from 9 June 2014, author's archive.

<sup>77</sup> Graham Greene, *Monsignor Quijote* (Praha: Mladá fronta, 1995), 111.

<sup>78</sup> Záznam o rozhovoru s. Hrůzy s velvyslancem SSSR dne 29 Sep. 1976, inv. č. 117, ka.3, AMZV, f. TO-T Portugalsko 1975–1979.

<sup>79</sup> The PCP became instead successful in communal politics, following the example of the Italian communists. In this regard the city of Évora in Alentejo was even nicknamed the Portuguese Bologna. See Maxwell, *The Making*, 166.

Nevertheless, the Czechoslovak government did continue to support some schemes to underpin the export of communist methods and thought to a post-authoritarian Portugal. Czechoslovak cooperative farmers went to the Portuguese region of Alentejo to teach the local peasants how to work with the soil that they now ‘owned’ within the framework of the Portuguese Agrarian Reform.<sup>80</sup> Like other Eastern Bloc embassies in Lisbon, Czechoslovaks created a ‘Society of Friendship with Czechoslovakia’ after 1974.<sup>81</sup> A significant element in establishing new links were scholarships and fellowships for Portuguese students and young professionals, to enable mixing with students at Czech and Slovak universities in a way that would enable them to ‘especially get a deeper and direct knowledge of constructing socialism in our country (Czechoslovakia – PS)’; to attract them, in other words, to socialism.<sup>82</sup> Yet, like many such projects, it was not a success story: the quota of fifty scholarships per year offered by Czechoslovak communists to Portuguese students was never filled. The total number of Portuguese scholarship holders in Czechoslovakia between 1974 and 1989 was never more than 200.<sup>83</sup> There are many reports of them becoming very close to the Lusophone students from Africa, mostly Angola and Mozambique.<sup>84</sup> Although members of the independence movements from these countries had already come to study in the 1960s, the collapse of the Portuguese Empire created a new wave of Portuguese-speaking students arriving at Czechoslovak universities. Several former African students in Czechoslovakia returned home and took high political offices in their pro-soviet governments, and the traces of Czechoslovak educational influence can be seen even now. It is personified by President Filipe Nyusi of Mozambique, who concluded his studies at the Military Academy in Brno and speaks some Czech. However, despite this, former Portuguese students mostly returned as ordinary citizens, starting their careers as doctors, engineers or businessmen, who did not bring revolutionary ideas back to Portugal but instead accepted its political reality.<sup>85</sup>

### Portuguese Democracy and the Approach to Czechoslovakia before 1989

In the late 1970s Portugal gradually stabilised its democratic system, leaving the political volatility of previous years behind. The last remaining obstacle to a fully functioning democracy was the diarchal system of governance created by the

<sup>80</sup> A highly sophisticated analysis of the reform was recently elaborated by António Barreto, *A Reforma Agrária em Portugal 1974–1976* (Lisboa: Dom Quixote, 2017).

<sup>81</sup> Already in winter 1974 the officials of the Czech Ministry of Education had the idea to start the university exchange, offering five government scholarships for Portuguese technological, agrotechnical or economic students. Letter of the Ministry of Education secretariat’s director to Miloslav Růžek, the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, 22 Dec. 1974, f. TO Portugalsko, inv. č. 113, AMZV.

<sup>82</sup> Zpráva o komplexním rozboru činností v roce 1962, leden 1963, 30, Spisovna VŠE, Vědecká rada 1961–1963/63.

<sup>83</sup> Interview with Luis Machado from 29 Aug. 2015, author’s archive.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Marina Lopes from 9 June 2014, author’s archive.

<sup>85</sup> Interview with José Manuel Fernandes from 17 Oct. 2015, author’s archive.



constitution of 1976, which gave the military decisive powers in the form of the Council of the Revolution.<sup>86</sup> Even military officers, who had precipitated the changes of 1974, were losing their role as the watchdogs of the revolution. By 1980 there was no longer a military member as minister of defence. In 1981 the president of the republic stopped being the chief of general staff, and eventually, in November 1982, the approval of the Law of National Defence openly declared civilian control, abolishing the Council of the Revolution. This process was symbolically concluded by the election of the first non-military president of the republic in 1986.<sup>87</sup>

Portuguese support for dissidents and democratisation in Eastern Europe served to confirm this transition, which mirrored the deterioration of East–West relations in the new phase of the Cold War.<sup>88</sup> In the case of the signature of the Charter 77 petition in Czechoslovakia, the National Assembly of the Portuguese Republic sent a letter to Ambassador František Procházka in which it criticised the civil rights situation in Czechoslovakia and the way the government treated its political dissidents. When a Solidarność official and emigrant Jerzy Milewski attended a meeting of the Portuguese Unions in October 1984 he was personally greeted by Prime Minister Soares.<sup>89</sup> In this context it is interesting that some of the Portuguese in Czechoslovakia helped the dissidents on their own. It has been revealed recently that Ventura, while regularly coming to Prague, smuggled forbidden literature and opposition journals for Czech dissidents, and sent their texts to press agencies in the West.<sup>90</sup>

After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the Polish Crisis in 1980–1981, the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs sought to distance itself from the Eastern Bloc by expelling diplomats from one of the Eastern European countries. The opportunity manifested when the Czechoslovak Ambassador Ján Janík attended a demonstration against the Portuguese government organised by the PCP in Lisbon in 1982.<sup>91</sup> He was labelled as *persona non grata* by the Portuguese authorities and forced to leave the country immediately.<sup>92</sup> Expelling a Czechoslovak diplomat was considered a good choice – the number of business agreements with Czechoslovakia was still relatively small and this diplomatic incident would have little impact on

<sup>86</sup> Alfred Stepan, 'Paths Toward Redemocratization', in Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule. Comparative Perspectives* (Baltimore, London: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), 78.

<sup>87</sup> Katherine Hite and Leonardo Morlino, 'Problematising the Links between Authoritarian Legacies and "Good" Democracy', in Katherine Hite and Paola Cesarini, eds., *Authoritarian Legacies and Democracy in Latin America and Southern Europe* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 48.

<sup>88</sup> See, for example, the occasional criticism of Czechoslovakia in Portuguese media, Letter of the Czechoslovak embassy in Lisbon, 8 Apr. 1976, Sala 16, Piso 20, AHD, f. PEA/19.

<sup>89</sup> See Idesbald Goddeeris, 'Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych „Solidarności”'. Biuro Koordynacyjne NSZZ „Solidarność”, 1982–1989, część 2\*, *Pamięci Sprawiedliwość. Pismo naukowe poświęcone historii najnowszej*, 11, 1 (2007), 323.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with Rosa Glutz Ventura, 1 Sept. 2015, author's archive; Interview with Jaromír Štětina, 11 Dec. 2016.

<sup>91</sup> According to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which had been following the incident, Janík had too much wine and was ostensibly shaking hands with the strike participants. *Poznatky do akce SLAPY*, 11 Oct. 1983, arch. č. 808925 MV, ABSČR, f. Svazky agentů.

<sup>92</sup> 'Neodůvodněný krok portugalských úřadů', *Rudé právo*, 4 May 1982, 1.

Portuguese trade.<sup>93</sup> According to José Duarte de Jesus, who was working at the Portuguese embassy in Prague at the time, the incident was far more complicated. A member of the Portuguese contra espionage unit recorded a meeting between Janík and Portuguese union members in Coimbra, where they discussed their strategy in the upcoming demonstration against government policies.<sup>94</sup> At the same time, the Czechoslovak secret police suspected Duarte de Jesus of working with Portuguese intelligence – he was supposed to have sent financial aid to Solidarność in 1981.<sup>95</sup> Shortly after the announcement by the Portuguese government, the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs reacted by expelling Duarte de Jesus and Ambassador António de Baptista Martins. Only one Portuguese employee, who had no official diplomatic position, was allowed to remain at the embassy, which led to a decline in official relations between Portugal and Czechoslovakia.<sup>96</sup> The Portuguese government even considered abandoning the embassy completely. According to Jaroslav Štrihavka, a Czech embassy employee, the reasons included both budget costs and pressure from the expelled Portuguese ambassador, who felt offended.<sup>97</sup> It is true that compared to the trade with major commercial partners, making less business together did not mean great harm to either economy; nevertheless, the drop in the value of goods shipped between Czechoslovakia and Portugal is clearly visible – shrinking from 216 million Czechoslovak crowns in 1980 to 118 million crowns in 1985.<sup>98</sup>

The PCP, unlike their Spanish counterparts, remained wedded to its alliance with the Soviet camp. Unlike other Western European communists, Cunhal maintained a pro-Soviet course in the 1980s and a disciplined party organisation inherited from the clandestine period. He condemned the dissidents and fully supported the Czechoslovak government in its actions against Václav Havel, the most prominent critic of the communist regime.<sup>99</sup> However, even the relations between the brother

<sup>93</sup> *Názor na vypovězení čsl-velvyslance z Lisabonu*, 31 May 1982, r. č. 8314 MV “Poprad”, ABSČR, f. Objektové svazky.

<sup>94</sup> See *Poznatky o zřízení nové kontrarozvědné služby v Portugalsku*, 15 Dec. 1985, arch. č. 808952-3, ABSČR, f. Svazky agentů. Cf. Interview with José Duarte de Jesus from 3 Sept. 2015, author’s archive.

<sup>95</sup> *Latoszek – předání poznatků polským přátelům*, 1 Jul 1982, r. č. 8314 MV “Poprad”, ABSČR, f. Objektové svazky; *Situace na ZÚ Portugalska po vypovězení velvyslance a politického rady z ČSSR*, 4 May 1982, r. č. 8314 MV “Poprad”, ABSČR, f. Objektové svazky. According to Duarte de Jesus, he was given special tasks by his government only during his later diplomatic assignments in Africa, Interview with José Duarte de Jesus from 3 Sept. 2015, author’s archive.

<sup>96</sup> *Telegrama de Embaixada de Portugal em Praga*, 3 May 1982, courtesy of José Duarte de Jesus and AHD, consulted on 11 Sept. 2015.

<sup>97</sup> See *Informace k současné situaci na ZÚ Portugalska v Praze*, 17 Jun. 1982, r. č. 8314 MV “Poprad”, ABSČR, f. Objektové svazky.

<sup>98</sup> The financial insignificance of the numbers can be illustrated by the Czechoslovak annual turnover with Japan in 1985, which amounted to more than one billion crowns. For both countries, see *Statistická ročenka České a Slovenské Federativní Republiky 1992* (Praha: SEVT, 1992), 454.

<sup>99</sup> This allowed Cunhal to preserve good relations with the comrades in Moscow and a limited cash flow to the PCP accounts. Although the Portuguese communists’ undemocratic approach excluded them from any government options and their electorate was very narrow, they became successful at the communal level and governed several city halls.

parties, PCP and CCP, were problematic. The enthusiasm of former clandestine fighters for democracy and socialism did not evaporate after democratisation in Portugal. While most Czechoslovak communists were pragmatic party members and technocrats their Portuguese counterparts continued to be ideologically committed believers. An example of just such a misunderstanding was presented by Andrea Hanzálková, an interpreter who gave a PCP delegation a tour in the Prague Old Town district in the 1980s. Prague is known for wonderful gothic and baroque buildings, such as churches and monasteries. But after showing the Portuguese delegation several of them, the guide was labelled a fanatic Catholic. Conversely, during a visit to Portugal, the Czechoslovak delegation could not comprehend how the general secretary's driver, a devoted communist, could own his own shop with leather goods in downtown Lisbon.<sup>100</sup> At least some of the Portuguese communists' continuing idealism simply clashed with the Czechoslovak elites' worldview, which was based on the realities of the everyday late socialist governance.

Official relations between Portugal and Czechoslovakia normalised after the Portuguese elections in 1983, when the Socialist leader Mário Soares became prime minister. Despite the continuing tensions between the Eastern Bloc and the West, Soares followed the general attitude of socialist and social democratic party leaders in other West European countries and chose a constructive *realpolitik* toward Czechoslovakia.<sup>101</sup> Although he is known to have been a close friend of Václav Havel, this friendship can be misinterpreted today as an indication of open support for the dissidents. One of the diplomats from the Portuguese embassy used to check on Havel in prison on Soares's behalf in the late 1980s, but the two of them met for the very first time only in December 1989.<sup>102</sup> This means that, although Soares clearly sympathised with the opposition in Eastern Europe, he did not attempt to create any official contacts with dissident groups like Charter 77 or Solidarność. Even the meeting with the Solidarność official Milewski in 1984 was by accident rather than by design.<sup>103</sup> On the contrary, within the framework of the *realpolitik* of the 1980s, not only was a new ambassador sent to Czechoslovakia, but in June 1983 President Francisco da Costa Gomes took part in the World Assembly for Peace and Life, against Nuclear War in Prague,<sup>104</sup> together with sixty delegates from Portugal.<sup>105</sup> The new approach also paid off in commercial terms – the value of trade carried

<sup>100</sup> Interview with Andrea Hanzálková from 4 June 2014, author's archive.

<sup>101</sup> For the policy of the Western European socialists see Bent Boel, 'Western European Social Democrats and Dissidence in the Soviet Bloc During the Cold War', in Robert Brier, ed., *Entangled Protest. Transnational Approaches to the History of Dissent in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (Osnabrück: Fibre, 2013), 151–69.

<sup>102</sup> Interview with José Manuel Fernandes from 17 Oct. 2015, author's archive.

<sup>103</sup> During his visit to Moscow in 1987 Soares met with Andrei D. Sakharov, but this was already in the climate of Perestroika. See Mário Soares, *Um político assume-se* (Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores e Tema e Debates, 2011), 386–8.

<sup>104</sup> The total number of congress participants was 3,625 delegates. See 'Skončilo světové shromáždění', *Rudé právo*, 27 June 1983, 1.

<sup>105</sup> Informace Pramene k osobě portugalského konzula Casanovy, arch. č. 808952, ABSČR, f. Svazky agentů.

out between Portugal and Czechoslovakia was only 118 million crowns in 1985 but gradually rose to almost 200 million in 1989.<sup>106</sup>

The Portuguese diplomat Luis Quartin Bastos played an important role in the further development of mutual understanding between his country and Czechoslovakia in the late 1980s. He served as ambassador in Kinshasa during a difficult hostage situation in Angola in 1983–1984 involving sixty-six Czechoslovak citizens, helping to negotiate the conditions of their release.<sup>107</sup> He was eventually assigned to Czechoslovakia in early 1989, where he continued to support the Czechoslovak communist government and saw the opposition movement as a threat to the regime's stability. After the student demonstrations of 17 November 1989, the Portuguese ambassador remarked, 'what do the students want, anyway? They have all they need.'<sup>108</sup> The mood in Portugal was different. Young students and professionals from Porto, led by Álvaro Bezeza, today an influential member of the Socialist Party, and José Pedro Aguiar-Branco, Portuguese Minister of Defence between 2011 and 2015, saw on television how their Czech counterparts fought in the streets for something that reminded them of the Portuguese fight for democracy in 1974. They decided to support the student revolution movement in Czechoslovakia and were fully backed by Mário Soares, who, in the interim, had become president of the republic.<sup>109</sup> They travelled to Prague and brought 50,000 roses, symbolic of the Carnation Revolution, and distributed them to the people who were gathering in the streets.<sup>110</sup> Soares himself was the first foreign head of state to visit Czechoslovakia after the 'Velvet Revolution', although in a private capacity. During this visit in December 1989, the Portuguese president gave a Renault car as an inauguration gift to the new Czechoslovak president, Václav Havel.<sup>111</sup> Soares invited Havel and his close friends to the Portuguese embassy for a dinner, where Havel was particularly interested in the democratisation and transition process in Portugal following the Carnation Revolution and asked for Soares's opinion regarding the Czechoslovak situation.<sup>112</sup> Soares also had an informal appointment with Alexander Dubček at the Intercontinental Hotel in the Old Town. Although seemingly incongruent, it was Álvaro Bezeza's student group which approached Dubček at the Prague Castle during the preparations for the presidential election and channelled the offer for a meeting.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>106</sup> *Statistická ročenka*, 454.

<sup>107</sup> This was claimed by Bastos himself and supported by Luís Machado. Poznatky o současné operativní situaci na ZÚ Portugalska v Praze, 22. května 1989, r. č. 1005375 MV "Sokol", ABSČR, f. KR/MV; Interview with Luis Machado from 29 Aug. 2015, author's archive.

<sup>108</sup> Poznatky o současné operativní situaci na ZÚ Portugalska v Praze, 30. listopadu 1989, r. č. 1005375 MV "Sokol", ABSČR, f. KR/MV.

<sup>109</sup> 'Přicestoval prezident Portugalska', *Rudé právo*, 29 Dec. 1989, 1.

<sup>110</sup> The original idea was to bring carnations, which were unfortunately not available in the season. Soares, *Um político*, 390; Interview with Álvaro Bezeza from 16 Feb. and 22 May 2015, author's archive.

<sup>111</sup> Soares, *Um político*, 392. The car was paid by the Association of Young Architects. Interview with Álvaro Bezeza, 22 May 2015, author's archive.

<sup>112</sup> Maria João Avillez, *Soares: O Presidente* (Lisboa: Círculo dos Leitores, 1997), 176.

<sup>113</sup> Interview with Álvaro Bezeza from 16 Feb. and 22 May 2015, author's archive.

All in all, the spontaneous visit of Soares and the young Portuguese activists was a success and an inspiration for other statesmen who would come to Czechoslovakia in the following weeks. It also marked the start of an enduring personal friendship between Soares and Havel – he even assisted the Czech president with buying a summer house in Portugal – and supported the intensification of Luso-Czechoslovak/Czech relations in the 1990s, marked also by Portuguese aid for the Czech application for the membership in the European Union.<sup>114</sup> The new intensity of contacts also resulted into large business contracts – like the delivery of Skoda cars for the Portuguese police forces or the participation of Mota-Engil in the construction projects of Czech highways.

### Conclusion

The years between 1968 and 1989 saw the development of new types of relationship between Czechoslovakia and Portugal. 1968 was an ambivalent moment. On the one hand, it led to disillusionment within the Portuguese communist emigration to Czechoslovakia. Some of the emigrants, like Cândida Ventura, would even leave the PCP and help Czechoslovak dissidents. On the other, the PCP leadership backed the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia because they depended on the financial and political support of Kremlin and favoured the Soviet Union in the Sino-Soviet conflict. However, the obedience of the PCP was not rewarded. Under the conditions of détente, both the Soviet Union and the normalisation regime in Czechoslovakia began to develop political and economic relationship with the still authoritarian regime in Portugal. The advantages of economic cooperation increasingly outweighed the dreams of socialist revolution.

Cold War narratives emphasised Soviets hopes for a communist government in Portugal after the Carnation Revolution in 1974 and pointed to the fear in the West of major Soviet financial aid to the PCP as evidence of that. This article has sought to revise this narrative. During the period of transition, Eastern Bloc countries, including Czechoslovakia, observed the political tension with concern. Despite early hopes they quickly came to realise that Portugal would never adopt state socialism, and accepted the democratisation process. Financial and material support was offered to the PCP sufficient only to maintain the pretence of a socialist future; in fact such funding was deliberately limited.<sup>115</sup> As the PCP lost its relevance in the Portuguese parliamentary system the Czechoslovaks and Soviets instead concentrated on the development of 'progressive' regimes in Africa, such as the former Portuguese colony in Angola, where opportunities for Czechoslovak industry and consumer goods lay. Further support for the PCP in Portugal was then limited to minor forms of practical aid, such as assistance for newly created agricultural cooperatives or scholarships for leftist students to study in Czechoslovak universities.

<sup>114</sup> Jan Klíma, *Dějiny Portugalska* (Praha: NLN, 2007), 521–2.

<sup>115</sup> The work of José Pacheco Pereira on the fifth volume of Álvaro Cunhal's biography may shed more light onto this period of the PCP's history.

Despite the criticism regarding Charter 77 and a diplomatic incident in the early 1980s, official relations between Portugal and Czechoslovakia gradually developed, thanks to the socialist government in Lisbon.<sup>116</sup> Just like their Spanish socialist counterparts, Portuguese governments prioritised better relations with the Eastern Bloc over support for dissidents. Czechoslovak communists were interested in Portugal as a market and did not question the results of the Portuguese democratic transition. As a result, contacts between Lisbon and Prague achieved a level of maturity even before the Czechoslovak Velvet Revolution in November 1989. November '89 itself is often described within the framework of the friendship between Soares and Havel, but it was the Velvet Revolution that brought both men together. This was in large part due to a group of young Portuguese activists who came to Czechoslovakia to re-enact symbolically their own country's Carnation Revolution – by supporting the student demonstrations in Prague.

<sup>116</sup> See also the works on the Socialist International, for instance by Bent Boel.