

A LOST CAUSE? GREAT BRITAIN'S ROLE IN THE PORTUGUESE REVOLUTION, 1974-1975¹

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INTRODUCTION

In mid-July 1973, the President of the Council of Ministers, Marcelo Caetano, made an official visit to London to take part in the commemorations of the sixth centenary of the Anglo-Portuguese alliance. The trip aroused a great deal of controversy in the United Kingdom (UK) because it coincided with recent massacres committed in Mozambique by the Portuguese colonial army.² Harold Wilson, the then Labour leader in opposition, was quick to condemn the massacres, which he described as 'genocide', and to demand the suspension of Caetano's visit and the expulsion of Portugal from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The visit was also criticized by other well-known party members, including James Callaghan, who would later become British Foreign Secretary. As part of the actions against Caetano's presence in London, Callaghan had a meeting with Mário Soares, leader of the Portuguese Socialist Party (PS), which had recently been created under the auspices of German Social Democracy and with the support of British Labour. Although Labour's aid to its sister party in Portugal was modest, it translated into a significant moral and international boost for the PS. It also forged links that both parties would draw on in the immediate future.³

In this line of rapprochement between the Portuguese and British socialists, a few months later, Labour's program for the British parliamentary elections in February 1974 expressed solidarity with the national liberation move-

ABSTRACT

The British case has been one of the least explored in the growing literature on the international dimensions of regime change in Portugal. This article focuses on analyzing the Labour government's foreign policy towards Portugal between April 1974 and November 1975. What was the British contribution to maintaining the international *statu quo*, stabilizing the political crisis in Portugal and anchoring the country in the Western community? To address these questions, the article investigates Britain's role in channelling the Portuguese revolution in a liberal and Western direction, aligned with British geopolitical and economic interests.

Keywords: Portugal, democratization, decolonization, Great Britain.

RESUMO

**UMA CAUSA PERDIDA?
O PAPEL DA GRÃ-BRETANHA
NA REVOLUÇÃO EM
PORTUGAL, 1974-1975**

O caso britânico tem sido um dos menos explorados na crescente literatura sobre as dimensões internacionais da mudança de regime em Portugal. Este artigo debruça-se sobre



a análise da política externa do Governo trabalhista em relação a Portugal no período compreendido entre abril de 1974 e novembro de 1975. Qual foi a contribuição britânica para a manutenção do *statu quo* internacional, a estabilização da crise política em Portugal e a ancoragem deste país à comunidade ocidental? Para abordar estas questões, o artigo investiga o papel da Grã-Bretanha na canalização da revolução portuguesa numa direção liberal e ocidental, alinhada com os interesses geopolíticos e económicos britânicos.

Palavras-chave: Portugal, democratização, descolonização, Grã-Bretanha.

ments in Portuguese territories in Africa and committed itself to promoting democracy in Southern Europe.⁴ During the election campaign, Labour candidate Wilson decried the Conservative government's complacency towards the dictatorships in Chile, Spain, Greece and Portugal. In short, in the months before the Carnation Revolution, British Labour expressed its support for the democratization of Portugal and the decolonization of its possessions in Africa on several occasions. This meant that, despite Britain's past complacency with the Portuguese dictatorship and its stubborn imperialist resistance, the new Labour government, which ensued from the early 1974 elections, was in an advantageous position to influence the processes of political and colonial transformation

that followed the military coup in Portugal in April of that year.

However, the British case has been one of the least explored in the growing literature on the international dimensions of regime change in Portugal.⁵ This article analyzes the foreign policy of Harold Wilson's Labour government towards Portugal between April 1974 and November 1975. What was the British contribution to maintaining the international *statu quo* challenged by Portugal's tumultuous socio-political evolution? To answer this question, the following pages investigate Britain's role in channeling the Portuguese revolution in a liberal and Western direction, aligned with Britain's geopolitical and economic interests.

GREAT BRITAIN AND THE 25 APRIL COUP: DECOLONIZATION AND DEMOCRATIZATION

The event of 25 April in Portugal spawned new expectations for British foreign policy in Southern Africa and Southern Europe. The end of the dictatorship brought unusual winds of decolonization and democratization to Lisbon, offering Harold Wilson's new government the chance to align its policy towards Portugal with the international commitments of Labour Party's election manifesto.⁶ As a result, British diplomacy focused on two objectives. Firstly, to facilitate the establishment of a liberal democracy in Portugal in a moderate and peaceful way. Secondly, to support a swift and orderly dissolution of the Portuguese overseas empire, which would also award London the possibility of dealing with the thorny situation in Rhodesia, a former British possession where a white minority rebel government had, in 1965, unilaterally declared independence with the support of Salazar colonial administration.⁷

The PS became a key ally of the British government in achieving these goals. While the president of the National Salvation Junta (Junta de Salvação Nacional), General António de Spínola, was in favor of a gradual transition to a kind of federalist and plebiscitary

solution in the form of a Lusophone Commonwealth, the PS advocated a rapid and direct transfer of power, in line with British ideas. In addition, the PS combined radical rhetoric with a realistic and moderate political practice, which meant that its anti-capitalist ideology and defense of neutrality did not hinder its commitment to parliamentary democracy, market economy and Atlanticism. Since the end of the authoritarian regime, Labour leaders saw the PS as a strategic asset to contain the growing influence of the communists, led by Álvaro Cunhal, and to guarantee the establishment of a Western-style democracy in Portugal.⁸

Shortly after the military uprising, socialist leader Mário Soares was invited by Ron Hayward, secretary-general of the Labour Party (LP), to London for a meeting with Prime Minister Wilson and Foreign Secretary Callaghan. This meeting outlined the main tenets of British policy towards Portugal during the revolution: assisting the PS through non-governmental channels and fostering diplomatic bilateral cooperation on issues of common interest with the new authorities in Lisbon. On the one hand, Minister Callaghan suggested sending financial, technical, training and organizational aid to the Portuguese Socialists, through the LP and the Trade Union Congress (TUC). On the other hand, he proposed that the British government cooperate with the Portuguese at various official levels. Specifically, he told Soares of London's willingness to share with Portuguese leaders the 'British experience in decolonization'.⁹ Anglo-Portuguese diplomatic collaboration in this area gained momentum after the appointment, in mid-May 1974, of Mário Soares as Foreign Minister of the First Provisional Government led by Adelino da Palma Carlos. In late May and early June, Callaghan had two meetings with the new minister, Soares, in which they discussed 'Portuguese plans for decolonization in Africa' and the possible «impact of developments in Mozambique on the political situation in Rhodesia and South Africa».¹⁰ Through these contacts and other diplomatic activities, the British government tried to facilitate an immediate decolonization of Portuguese possessions, to promote a political and racial reorganization that would strengthen its position in Southern Africa and the Commonwealth.

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TRIED TO FACILITATE AN IMMEDIATE DECOLONIZATION OF PORTUGUESE POSSESSIONS, TO PROMOTE A POLITICAL AND RACIAL REORGANIZATION THAT WOULD STRENGTHEN ITS POSITION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA AND THE COMMONWEALTH.

It comes as no surprise, then, that London was pleased when, at the end of July 1974, Spínola abandoned his plans for limited decolonization, paving the way for the immediate end of the Portuguese empire.

THE CULTURAL AND TRADE UNION OFFENSIVE

In the summer of 1974, when decolonization in Africa seemed to be on the right track, the domestic political situation in Portugal was becoming increasingly volatile. The military coup had unleashed a revolutionary process that worried foreign observers,

such as British ambassador Nigel C. Trench, who in early June 1974 expressed his concern about the weakening of the state and the power vacuum which, in his opinion, were fueling an uncontrollable 'general feeling of liberation' and an increase in social disorder in the country.¹¹ Trench warned that galloping inflation, the flight of foreign capital and the erosion of the figure of Spínola might benefit the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), the only political actor he saw as 'sufficiently well organized to exploit the resulting chaos'.¹²

The following month, the British embassy in Lisbon warned of a constant stream of visits to Portugal by Soviet journalists and intellectuals linked to Western communist parties. This was the case with a mission from the World Peace Council, which visited Portugal at the end of June, and a delegation from the Soviet Copyright Council, which traveled to Lisbon to establish links with Portuguese authors and publishers and promote cultural exchanges between the two countries. These contacts, together with the visit of the Bolshoi Ballet and the Red Army Choir, reflected, according to British diplomacy, the Soviet desire for 'affirmation in the cultural field in Portugal'.¹³ Shortly afterwards, another official report indicated that, since the end of the dictatorial regime, an 'extensive program of cultural activity had been promoted by Portugal's new friends' in the Eastern Bloc, which was 'gaining great visibility and attracting the curiosity and attention of the Portuguese public'.¹⁴ Mário Soares's wife expressed her discontent to British officials at Western inaction on this issue, which allowed 'the Russians and their friends to have the whole cultural field to themselves'.¹⁵

In response, the British embassy proposed tackling the communist ideological offensive in the media and cultural field by means of a twofold strategy. Firstly, it suggested 'counterbalancing communist and left-wing dominance in the media in Portugal'¹⁶ through training courses for journalists and using materials from the Information Research Department, a government agency linked to the British intelligence services, whose job was to produce and disseminate anti-communist propaganda secretly. In addition, there were plans to carry out a public relations campaign, through visits, contacts and publications, to explain to key figures in the government and the Armed Forces Movement (MFA) the British point of view on 'East-West relations and the nature of the Soviet threat in Western Europe'.¹⁷ However, all this had to be carried out with the utmost caution, since the military sectors linked to the PCP were 'pathologically frightened of the CIA and any other form of manipulation by the forces of capitalism and reaction'.¹⁸

Secondly, the embassy proposed increasing its cultural and educational presence in Portugal through the British Council (BC). However, the revolutionary dynamic that began in the spring of 1974 considerably hampered the scope of action of this organization. Until then, the BC had carried out 'successful' and 'intense' work in Portugal. In addition to its prominent participation in the preparations for the sixth centenary of the Anglo-Portuguese alliance, it had worked closely with the Caetano government,

providing advice and technical assistance for the reform of the Portuguese education system.¹⁹ However, the purges that followed the coup left the BC without some of its best Anglophile contacts among the Portuguese educational elite. The revolution also led to the stalling and postponement of educational reform, depriving the BC of one of its main platforms of influence in Portugal. Although the English teaching program was not affected by the political climate, the instability that hit Portugal in the second half of 1974 damaged an important part of the cultural and educational work of the BC, whose activity would not be resumed until the end of 1975.²⁰

During this period, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) also expressed its concern regarding the growing weight of communists in trade union circles in Portugal. After the fall of the dictatorship, the PCP was the only party in the country with a strong presence among the working class. The Labour government feared that Portugal would follow the example of Eastern Europe after the Second World War, when Communist control of the unions preceded the seizure of political power. The debate on trade union reform in Portugal was followed closely by London. However, any official intervention in this matter risked being understood and judged as interference related to the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) activities. Faced with the government's difficulty in acting in the Portuguese trade union sphere, at the end of June 1974 Wilson and Callaghan asked Jack Jones, the chairman of TUC's international committee, for the union's collaboration in containing communism in the world of labor. From then on, the TUC disseminated materials, ran union training courses and provided advice on collective bargaining to promote a legal framework for industrial relations based on collaboration between the forces of labor and capital. At the same time, another British trade union organization, the International Federation of Transport Workers, carried out various activities to counteract the growing activism of union leaders from Eastern countries in Portugal, including conferences designed to 'opening the eyes of local trade unionists to some of the pitfalls of communist manipulation'.²¹

THE BRITISH RESPONSE TO THE RADICALIZATION OF POLITICAL CHANGE

In July 1974, the British embassy in Lisbon sent information about the notorious deterioration of Portugal's socio-political panorama after Prime Minister Adelino da Palma Carlos resigned. Political tension and social unrest increased in the following months until they reached, in the words of N. Trench, 'conditions very close to anarchy',²² which resulted in the resignation of President Spínola on 30 September. In the opinion of the British ambassador, Spínola's failure to re-establish social discipline and political authority meant the 'full victory of the extreme left' and a serious threat to the transition to democracy in Portugal.²³

Faced with these worrying developments, the FCO's Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs met at the end of October to address the situation in Portugal. At this

meeting, it was decided that the British contribution to Portugal's political stabilization should have a twofold dimension: 'positively, to foster the development of healthy democratic institutions [...] firmly aligned with the West' and 'negatively, to prevent Portugal from falling into the Soviet sphere of influence'.²⁴ British diplomacy understood that in order to achieve the 'secure establishment of a pluralist democracy in Portugal' it was necessary to strengthen the 'parties that correspond in general lines to those of

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our Parliament', through programs and visits that would facilitate 'their access to the organizational experience of the [British] parties and strengthen their international status'.²⁵ Thus, although Labour's aid continued to focus on the PS, the severe weakness of other moderate forces from the center and right led the British govern-

ment to extend its support to these organizations, especially the Social Democratic Centre (CDS), a conservative force whose existence had been questioned after the fall of Spínola.

In the fall of 1974, London accepted the CDS's request for some of its leaders to visit Britain in order to consolidate its 'links abroad, presumably mainly with the Conservative Party'.²⁶ It was hoped that a closer relationship with the British Conservatives might strengthen the CDS's democratic credentials and political legitimacy, thus increasing the party's ability to contribute to stabilizing the domestic situation and play a moderating role in the center-right ideological spectrum. Before the end of the year, CDS president Diogo Freitas do Amaral and other party leaders visited Great Britain under the tutelage of the British Conservative Party. Freitas do Amaral later returned to Britain as a guest of the Federation of Conservative Students to speak at the Conservative conference in Blackpool, in which he expressed his gratitude for the 'help and assistance the British Conservatives had given his party'.²⁷ There were also visits by British Conservative leaders to Portugal to identify 'groups and forces in Portugal that the Conservative Party could guide and help in the democratization process of the post-Caetano era'.²⁸ The FCO also attempted to establish contacts and relations with moderate and liberal forces, albeit with little success.²⁹

The radicalization of the revolutionary process in Portugal put NATO members on alert, in a context of growing destabilization on the Alliance's southern flank ensuing from increased tension in Cyprus, the fall of the 'regime of the colonels' in Greece, the popularity of the communist parties in France and Italy, the increase in Soviet naval presence in the Mediterranean and the weakening of the Franco dictatorship in Spain.³⁰ Unlike other members of the organization, the British government reacted calmly to the growing dominance of the communist left over the process of political change in Portugal. The meeting of the Permanent Under-Secretary, mentioned above, concluded

that ‘the outlook was confused and murky’, but that ‘it would be wrong and counter-productive to regard Portugal a lost cause’.³¹ It was argued that, given the collapse of Portuguese economy, a break in ties between Portugal and the ‘Free World’ would be taken advantage of by the Soviet Union, who would run to offer financial aid and increase its presence in Lisbon. British diplomacy considered that the economic chaos in which Portugal found itself made economic aid an effective means of persuasion to redirect the course of the revolution. According to David Thomas, director of the South West European Department, it was necessary

‘to give the Portuguese government the benefit of the doubt by responding as positively as possible to their requests for cooperation and assistance and by showing confidence in them, with the aim of thereby increasing Britain’s ability to influence their actions’.³²

As such, the British government offered technical and economic aid to Portugal. This commitment, however, highlighted the economic weakness of British external intervention and generated friction between various ministries.³³

Despite these constraints and disagreements, Minister Callaghan managed to present a plan for technical assistance during his visit to Portugal in early 1975. During his trip to Lisbon, Callaghan met with members of the Portuguese government, to whom he offered the said aid as a ‘practical demonstration of our friendship, support and confidence’ in Portugal and its ‘progress towards a stable and pluralistic democracy’.³⁴ During the spring and summer of 1975, several visits and meetings were held between committees and experts from both countries to agree on the main lines of the technical cooperation program. As a result of these meetings, it was decided that the priority issues would be public health, business training, road construction, pollution, fishing, urban planning and renewable natural resources. Although the British were at pains to emphasize the plan’s contribution to Portugal’s economic and social development, Britain’s fragile economic situation led to a notable cutback in the plan, which was reduced to ‘modest proportions’.³⁵ This highlighted Britain’s difficulties in reaching the level of bilateral aid provided by other allies such as West Germany and the United States. In order to camouflage this weakness and cultivate a positive image in Portugal, since mid-1975 the British government has become one of the main advocates of multilateral aid to Portugal through the European Economic Community.³⁶

BRITAIN, THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION AND THE CONSTITUENT ELECTIONS

On 15 March 1975, the British embassy in Lisbon reported an attempted coup d’état by right-wing sectors close to Spínola, the failure of which caused the ‘regime to turn violently to the left’.³⁷ The unsuccessful coup triggered a radical counter coup, causing the democratic revolution to enter its socialist phase. British diplomacy considered that

these ‘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’.³⁸ In the opinion of Ambassador Trench, ‘the new executive (the IV Provisional Government) headed by Vasco Gonçalves was clearly closer to Eastern Europe and the Soviet bloc than its predecessors’.³⁹

British officials noted with concern how the growing strength of communism and the far-left threatened British commercial interests and the stability of NATO itself. How-

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ever, the FCO’s review of policy towards Portugal a few days after the coup did not diverge from the pragmatic line followed until then. As well as supporting the PS and non-communist forces, it advised ‘continuing to make friends among Portuguese leaders and trying to influence them as long

as there is any prospect of democracy’.⁴⁰ The FCO argued that tough stances, similar to those of its US and German allies, could have counterproductive effects, antagonizing Portuguese leaders and giving the Soviets the opportunity to ‘fill the vacuum at our expense’.⁴¹ It was, therefore, a question of striking a difficult balance, trying to maintain a fluid dialogue with the Portuguese authorities without demoralizing the moderate groups. This ambiguous strategy also included ‘cultivating a positive relationship’ with the more pragmatic sectors of an MFA that was emerging ‘clearly as the decisive force in Portugal’.⁴²

Unlike the US State Department, the FCO did not interpret events in Portugal exclusively through the prism of the Cold War. Instead, its analysis ascribed more importance to the country’s internal factors than to the Soviet Union’s external intervention. At the end of March 1975, Minister Callaghan pointed out that, although Portugal seemed to be heading towards a ‘totalitarian regime controlled by communists’, there was still a fluid relationship of forces on the Portuguese political scene.⁴³ Although the communist and radical sectors of the MFA were steering the course of the revolution, the centrist and progressive groups could tip the scales in their favor in the elections for the Constituent Assembly, scheduled for 25 April 1975. From the British point of view, the elections had great potential to forge a new distribution of political power, stripping the communists and their allies in the MFA of important positions in the state apparatus and the media. The British believed the elections would help replace revolutionary legitimacy with electoral legitimacy, benefitting what they considered the political actor with the most support among the Portuguese electorate, Soares’ PS. It was estimated that victory at the polls would give Soares the political capacity to reorient the revolution in a liberal and Western direction.

The British strategy towards the elections was twofold. Firstly, the government endeavored to guarantee fair elections in a non-tense environment. In this regard, Ambassador

Trench conveyed to Portuguese leaders the British interest in holding rallies in a 'stable and balanced' environment as an 'important step towards the consolidation of democracy'.⁴⁴ Secondly, the British LP provided the PS – mainly through the Socialist International – with material, economic and technical electoral aid.⁴⁵ During the campaign, the Conservative Party also directed aid and resources to the CDS. A few months earlier, representatives of both parties had been invited to visit the UK during the legislative elections in October 1974 to learn 'the mechanics of running (and winning) elections that might strengthen the chances of democracy prevailing in Portugal'.⁴⁶ The electoral success of the moderate forces led by the PS and the modest results of the Communists were greeted with enthusiasm by British diplomacy. Ambassador Trench stated that 'the magnitude of the socialist victory in the elections' represented the 'first major setback for the communists' since the end of the dictatorship.⁴⁷ However, the Communists remained determined to preserve their dominant position in civilian and military institutions, leading the country into an acute political and social crisis. At the end of June 1975, a British military intelligence report pointed out that the distribution of political power in Portugal continued to be inversely proportional to the electoral results.⁴⁸ This situation triggered an intense struggle between the radical left and the moderate parties to control the revolution.

LABOUR GOVERNMENT POLICY IN THE HOT SUMMER OF 1975

During the summer of 1975 Portugal was plunged into an intense social conflict that threatened to end in civil war. Despite the seriousness of the situation, the British government chose to preserve its pragmatic attitude based on keep in touch with the moderate elements in Portuguese life and give them what legitimate support and encouragement we may⁴⁹ and, at the same time, cultivating constructive relations with the Fifth Provisional Government and the members of the MFA who 'still have fairly open minds'.⁵⁰ In other words, the intention was to continue helping non-communist forces 'without seeming to be taking sides against the military' and to collaborate with official sectors 'without seeming [...] to be withdrawing support from democrats'.⁵¹ However, during those months, relations with Portugal went through a thorny period due to the occupation of several British-owned farms in Alentejo and the seizure of British-owned industries. Faced with these events, the Labour government adopted a moderate and cautious stance to protect the interests of the British community without alienating government sectors in Lisbon. This prudence earned it criticism from employers' organizations and the conservative opposition in parliament. In addition, the possibilist nature of Wilson's policy also earned the disapproval of the left wing of his own party, unhappy with his unreserved support for the PS, which was seen as a counter-revolutionary organization aligned with the United States and NATO.⁵² Although with reservations, the British joined the diplomatic campaign led by the Western allies during the spring and summer of 1975, which aimed to prevent the

triumph of communism in Portugal. In bilateral meetings held during the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which took place in Helsinki in August 1975, Prime Minister Wilson and Minister Callaghan discussed Portugal's internal situation with the Soviet and Portuguese delegations. In these talks, British diplomacy focused on three points: putting moderate pressure on the Portuguese government to abandon its intention to establish a left-wing dictatorship in the country; offering them economic aid through the EEC on the condition that a pluralist democracy was established in Portugal; and, finally, avoiding Soviet interference in Portuguese internal affairs in favor of the communists.⁵³

At the end of the conference in Helsinki, Wilson and the leaders of the European Socialist and Social Democratic parties went to Stockholm with the aim of coordinating efforts to promote Western-style democracy in Portugal. At this meeting, concern was voiced about the growing influence of communist parties in Southern Europe, and the consequent threat to international stability and the social-democratic dominance of the Euro-Western left. In the context of the Cold War, the electoral appeal of the Eurocommunist options and the effects of the 1973 economic crisis made concerted action by European socialists urgent.⁵⁴ The latter created the Committee of Friendship and Solidarity with Democracy in Portugal, whose objectives focused on helping the PS and the moderate sectors of the MFA as an antidote to the communist and far-left forces. The working sessions began the following month at a meeting held in London with the approval of the British Labour government.

The political and social radicalization felt in Portugal during the summer of 1975 rendered difficult the strategy of calculated ambiguity adopted by British diplomacy. The

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strong polarization made the Wilson government's possibilist position increasingly hard to maintain, having to perform a difficult balancing act until the beginning of September. At that point, the resignation of General Vasco Gonçalves and the dissolution of the Fifth Provisional Govern-

ment meant a substantial change in the script of Portuguese politics. The new Prime Minister, Admiral Pinheiro de Azevedo, put moderate centrist and socialist forces at the head of the revolution. At the beginning of October, Minister Callaghan was pleased that the appointment of the Sixth Provisional Government marked the 'first significant change of direction from the previous trend of domination by the Communists and others on the extreme left'.⁵⁵ The British Foreign Secretary welcomed the new government, which offered 'firm hope that Portugal will achieve a period of greater stability'.⁵⁶ However, the moderate government only managed to consolidate its power and authority after the military coup by the extreme left on 25 November 1975, whose failure, according to the FCO, 'appears to have been a decisive victory to the forces of modera-

tion, law and order, and resistance to Communism'.⁵⁷ This opened the way for establishing a democratic and pluralist system in Portugal.

CONCLUSIONS

The overthrow of the Portuguese dictatorship opened up new expectations of political and colonial change that converged with Britain's external interests in Southern Europe and Southern Africa. This convergence allowed Harold Wilson's government to carry out a coherent policy towards Portugal, in which the defense of internationalist and democratic socialism was aligned with the safeguarding of national strategic interests.⁵⁸ This meant that, unlike other cases in the Cold War,⁵⁹ the Labour government was able to combine its geopolitical priorities and the fight against communism with the promotion of democracy and socialism in freedom. Thus, after the fall of the authoritarian regime, British diplomacy sought to promote a peaceful transition to a parliamentary democracy and a rapid and controlled dissolution of the Portuguese empire in Africa. The main British ally in achieving these goals was the PS, even if Wilson's government also extended its support to other moderate forces and cultivated constructive relations with the Portuguese rulers, including the less radical sectors of the MFA.

During the period under study, Portugal went from being the protagonist of the last socialist revolution in the West to being the agent of a successful political transition to a liberal democratic system. The British government contributed to this process by providing a stable way out of Portugal's acute political crisis and encouraging the country's anchoring in the Western community. British diplomacy played an important role in political and social containment in Portugal, which helped prevent the triumph of communism and allowed for a moderate and pluralistic outcome to the revolution. However, British diplomatic intervention in Portugal was significantly hampered by domestic economic problems, which reduced its capacity for influence in the context of the new stage of democratic consolidation and European integration. 

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