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The Portuguese Agrarian Reform: Why no Violent Repression?

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Resumo:

Esta dissertação examina a questão da não violência na implementação da reforma agrária em Portugal (1974-6). Através da análise de dados de arquivo e de entrevistas a dissertação explica que, apesar da crise de estado e das ações violentas que decorriam, durante a transição democrática, nos centros urbanos do país, que as ocupações de terra, tanto legais como ilegais, não levam a ação violenta no meio rural. Usando o método de triangulação demonstra-se que a articulação de um conjunto de fatores contribuí para o desenrolar de um processo pacífico. É a ausência de forças conservadores assim como a ausência de uma organização de classe juntamente com o radicalismo das forças de esquerda e a sua articulação simbiótica com as forças governamentais que faz com que, ao contrário do esperado, nenhum dos atores recorra a ações violentas.

Palavras – chave:

Reforma Agrária; PREC; Violência Política; Transição Democrática; Portugal;

Abstract:

This dissertation examines the question of non-violence in the process of implementation of the Portuguese agrarian reform (1974-6). Through data and interview analysis the dissertation explains that, despite the state crises and violent actions that were perpetrated, during the democratic transition, in the urban centers of the country, the land occupations, both legal and illegal, do not lead to violent action in the countryside. Using triangulation as a preferred method it is demonstrated that the articulation of a set of factors contributes to a peaceful process. It was the absence of conservative forces as well as the lack of a class organization along with the radicalism of left-wing forces and their symbiotic articulation with governmental forces that makes so that none of the actors resort to violent actions, despite what was to be expected.

Key words:

Agrarian Reform; PREC; Political Violence; Democratic Transition; Portugal;

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List of Acronyms

ALA – Associação Livre de Agricultores – Free Association of Farmers

CAP – Confederação dos Agricultores de Portugal – Confederation of Portuguese Farmers

CDS/PP – Centro Democrático Social/Partido Popular – Democratic Social Center /Popular Party

CGTP – Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses – General Confederation of Portuguese Workers

CRRA – Conselho Regional da Reforma Agrária – Regional Council of Agrarian Reform

FSP – Frente Socialista Popular – Popular Socialist Front

GER – Gabinete de Estudos Rurais – Rural Studies Office

MAP – Ministério da Agricultura e das Pescas – Ministry of Agriculture and Fishing

MDP/CDE – Movimento Democrático Português/Comissão Democrática Eleitoral – Portuguese Democratic Movement/ Democratic Electoral Commission

MFA – Movimento das Forças Armadas – Armed Forces Movement

MRPP - Movimento Reorganizativo do Partido do Proletariado – Reorganizational Movement of the Proletariat Party

PPD – Partido Popular Democrático – Democratic Popular Party

PREC – Período Revolucionário em Curso – En Course Revolutionary Period

PS – Partido Socialista – Socialist Party

STA – Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Agrícolas – Union of Agriculture Workers

UCP – Unidade Coletiva de Produção – Collective Production Unit

ZIRA – Zona de Intervenção da Reforma Agrária – Intervention Zone of the Agrarian Reform

Introduction

With the *coup* of April 25, 1974, and the fall of the New State (Estado Novo) - the Portuguese authoritarian regime that lasted for almost half a decade - came a period of great social and political upheaval that quickly turned into a state crisis (Palacios Cerezales, 2003a; Pinto, 2008). During that period, the relationship between the new political parties and the middle-rank military, who had been responsible for the coup, was convoluted and led to a period of radicalization, particularly during the second year. Throughout 1975, illegal and violent forms of contention erupted mainly in the urban areas. Social tension and episodes of collective violence were particularly visible and dozens of violent actions occurred. In the countryside, however, despite hundreds of illegal land occupations that were part of an attempt to implement an agrarian reform in Portugal, no such thing took place. Why was this the case?

According to the existing literature, agrarian reforms and/or peasant upheavals are frequently accompanied by violence stemming from class conflict and state repression (Barraclough, 1999; Bush, 2011; Malefakis, 1970; White, 1986). Considering that, plus the fact that in the urban areas of Portugal during the same period in which the agrarian reform was being implemented numerous cases of political violence and repression were registered, the absence of violence during the process of land occupation and expropriation is puzzling and has not been explained thus far.

The aim of this dissertation is to explain why violence did not erupt in the Portuguese countryside in the revolutionary period between 1974 and 1976 in which the agrarian reform took place when all the factors for violence to erupt were apparently present. We translated this into the following research question: Why did the radical repertoires applied by the social movement did not lead to violence and repression in Portugal in 1974-76? This question can be divided into three sub questions: 1) Why did the rural proletariat not resort to violence when occupying illegally the farms? 2) Why did the landowners not react violently to these unlawful occupations? And 3) Why was there no state repression of this movement?

This research will contribute to our knowledge about collective action during the transition period as well as the political opportunity structures of the social movements and the roles that several political and military actors played that contributed to the political landscape that we have in Portugal to this day. The

problematic of political violence in the Portuguese agrarian reform will contribute consequently, to further our knowledge on social movements and political violence as a case study and put another piece in the puzzle of the Portuguese democratic transition, with new tools on collective violence and political conflict that had not been applied to the agrarian reform yet.

The thesis will be divided into three parts. Chapter I is where the theoretical and historical framework are discussed through the contextualization of several cases of Agrarian reform as well as the discussion of the root causes of political violence in social movement literature and the historical context of the Portuguese agrarian reform and revolutionary period. Chapter II is where the methodological framework and the sources are briefly addressed. Chapter III is where we discuss the several advances and setbacks of the Portuguese agrarian reform as well as the legal context in which it occurred, its geographical space, the social characteristics of the population, the social movement, its allies and opposition and finally the violent episodes that took place during this period. Finally, in the conclusions we offer our remarks regarding the Portuguese case and elaborate on the contribution we are able to give to the broader literature on the Portuguese transition and the issue of rural violence.

1. Theoretical framework

In this chapter we present the theoretical background in which our research was based, which comprises three areas of academic work – sociological and historical studies of agrarian reforms, sociological studies of social movements and political violence and democratization studies, particularly focused on the Portuguese case. As such, this dissertation combines insights from sociology and political science as a better way to answer our research question.

The recourse to so many different areas of sociology and political science was necessary due to the lack of literature regarding agrarian reforms that would focus in a systematic way on violence and collective action.

We start by discussing some of the Agrarian Reform literature, by analyzing different types of agrarian reforms and their root causes throughout the world in order to best contextualize our case.

Secondly, we give some theoretical framework to political violence, how it relates to social movements, where it stems from and multiple definitions of it.

Thirdly, we discuss the historical background of the Portuguese Agrarian Reform and the broader national context of revolution and state crisis in which it occurs.

Agrarian Reform

Land Reform or Agrarian Reform are terms applied to define a substantial change of hands of rural property in a state which will, most likely, have repercussions in the class structure – most of the times its goal is to contribute to social equality, although there is a hand full of cases of “market” oriented agrarian reforms. Usually an agrarian reform implies the disrespect for property rights when the reform is enacted in a revolutionary or transition period, but it can also mean government interference as a means to regulate rentals, facilitate access to loans or support cooperative movements (Barros, 1979a).

Agrarian Reform can be defined, in general terms, as a set of policy measures with the goal of improving the living conditions of peasants and rural proletariat, as well as the eradication of inequality and class structure in the rural population. These policies usually involve the expropriation of large landowners and of all the infrastructures and fundamental sectors to the functioning of agriculture in the country

with some form of compensation for the landowner class (Barracough, 1999; Jacobs, 2010;).

Some of the motivations that can lead to agrarian reform can be: social mobilization and land occupation, that triggers government action, as it happened in Chile, in the 1960's (Barracough, 1999). It may be implemented and instrumentalized as a way of regime maintenance, as the PRI government did in Mexico (Albertus, Diaz-Cayeros, Magaloni & Weingast, 2016). It can be triggered by a democratic transition in which the class structures prevalent in the previous regime are to be eliminated, of which the Portuguese case is a very illustrative case; or it can be enacted by the interests of a foreign power in its sphere of influence, as were the cases of Japan, Taiwan and South Korea in the post second world war (Jacobs, 2010).

There are also several models that agrarian reforms can adopt: two of the models are Soviet-inspired, the first, *Sovkhoz* is a model of state control in which private property is nationalized and managed by a centralized bureaucracy (Murteira; 2004). This model was used, not only in the Soviet Union, but also in Cuba and North Korea (Barracough, 1999) – a common result of compulsory nationalization of land is, often enough, peasant upheaval, state repression and political violence (Jacobs, 2010). The second soviet inspired model is *Kolkhoz*, in which property is collectivized and divided between co-ops and other similar collective production units, which have direct property rights, or are entitled to have exploration rights through a land regime of “useful possession” (Murteira, 2004). This model was applied in Porto Rico and Peru, for example (Barracough, 1999).

The third, and most common, model is a redistribution model in which the state divides large properties in small parcels of land and splits them between the rural poor and/or the indigenous populations. This model was applied in Mexico, Bolivia and Venezuela, for example (Barracough, 1999).

In the Portuguese case, the Agrarian Reform was characterized by a spontaneous occupation of private lands by a social movement comprised of the agricultural proletariat, enabled through a state crisis (Vester, 1986), with the goal to eliminate unemployment and followed by a political struggle to control and direct a social movement by political parties and other actors (Varela & Piçarra, 2016). This reform took the shape of the *Kolkhoz* model, with hundreds of *Unidades Coletivas de Produção* (Collective Production Units, UCP) being formed in late 1975. Differently to many other cases of peasant revolt such as in the cases of Spain (Malefakis, 1970),

Peru (Barraclough, 1999), Egypt (Bush, 2011) and the Philippines (Borras, 2001), this social movement is not repressed by landlords and their caciques or the state, and political violence and repression did not emerge. Why?

The literature concerning these phenomenon leads to expect violence, because in so many cases of agrarian reforms there are in fact violent episodes, sponsored by the state and the landlords. In Huzier (1972) and Kay (2001) it is concluded that although peasants rarely resort to violent forms of contentions, preferring to use the occupation of lands as a preferred tactic, it is usual for the government or the landlords to have a violent, disproportionate response. To help clarify and systematize this question we resorted to the literature on social movements that follows.

Political Violence and Social Movements

A social movement is, accordingly to Tilly & Tarrow (2007:442) “A *sustained challenge to power holders in the name of a population living under the jurisdiction of those power holders by means of public displays of that population’s worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment*”. The underlying idea in this definition is that, for a social movement to exist, there must exist some form of political conflict in society, paired with ideological differences between one group of citizens and the government, the police and/or other power holding structures (a company can be the power holding structure, for example, in the context of a labour dispute). For a social movement to emerge though, it is not only necessary to have a conflict but also a collective identity (Della Porta, 2006) which can be linked to a more or less radical ideology and thus make a movement more or less prone to violence.

Political violence does not only stem from ideological factors though, but also from relational ones – “*the outcomes of the interactions between social movements and their opponents*” (Idem : 8) – a movement may not start out, in a protest cycle, as violent but radicalize as a means to resist unjust, disproportionate and/or random acts of police suppression which may discourage moderate members of a movement or may even radicalize them (Della Porta, 2014). There are also systemic explanations for the origins of political violence as are “*the weakness of democracy, civil liberties, human rights, rule of law*” (Idem : 164). Della Porta (2006) identified other factors where violence can originate as is seen in Table 1.1.

VARIABLES	STRUCTURAL EXPLANATIONS	CONJUNCTURAL EXPLANATIONS
ECONOMIC	Economic Inequalities	Intermediate steps in economic growth
SOCIAL	Social Cleavages	Rapid Modernization
POLITICAL	Authoritarian Regimes	Crisis of the repressive apparatuses
CULTURAL	Tradition of violent conflict	Rapid changes in the value system

Table 1.1. - Some of the Explanations of the origins of Political Violence (Della Porta, 2006)

The choice to resort to violence, or not, is also related to the concept of political opportunities; if there are no normal channels of communication between the social movement and political institutions that “*allows existing grievances to be heard*” (Della Porta, 2008 : 223), political violence may appear as the only resource available (Della Porta, 2014).

So, what defines political violence? Is it the involvement of agents of the state (Tilly, 1975)? Is it the number of people perpetrating the attack? Does it have to be coordinated or can it be spontaneous? Do we consider damages only of people or also of property? Is it a spectrum, a scale or a yes or no situation?

Certainly, a terrorist attack, a political assassination and police repression at the orders of political leaders constitute acts of political violence but does burning dumpsters or occupying an empty building without resistance?

Della Porta (2006, Pp. 2-4) enters in a dialogue with several definitions of violence, political violence and state repression - these are quoted in Table 1.2. If we put together the several elements of these definitions what we can say is that political violence involves the use of force for political aims against a political community, a regime or a political adversary, which inflicts damages on people or property and can happen intentionally or unintentionally.

SOURCE	DEFINITION
WEBSTER'S NEW WORLD DICTIONARY OF THE AMERICAN LANGUAGE, 2ND COLLEGE EDITION, 1979 APUD DELLA PORTA 2006, PP 2-4	"Use of great physical force to inflict damage"
GRAHAM AND GURR, 1969 APUD DELLA PORTA 2006, PP 2-4	<i>"Behavior designed to inflict physical injury on people or damage on property"</i>
TILLY 1978, APUD DELLA PORTA 2006, PP 2-4	<i>"Any observable interaction in the course of which persons or objects are seized or physically damage in spite of resistance"</i>
GURR, 1970 APUD DELLA PORTA, 2006 PP 2-4	<i>"Collective attacks within a political community against a political regime"</i>
WILKINSON, 1986 APUD DELLA PORTA 2006, PP 2-4	<i>"Deliberate infliction or threat of infliction of physical injury or damage for political ends"</i>
WILKINSON 1986 APUD DELLA PORTA 2006, PP 2-4	<i>"Violence which occurs unintentionally in the course of severe political conflict"</i>
DELLA PORTA AND TARROW, 1986 APUD DELLA PORTA 2006, PP 2-4	<i>"Those repertoires of collective action that involve great physical force and cause damage to an adversary in order to impose political aims"</i>

Table 1.2. Definitions of Political Violence in Della Porta, 2006 Pp. 2-4

Political violence is not only defined by what is lawful and unlawful, but also by the prevailing culture of protest and typical repertoires used by social movements in a country and historically bound (what may have once been perceived as illegitimate may now be normalized and vice-versa). This is what happened in the Portuguese case: although some repertoires of action were not viewed as legitimate before and have not been seen as legitimate ever since the Portuguese revolutionary period, the state crisis makes hierarchical, property relations and state ideology dissolve as well as previous authority figures disappear (the republican guard, for example, is made to retreat) and all of this gives way to a left wing revolutionary way of thinking – especially in

Alentejo, where the left forces are almost omnipresent – therefore, forms of contention as occupations and seizures of property as well as illegal strikes stand as a legitimate.

Thus, the definition for political violence that Della Porta (2006 : 4) comes up with -a “*Particular repertoire of collective action that involved physical force, considered at the time as illegitimate in the dominant culture*”- seems to be the most malleable one for us to draw the line between violence and nonviolence, seeing as, in the historical period we are diving in, legal and illegal does not exactly draw the line between legitimate and illegitimate.

Taking in account Della Porta’s definition of political violence and the remaining studies regarding this subject we start drawing a theory and defining our expectations of the Portuguese case.

The Portuguese Transition Period

The Portuguese revolutionary period, began with the 25th of April *coup d’etat*, and was marked by a two-year period of social and political conflict and uncertainty. Political parties were not yet organized and most of their leaders were in exile. The captains of the Armed Force Movement (MFA) together with the National Salvation Junta (JSN) take temporary control of the state apparatus while the repressive police forces and state bureaucracies associated with the *Estado Novo* are targeted in a large scale purge process (saneamentos) (Costa Pinto, 2008; Rezola, 2014;).

The climate of change develops quickly into a state crisis where the authority, ideology, and traditional relationships of hierarchy dissolve, opening the political system to the formation of new elites (Palacios Cerezales, 2003a). The social arena was also affected by this context, where new political opportunities and claims emerge. Without state repression, widely associated with the *Estado Novo*, the repertoires of the worker and resident movements extended to radical forms of actions that dematerialize relationships of authority and private property. For the MFA, now in charge of maintaining public order, the cost of repression appears too high to make these realities reemerge (Idem).

Strikes and rural, urban, and workplace occupations sprouted all around the industrialized cities and the *Alentejo* – in order to manage these claims and to have a democratic and representative legitimacy, *comissões de moradores* and *comissões de trabalhadores* (grassroots urban and workers organizations, respectively) are created

– initially these benefit from great political autonomy, but as the months of the revolution go by, the radical left-wing parties (MDP/CDE, MRPP and FSP, for example) and the PCP struggle to control them. While initially their claims were of an economic nature – eight-hour workday, paid vacation, minimum wage, etc. – they quickly spread to the political arena – collective management of the workplace and nationalization of key sectors of the economy - this was, for these movements a logical and natural progression (Hammond, 1988).

This struggle between the left-wing radicals and the communist party was one between the two ideological models of socialism predominant in the country: the “popular power” model versus centralized communism (Idem). As a reaction to the excessive centralization of socialist societies, the “popular power” model argues that the way to socialism is paved by the actions and decisions of workers. According to this view, workers must, by themselves, abolish private property and take control of big business - this way the over bureaucratization so characteristic of typical Marxist-Leninist state-parties would be avoided and there would be a self-managed democratic state in its place.

With the radicalization of the political forces after an attempted *coup* on the 11th of March 1975 and, after that, the exit of the moderate political parties (PS and PPD) from the VI Provisional Government, there comes a period of conservative reaction known as the *Verão Quente* (Hot Summer) of 1975. After an attempted occupation of a *Grémio da Lavoura* (the landowner guilds, one of the corporatist institutions from the old regime) in the town of Rio Maior by a peasant league (a small farmers associations from another village controlled by the PCP), the local population revolts and breaks into the headquarters of the Communist party and the FSP burning propaganda and the socialist and communist symbols found there. The next morning, a road blockade was set up to prevent the newspapers from the capital to be distributed (Almada, 1981; Burguete, 1978; Palacios Cerezales, 2003b) as they were perceived as communist propaganda.

This event was the fuse that ignites the movement of conservative forces all throughout the north of the Tagus river - the metaphorical and physical barrier between the religious North and the Communist South, a reality that still divides Portugal socially and politically to this day. The repertoire of the conservative forces involved road blockades, sieges and break-ins to banks and local political institutions. Between

July and November 1975, Portugal is the stage to more than 80 break-ins to the headquarters of left-wing parties and labor unions (Palacios Cerezales, 2003b). These actions served as manifestation for the contempt that existed for the course of the revolution – the absence of moderate forces from the government is seen as an affront to the 25th of April election results for the legislative assembly where the PS and PPD gathered the most votes and consequently, as an act of disrespect for the electoral democratic pathway chosen by the majority of citizens (Palacios Cerezales, 2003b; Pinto, 2008).

The picture of violence, resistance and reaction is not universal to the whole country, though - in the latifundial south, there is a continuous stride for the worker control of land and agricultural enterprises, with the farmworker's unions leading the occupation of land. Of the 15 incidents of violence in this area (see Table 3.3. for more details), reported by the national newspapers, only two happened during the occupation of land by the unions. The majority of conflicts occurred during or after political rallies, protests or demonstrations and as a product of clashes between the landowners and the unions. (Piçarra, 2017).

Expectations

Although the structural and conjunctural factors, mentioned earlier in this chapter for the development of violence there were no systemic episodes of violence in the area with only 15 episodes of violence occurring between July 1975 and October 1976. There are economic inequalities caused by the high level of unemployed or only seasonally employed rural proletariat, social cleavages between the absentee landowners and their tenants and between the capitalist owners and their workers and the crisis of the repressive state apparatus, but no violence to speak of. Why is this?

Comparing our landscape with other agrarian reforms, such as the Spanish one during its second republic (Malefakis, 1970), for example, where violence and repression are common, and with the urban areas of Portugal, where in a 3 month period there are more the 80 violent episodes, that leads us to our research question “Why did the radical repertoires applied by the land occupation movement did not lead to violence and repression in Portugal in 1974-76?”. To answer this question it is important that we explain the roles that our main actors played – on one side the state and its forces comprised by the MFA and technicians from MAP, on the other the social movement comprised of union members, service providers, tenant farmers and

temporary workers, the left wing forces such as PCP and MDP/CDE, and the conservative forces that were the landowners, the ALA (association of farmers which will later turn into CAP) the church and the right wing parties - explain how the unions and the ALA influenced these roles and what was the role that the MFA and other government officials had in the land occupations and in mediating the social conflict.

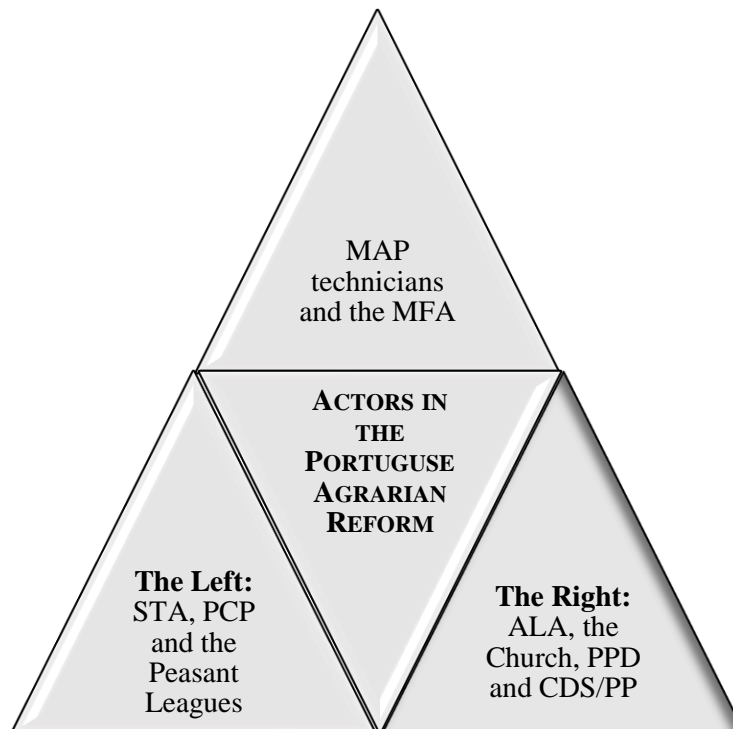


Table 1.3 – The Actors of the Portuguese Agrarian Reform

We base our expectations in two propositions – that there was not a sense of collective identity that would have been necessary to organize and collectively manage landowner reaction (Della Porta, 2006) and thus:

1. The lack of a class organization is why the landowners did not resist the land occupations;
2. The absence of conservative organizations like right wing parties or the catholic church prevented radicalization;

The conservative forces and the landowners in Alentejo were delegitimized by the fall of an oppressive 48-year regime that not only worked in their favor, but which many supported and so in the 1974 to 1976 period they found themselves pitted against the government, the armed forces, the social movements and the left-wing parties.

The second set of hypotheses is based on the idea that there were no incentives or gains to be extracted from violent action because:

3. There was a symbiotic relationship between the governmental forces and the left-wing social movements and thus, the unions do not need to experiment with violent forms of contention;
4. On the owners' side, there were no political or material gains to be extracted from violent action due to the strength and radicalism of their opposition;

2. Methodology

To answer our research question “Why did the radical repertoires applied by the social movement did not lead to violence and repression in Portugal in 1974-76?” we opted for a qualitative and inductive design. This means that, throughout the process, there has been a feedback loop between the research strategy, the theory that supports it and the data found (Bryman, 2012). This design is justified by the fact that we are not replicating a pre-existing research design to test a pre-existing theory in a new case or group of cases, but piecing together several historical accounts and sociological and political research, from the four and a half decades that have passed since the phenomenon in analysis took place, with more modern theory about social movements and political violence.

Given the above, we did not specify formal hypothesis but have, after extensive review of the literature in the field, set up expectations. As explained in the previous chapter, these expectations have helped us frame our analysis around two distinctive dimensions: collective identity and incentives and gains.

The empirical data used in the dissertation included the analysis of Portuguese national media outlets, semi-directive interviews, statistical data, and legislation. In this process, triangulation has been an important tool through which we have proven the accuracy of our expectations (Natow, 2019). Through the analysis of statistical data, interviews, policy documents and newspapers we have found corroboration for our original expectations as well as further information about the phenomenon.

The data were collected from several sources. In order to characterize the level of violence in the rural areas, we departed from the historical account of political violence made by Piçarra (2016), from where we also took newspaper data from the 1975-1976 period. This was a useful starting point that confirmed our intuition – that no major episodes of violence had taken place – and was later confirmed through additional primary sources.

In order to overcome the difficulties arising from the need to conduct interviews with relevant actors involved in a process that took place more than 40 years ago, we used the interviews conducted by Barreto & Barreto in 1979 (Table 2.1.). We believe these interviews were coated with a much greater degree of accuracy, than we could have ever achieved in 2019, i.e., 45 years after the events.

INTERVIEWEE	MUNICIPALITY/DISTRICT	AGE	STATUS
SR. MENDES DIAS	Ponte de Sor/ Portalegre	46	Tenant Farmer
SR. BROTAS	Campo Maior/ Portalegre	53	Tenant Farmer
SR. LOURENÇO	Mora/Évora	53	Tenant Farmer
SR. PROJETO	Évora/Évora	46	Tenant Farmer
SR. SILVÉRIO CARRILHO	Campo Maior/ Portalegre	37	Tenant Farmer
SR. ROUPA	Redondo/Évora	31	Agricultural Proletariat
SR. JOAQUIM COELHO DOS SANTOS	Mora/Évora	70	Agricultural Proletariat
SR. FUNENGA	Campo Maior/Portalegre	60	Agricultural Proletariat
SR. MANUEL VICENTE	Montemor-o-Novo/Évora	50	Agricultural Proletariat
SR. FIGO	Évora/Évora	42	Agricultural Proletariat
SR. BEXIGA	Vila Viçosa/Évora	45	Landowner
ENG. FRANCISCO BORBA	N.D./Setúbal	39	Landowner
SR. AGNEDO MINAS	Campo Maior/Portalegre	28	Landowner
ENG. GUERREIRO DOS SANTOS	N.D./Beja	40	Landowner
JOÃO MARIA PARREIRA PALMA CANO	Serpa/Beja	48	Landowner

Table 2.1 – Interviews conducted by Barreto & Barreto (1981)

In addition, two semi-directed interviews with former UCP members in the district of Santarém, where Barreto & Barreto did not do interviews, and despite the advanced age of the interviewees and their somewhat foggy memory on specific dates and events, we think they have contributed to corroborate our theoretical analysis of the phenomenon.

The statistical data concerning the timeline of the occupations and the structure of employment has been found in Macedo's "*Geografia da Reforma Agrária*" (1985) which gathers several statistical data from the 1970 census and data lifted during her

time working in the Gabinete de Estudos Rurais (GER) of the Catholic University and some unpublished GER data that is open for public consultation in the Library João Paulo II of the Catholic University.

In the process of research, hypothesis formulation and writing of this thesis there have also been several informal conversations and email exchanges with Nancy Bermeo, a professor at the University of Oxford, Diego Palácios Cerezales, of the Complutense University of Madrid, Maria Antónia Pires de Almeida, a historian in ISCTE and Manuel Villaverde Cabral a researcher at Instituto de Ciências Sociais, in order to brainstorm ideas and help corroborate our analysis and hypothesis.

3. Analysis

In the chapter we start by providing some contextual information about the Portuguese agrarian reform, the type of agrarian reform and its timeline, the laws surrounding it and the occupations, a characterization of its geographical area and population and the cases of violence, we have encountered. In a second part we find our analysis based in the expectations set up in the first chapter.

Timeline of the agrarian reform

The Portuguese Agrarian Reform model was inspired by the *Kolkhoz* soviet model in which property is collectivized and distributed between cooperatives and collectives (Murteira, 2004). The Portuguese process has been characterized by Afonso de Barros (1979a : 56) as a regional phenomenon of collectivist nature. The implementation process occurred between April 25th, 1974 and July 30th, 1976 (Barreto, 1983) followed by a longer dismantling process, which started around the end of 1976, when the Republican Guard (GNR) returned to the field and only ended in 1983 when most of the occupations are reversed (Dantas, 2018).

The first phase of the Agrarian Reform was set between the military coup and March 11th, 1975 and it was characterized by the lack of a legal background. The farmworkers' union started by, under the pretext of economic sabotage, distributing workers throughout the farms to do the essential agricultural tasks and only after that did they move on to more radical forms of action.

Although the first occupations had already happened by the end of 1974 – the first occupation, according to Soeiro (2015) happened in the Beja district on the 10th of December, 1974 - , it was not until the spring of 1975 that land occupations were transformed into a mass movement (de Vale Estrela, 1978; Oliveira Baptista, 1978). These first occupations were initiated by the tractor owners (who were service providers), connected to the peasant leagues. These were followed by the temporary agricultural workers that had been unemployed, at this point, for a series of months (Varela & Piçarra, 2016). On the political side, it was in this period that most of the replacements of offices in local power occur, as well as the negotiation between the government and different civil society actors to improve working conditions through collective work contracts (CTT) (Barreto, 2017), negotiations that happened in articulation with the ALA.

In the second phase, from March 11th to December 1975, legal protection was established for the social movements with the rural leases law (decree 201/75), the Agrarian Reform law (decree 206-A/75) and the approval of emergency agricultural loans (decree 206-B/75). The farmworkers unions organized and most permanent workers – with bigger connections to the landowner class – were integrated in the post-occupation agricultural structures. During the Summer of 1975 there was a crescendo of Union control, not only in the occupation process but also in the management of properties (Rosa, 1977). Most occupations occurred during this period: by the end of 1975, more than 1 million hectares of land had been seized (Rosa, 1977). It was during this phase that the government most intervened in private agricultural businesses and nominated commissions to end the former corporative bodies instituted at the local level in order to disrupt the organizing efforts of the reactionary forces (Barreto, 2017).

DATES	OCCUPIED AREA (HA)	%
UNTIL 31/7/75	155 997	13,2
1/8/75 TO 30/9/75	322 897	27,3
1/10/75 TO 31/12/1975	686 415	58,0
1976	17 634	1,5
TOTAL	1 182 925	100

Table 3.1. Chronology of Occupations in the ZIRA; Source: Macedo, 1985;

In the third and final period, due to a change, on November 25th, of the national political scenery, the legal advances experimented in the previous stage suffer setbacks: the agrarian reform area (ZIRA) was reduced, the agriculture credit rates was adjusted, the landowner's rights were expanded and some of the previous expropriations are reversed (Rosa, 1977). It was during this period that most of the legal action of expropriation occur a way for the provisional government to try to secure the gains of the agrarian reform before the, much more moderate, first democratically elected government took office.

Rule of Law and Land Occupations

All throughout the revolutionary period, the legislative production was set on altering the status quo, which in case of the agrarian reform is expressed on land performing an essential social role (Pinto, 1983). This means there was a disregard for property

rights and that the altering of the latifundio structures was a vehicle for change in the social structure in the rural south. This made this process more of an agrarian revolution than a reform-oriented process (Barreto, 2017; Pinto, 1983). The absence of a constitutional law created a legal vacuum and the new decrees are full of omissions, which encouraged different readings at the local level (Pinto, 1983) and which, due to the state crisis, are indeed applied differently at the local levels seeing as there is no guidance or supervision of the application of the new laws.

The first occupations were made under the protection of the 660/74 decree, which allowed for state intervention in agriculture enterprises, and the 207—B/75 decree which defined economic sabotage – this way, the lands which were considered to not be functioning at full capacity were seized. There was also a prevalence, at this stage, of collective work contracts, negotiated first at the municipality level, then at the district level and finally at the ZIRA level; these contracts were mediated by the state (Pinto, 1983) and define equal working conditions, payment and rights for the workers of the area it covered.

With the application, in the summer of 1975, of the 406-A/75 decree, which established the norms for the expropriation of lands, the processes of occupation are regulated. This decree established who was subject to expropriation, which landowners get the right to a reserve of land, the rights and obligations of landowners, the terms and deadlines of expropriations, the part that the CRRA's were to play and make invalid any contract that diminished the value of property or that relinquished its use. The strange attribute, not only of this law, but of many of the laws implemented during the revolutionary period is its retroactive character (Pinto, 1983) – when this law is passed more than 152 thousand hectares of land (Bermeo, 1986) had already been seized by cooperatives, unions and the peasant leagues – the decree is then used to legitimize and legalize the previously illegal actions.

In table 3.2. it is illustrated this inconsistency between the occupations and the government action. While the first occupation registered by GER occurred in March

1975, the first official expropriation only happened in October, and while the expropriations carried on until 1977, the occupations stopped after December 1975.

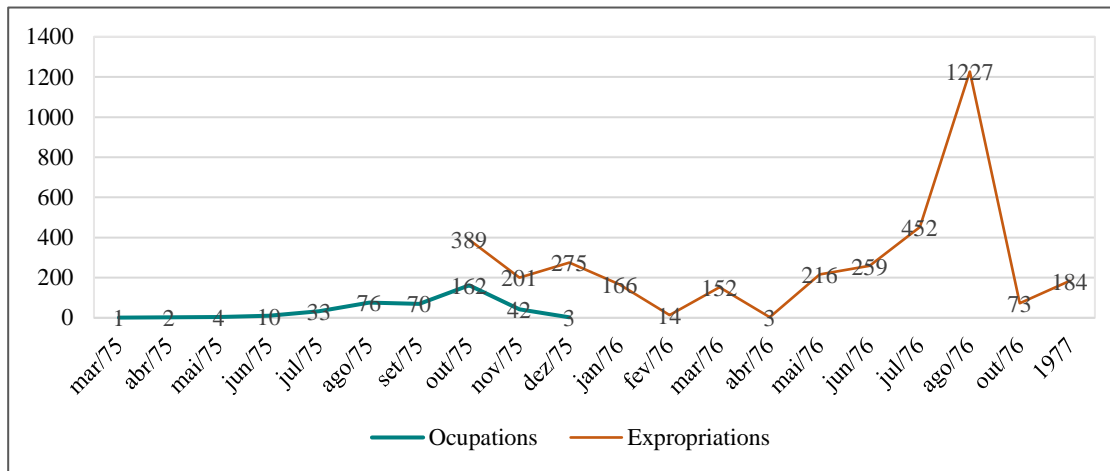


Table 3.2 – Number of occupations versus Number of expropriations in the 1975 – 1977 period. Source: GER; Macedo, 1985;

The Agrarian Reform Zone - ZIRA

The ZIRA was made up by the Beja, Évora and Portalegre districts as well as 2 municipalities in the Castelo Branco district¹, another 2 in the Lisbon district², 10 municipalities in the Santarém district³ and some parishes in the Faro district⁴ (Macedo, 1985) comprising a total area of 3 640 153 hectares of which 59,5% was agricultural land (Macedo, 1985 : 21). The average size for and agricultural exploration in the ZIRA was 25,5 ha, more than quadruple the average for the country which was, at the time, 6,10 ha. These numbers also present great discrepancies within the ZIRA region with the average size of the agricultural exploration being 50,1 ha in the Beja district – the heart of the latifundial south – and only 6,3 ha in the capital district of Lisbon.

The main characteristics of this area are its low density of population (36 habitantes/km² in average) with the Beja district having the lowest population density

¹ Idanha-a-Nova and Vila Velha de Ródão

² Azambuja and Vila Franca de Xira

³ Abrantes, Almeirim, Alpiarça, Benavente, Chamusca, Constância, Coruche, Entroncamento, Golegã, Salvaterra de Magos and Vila Nova da Barquinha

⁴ Alcoutim, Pereiro, Giões and Martim Longo in the Alcoutim municipality; Alte, Ameixial and Salir in the Loulé Municipality; São Bartolomeu de Messines and São Marco da Serra in the Silves municipality; Alferce, Monchique and Marmeleite in the Monchique municipality as well as Odeceixe in the Aljezur municipality.

of 19 habitants per km², the predominance of agricultural work, specifically capitalist and latifundial in nature and the high level of temporary work and unemployment (Barros, 1983; Pinto, 1983).

In the 1970 census the active population in the ZIRA was 39,5% not having a great variation within the area, although there had been recently an increase of the employed population in the Lisbon and Setubal districts. This increase was due to industrial development and a subsequent internal migration from the Alentejo provinces (Beja, Évora and Portalegre) to work in construction and in the industrial sector in the more industrialized districts. This, along with the impact of the colonial wars, mitigated some of the effects of unemployment in the youth of the Alentejo provinces.

The majority of the population worked in the primary sector (39,9%), although the service industry had grown exponentially since the 1900 census. The percentage of people working for an employer is 83,7% while only 1,6% of the population had their own business or were their own boss (Macedo, 1985) – each business owner had in average, by 1970, 52 people working in his enterprise. In the agricultural enterprises that have more than 20ha, the predominance of workers are temporary (75,9%) being called to work only in times of seeding or harvest; in the enterprises with less than 20ha, most of the workers were in the family of the owners (68,4%) – consequently, with 45,1% of the area of agricultural exploration in Portugal, the ZIRA employs only 8,9% of agricultural workers in the country.

In the ZIRA, the number of people that knew how to read was around 61,8% in 1960, with great discrepancies between the different districts and municipalities – in the more peripheral and isolated areas like the Odemira municipality that value would be less the 50% of the population and in more urban areas like Almada municipality it would be around 80%.

Violence

In Tables 3.3. and 3.4. we find the descriptions of the incidents of violence found in the GER data and by Piçarra through newspaper consultations. Piçarra found 15 cases of violence in the two-year period that he studies and only two of which are directly related to the occupation process. In the GER data, which details the use of weapons by occupants we find only 12 registered cases and only one where a gun was reported to be used directly on a person – to expel the landowner from the property – most of

the uses are reported to be “to keep a watch” on the property, probably by a nightshift guard, which is not an uncommon use of weaponry in the Alentejo.

In Barreto’s interviews, there are reports of intimidation, through the presence of military forces but only one occasion where shots have reportedly been fired. It is interesting though, that most interviewees report that the small, medium and tenant farmers were the ones that resisted the most to the occupation processes, and that the big landowners did not feel that they “had the strength” and that they did not resist because they were “outnumbered”. There is also a suggestion that the occupations seem to generalize only after the radicalization of the revolution on the 11th of March and that before that, the occupants were much more careful with which properties to occupy. This means that, like everything in the Portuguese revolutionary period, the Agrarian Reform was not built out of careful political calculation but instead evolved and changed – at first being an experiment on underutilized lands, then radicalizing and becoming widespread and after that, with the more legalist period, trying to cement and institutionalize itself through UCPs.

USE OF WEAPONS BY THE OCCUPANTS

CASES	NUMBER
To prevent the exit of goods from the property	3
To keep watch on the property	7
To enter the property during the occupation	1
To expel the landowner	1
Total	12

Table 3.3– Uses of weapons by occupants (Gabinete de Estudos Rurais, 1980)

The interviews conducted by the researcher pointed in the same direction of the remaining literature: that there were military and MAP technicians present during the occupations, that the civil population did not take guns into the occupation but that they participated in the hundreds in the occupation process and that the owners were mostly absent during the occupations.

DATE	CASES OF VIOLENCE	DESCRIPTIONS
JULY, 1975	4	<p>15/07/1975 - Confrontations between armed workers</p> <p>14/07/1975 - Occupation of a CRRA by landowners</p> <p>28/07/1975 - Attempted assault of a local political office and a bank</p> <p>13/07/1975 - The events in Rio Maior that trigger the “Verão Quente” mentioned in Chapter 1</p>
AUGUST, 1975	1	N.D. - Armed repelling of an attempted occupation
SEPTEMBER, 1975	3	<p>09/09/1975 - Confrontation between two sides of a protest</p> <p>14/09/1975 - Conflicts between landowners and workers concerning an occupation</p> <p>12/09/1975 - Landowners force government agents to quit and occupy government property</p>
OCTOBER, 1975	1	26/10/1975 – Occupation of a Grémio by small farmers connected to the left., two hundred landowners react to this. Violence is avoided by the presence of military
JANUARY, 1976	1	03/01/1976 – Impediment to the conduction of a CAP rally
FEBRUARY, 1976	1	02/02/1976 – Military search farms looking for guerrilla training camps
MARCH, 1976	1	09/03/1975 – Aggression of members of the Union and MAP technicians by CAP members
APRIL, 1976	2	<p>04/04/1976 – Confrontations between CAP members and agricultural workers with intervention of the armed forces</p> <p>26/04/1976 – Union president is assaulted by CAP men</p>
OCTOBER, 1976	1	10/10/1976 – A MAP technician is assaulted by CAP men
TOTAL	15	

Table 3.4 – Number of violent incidents lifted form Diário de Lisboa by Piçarra (2017)

The presence of an authority figure, such as the military, that had the power to use violence but were not at all interested repressing the population, is one of the key factors as to why there was no violence during this period. The retreating of the landowners to the cities is also another – the absence of the owner explains why there was no resistance in most cases, and the exact opposite explains why some lands were never occupied in the first place and why some attempted occupations failed.

The fact that there were MAP technicians present and that there were such deep cooperation between the local offices of the Agricultural Ministry and the unions also explains why there was no resistance – the presence of officials and the paperwork they signed authorizing the occupations gave a lawful veneer to what would otherwise have been perceived as an illegitimate action.

Absence of Conservative Organizations

The occupations were initially spontaneous, without any type of political control or coordination, seeing as political parties were not yet sufficiently organized (Barros, 1979a; Bermeo, 1986; Clark & O'Neill, 1980; Ferreira, 1977; Varela & Piçarra, 2016; Vester, 1986;). After this initial phase and with the creation, in June 1974, of farmworkers unions in several districts and their incorporation into the Communist controlled union organization CGTP, scholars disagree as to the capability of the PCP to control and manage the actions of the unions and of the occupied farms. While some argue that the unions were merely instruments of the leftwing revolutionary forces acting against the moderate provisional governments (Barreto, 1984; Hammond, 1988;) there is also those who argue that the social movements were independent forces and that no political party was able to control their actions or predict the wave of land seizures – this narrative states that the unions were local organizations, responding to local needs (Bermeo, 1986; Varela& Piçarra, 2016; Soeiro, 2014).

It is worth noticing, that the Communist party is the main political force in the ZIRA – this area has around 40% of its electorate during the 1975-1976 period (Macedo, 1985) and it is deeply implemented with 126 local offices in the region (Barreto, 2017) - , which made it capable of recruiting and organizing extremely well and to influence and cooperate with the MFA and governmental forces in the area (Varela & Piçarra, 2016; Soeiro, 2014). There is also a long history of political struggles and martyrdom in the Alentejo districts as well as in the Alpiarça and

Coruche municipalities in the Santarém district and a history of clandestine activities and political militance during the Estado Novo years (Pires de Almeida, 2006&2010; Hammond, 1988).

The force of the Communist party is therefore exacerbated at the national and at the local level by its permeation of the civil and military institutions, the municipalities through the MDP/CDE, most Unions at the ZIRA and national level (Barreto, 2017) and its presence on the streets is amplified by the deep militancy of its social base – even today, the electorate of the communist party is the most willing to strike and to protest in large numbers - this way, a party which represented only 12,5% of the vote in the April 1975 elections got to direct a most of the narrative during the 1974-1976 period.

When it comes to political programs and the Agrarian Reform, the only parties who had mentioned it before 1974 were the PS, which is favorable to some sort of agrarian reform but does not explicitly what measures it wants to apply, and the PCP, in its manifesto published 10 years earlier (Barreto, 2017), making them the only parties that can react more or less readily to the mobilization.

The only other Movement/Party⁵ that has a part in this initial picture of Portuguese democracy is the MDP/CDE which forms committees that manage the local offices until there can be elections (Idem). The members of this Party/Movement which is seen at this time as above-parties – seen as a pro-democracy movement which comprises moderates of the PPD and PS and radicals of the PCP - in the Alentejo area are mostly MFA and Communist party members; the contrary “*is rare*” and when it happens, those people run into “*all kinds of difficulties*” (Barreto, 2017 : 177).

Yet another factor that might contribute to the force of the PCP in the ZIRA is the lack of the cross-cutting cleavage of religion that serves as a bridge between social classes (Bermeo, 1986). In the 1970’s the whole Alentejo area was still considered by the Catholic Church as a “*missionary area*” (Bermeo, 1986 : 26) with an average of one parish per 3,132 persons – in the Beja district the number is actually the highest in all of Europe (Idem) with 1 parish per 3,969 persons. According to McAdam Clark & O’Neil this is because, in the Alentejo province, from as far as people can remember, the Church had been identified with the rich and right-wing policies (1980 : 67). The

⁵ MDP/CDE starts out as a multi-party movement that promotes de democratization of Portugal. During the revolutionary period they lose their multi-party bias and adopt a more radical left ideology. After that they join the PCP in an electoral coalition which lasts for a short period of time.

role of the church is also deeply documented in Almeida's *Memórias Alentejanas do Século XX* (2010) where she interviews several people in the municipality of Avis in the Évora district. In this work we see that, even though the Alentejo proletariat, especially the women were believers in God, the church did not have an institutional role to play in their lives – they rarely went to mass on Sundays and adhered to the social expectations of getting married and baptizing their children, This is strikingly different from what happens in the north of the country where the church had a much bigger influence and thus could have acted as a way to scare people into reacting against the agrarian reform and the other revolutionary measures being undertaken – with a more even distribution of property the peasantry of the north could have been scared into looking at the occupations in the latifundio area and got to thinking that they would come for their property as well. This explains why the small and medium sized farmers are so keen to ally themselves with the latifundio bosses in the CAP when it was created in 1976.

Left Wing Radicalism

The members of the occupation movements can be characterized more as an agricultural proletariat than as the typical peasantry described in Marxist literature (Cabral, 1978). Their claims - as stated in a manifesto of January 1974 - are not aimed at the redistribution of land in family-sized parcels but are working-class traditional claims such as better salaries, improvement of working conditions, paid vacations, the right not to be fired after 5 years of work in the same employer, retirement by disability, payed leave in case of disease and most of all the end of unemployment in the ZIRA region. This is also reflected in the property regime that is applied within the Agrarian Reform zone- the collective production units do not claim property for themselves: they had the right to cultivate the land – a property regime called *posse útil*, based on the economic right to explore – but not *de facto* property possession – which was the state's (Fernandes, 2002).

It is hard to define a model for the occupations – the presence of union members is evident and more likely than not of unemployed workers who see the occupation as means to get employment. Sometimes workers from the Setubal and Lisbon area, that worked in construction also saw an opportunity for better and more secure employment and participated in the movement; women were a large force of the *brigadas de ocupação* as well. The military and MAP technicians participated, a lot of the time

unarmed, and served the purpose of notifying the people present in the land where the occupation was taking place and persuading them to leave (Barreto, 2017). There are even cases where the landowners, seeing the progress of the revolution, delivered their land to the workers who already work for them, in order not to give their possessions over to strangers. In some rare cases there is only an attempted occupation and the owners or tenants are successful in dissuading the occupants (Idem) – this happens mostly for small and medium farmers and for tenants.

The unions were the main organizers of the occupations, identifying the lands to occupy and filling complaints of economic sabotage with the government agencies who provided an assessment of the way to move forward and redirected the action to the union. This government agency, the CRRA, comprised of technicians from the agricultural ministry, is a clear ally of the movement, as is recalled by José Soeiro (2014) a former Union leader. Another big ally was the Armed Forces Movement division present in the Alentejo, headed by brigadier Pezarat Correia, a well-known name in the stories of the occupations.

The CRRA were semi-corporative institutions created in July 1975 which promoted a decision-making process involving the MFA, the agricultural ministry technicians and the unions. The landowners were left out, which promotes a power-imbalance between the interested parts in the Agrarian Reform process (Barreto, 2017). These Councils had powers of inquiry and oversight, as well as decision making about the intervening of the state in property and even ordering prisons or confiscations (Idem).

The notes of the CRRA meetings in the 1974-75 period very clearly demonstrate that there was a symbiosis between the unions actions and the CRRA's line of thought: On July, 20th 1974, due to “*suggestion from the Union*” (Soeiro, 2014 : 194) all of the buildings belonging to an undefined person are subject to inquiry; they also help legitimize the illegal actions done by the Union saying that the control of the workers is “*justified [...] as a guarantee of the continuity of agricultural exploration*” (Idem : 196) as well as act through the Union instead as through their own operatives as is stated in the minutes of the July, 14th 1975 meeting were the council orders an inquiry in the municipality “*by way of the Union*” (Idem : 200).

On the 17th of July 1975, it is the council that suggests that the union elects commissions in each exploration as a way to report to the council any anomalies in the estates. On the 24th they suggest the constitution of the *brigadas de ocupação*

composed by members of the council, the MFA, the peasant league and the Union as a way to expropriate all of the estates already controlled by the workers. The Agrarian Reform laws are published on the 29th of July and, starting from there, the economic sabotage argument is no longer needed to justify an intervention. The occupations merely need to adhere to the criteria set in the decree – in that same day the Beja CRRA decides on a whole new range of interventions (Idem: 216). This shows how occupations may have started out as spontaneous, but quickly developed into coordinated acts preceded by an analysis of the conditions of the land and of other factors that were important to justify the occupation (Barreto, 2017).

It was almost towards the end of the PREC that the first UCPs are constituted, as a way to try and legitimize and institutionalize the gains that the revolutionary period brought the workers. The first UCP “*Vanguarda do Alentejo*” was constituted on October 17th, 1975 ten months after the first occupation. In these UCP, the workers earned wages established in the collective work contract negotiated with the work ministry and while the property belongs to the state, there is no state nominated official that manages the properties. Instead, it was the workers that constitute the UCP – and most likely the Union – managed the production on the UCP level. One estate did not translate into one UCP per se, though in the beginning it might – by the end of the Agrarian Reform the Unions had decided to establish mega-UCP on the parish level which were even bigger than the former latifundial explorations. These collective production units created, according to data lifted from the CGTP archive around 71 900 jobs – 44 100 of them permanent and 27 800 seasonal – which translated into 35% of the agricultural force being employed in these new production units according to Barros (1979b).

Lack of a class organization

In May 1974 the latifundial bosses set up between them a class organization, the Association of Free Farmers (ALA) which seems to have had very little impact in the way that the agrarian reform evolved in general – their goal was to negotiate with the government and the unions to minimize the damages that could be done to their business during this unpredictable period but, by the March, 11th attempted coup, when the left-wing forces further radicalized, the whole economic and political elite of the Estado Novo regime had already lost legitimacy in the public sphere and thus all its negotiating power and the landowners of Alentejo were now equated to slave owners

who exploited, ill paid and brutalized their workers. Furthermore, this organization has a very hard time organizing and made a lethal mistake by not uniting with the small and medium farmers (Barreto, 2017) who could have given their struggle some more sympathetic in the eyes of public opinion as well as human bodies to protest and mobilize. By way of the political conjuncture, the small and medium farmers organize in the peasant leagues and fall in the hands of the communist party. As a consequence, the big farmers do not seem to be able to present a united front during the first two years of Portuguese democracy.

In the third phase of the Agrarian Reform and now with the conservative reaction to the revolutionary period taking shape, another force for the latifundial bosses emerge, this time with a bigger coalition of allies. The CAP (Confederation of Portuguese Farmers) unites the big farm owners with the medium and small farm owners from the most conservative parts of the country. The formation of this organization in November 1975 is preceded by demonstrations and rallies in which thousands of farmers participate in the town of Rio Maior, the heart of the conservative backlash, and parades and other types of protest actions in the capital.

Due to the expansion of its civil society allies and the regaining of legitimacy from their political allies in the form of the conservative parties after the November 25th attempted coup, this organization cemented itself in the social arena and participated greatly in the dismantling of the Agrarian Reform through an in-depth denunciation of illegal occupations and expropriations and political pressure put on the first democratically elected governments (Barreto, 2017). Until this day, it is one of the biggest agricultural associations in the country.

A Symbiotic Relationship

The occupations can be defined as a popular initiative movement formed by permanent, seasonal and unemployed workers as well as union members, which were at times assisted by ministerial member or government technicians as well as members of the MFA – the famous *brigadas de ocupações* which helped legitimize the actions of the movement even when these are illegal. The main goal of the occupations was to expel the proprietor and to seize, not only the land but others means of production (animals, tractors, etc.) that constitute the agricultural enterprise. Most of the

occupations were made illegally and then retroactively legalized by the already mentioned 406-A/75 law.

Expropriations were the legal act that, in conformity to the 406-A/75 law, transferred the property rights from a private individual to the state and the workers through the *posse útil* land regime. Though the majority of lands were occupied before they are expropriated, some will only be occupied after the expropriation takes place and others will be expropriated and never occupied.

Thus, the Portuguese agrarian reforms happened due to the symbiotic relationship between the popular movements and the government officials – the government's role is to legitimize the actions of the masses but those on the ground are the ones in charge of carrying out the decrees. The process of reform will only occur in the municipalities where the workers were the most organized and took the initiative – there are several municipalities in the Santarém district alone, that were part of the ZIRA and where occupations did not occur and collective production units were never formed.

Conclusions

Our literature review on agrarian reforms, political violence and the Portuguese transition period, lead us to the research question: Why did the radical repertoires applied by the social movement did not lead to violence and repression in Portugal in 1974-76? To answer this research question, we set four expectations regarding our phenomenon: that the lack of a class organization and the absence of conservative forces is why the landowners did not resist the occupations; that there was a symbiotic relationship between the governmental forces and the left-wing social movements; and that for landowners, due to the radicalism of their opposition, there were no political or material gains to be extracted from violent action.

To answer our question and justify our expectations we chose a qualitative and inductive approach using descriptive analysis and triangulation as our preferred research methods. As a preliminary test of our expectations we conducted informal conversations and some email exchanges with experts in the field. As sources we used previous studies and interviews, as well as statistical data and archival documents. We have also conducted two interviews more to expand the geographical area of the analysis to include one more district.

The process of the Portuguese agrarian reform followed the same steps as the revolutionary period did: first a moment of quiet relief from the previous 40 years of dictatorship with a new set of rules being formed and some experiments on more radical actions – it was when the first occupations occurred, illegal but justified under the premises of the economic sabotage law and as a means for people to guarantee their employment. Unions and political parties were formed, and the first wave of contention starts with the negotiation of the collective work contracts, the ALA acting as an intermediary for the landowner class.

With the 11th of March 1975 events the revolution radicalized, and the political, social and economic elite of the Estado Novo loses the ground for negotiation they had and no longer plays a part on drawing the rules of the emerging regime. In Alentejo the wave of occupations starts. It was at this stage that we witness the quid pro quo between the military, the MAP local officers, the Unions, the PCP and the local politicians – the Union acts as the inspector, the CRRAs legitimized the illegal actions by signing the occupation orders, which gave these legitimacy and the military helped with the practical work of the occupation itself.

With the 406-A/75 decree that set the legal rules of expropriation, the movement started occupying all of the farms that were above 500 points, the legal limit for expropriation – this starts a third wave of occupations where the action in the ground is complemented with the expropriations by the state.

After the period of turmoil that constitutes the spring and summer of 1975, comes the legalist period of the agrarian reform. With the 25th of November events and the prevailing of the moderates there is an attempt to institutionalize the previous gains of the agrarian reform which will translate into the forming of the UCPs and their fierce defense by the CGTP and the PCP – to this day, when they are long dead and gone.

As we stated previously, we identified, based on the literature, four reasons that explain the lack of violence in the Portuguese agrarian reform process. The absence of conservative organizations is justified by the lack of local presence of the more moderate and right wing parties like the PPD and the CDS as well as the absence of the church which could have helped broaden the coalition of forces behind the landlords by influencing parts of the population to adhere to the landowners cause like it did in the north of the country.

There was a great imbalance of forces – on the one side the landowners that stood alone without their traditional conservative allies behind them, the church, that was absent from this picture, and the right wing parties, that only much later implemented in the south and on the other side the unions which had the communist party, the force of the military and the legitimacy that the local MAP technicians gave.

The radicalism and broad alliance of the left-wing forces is demonstrated by the composition of the *brigadas de ocupação*. There was large support of the occupation movement by officials and politicians at the local level with the MAP technicians and the MFA serving as legitimizing forces for the illegal occupations. The fact that the landowners were left out of the composition of the CRRA's is proof of the clear power imbalance that existed between the unions and the landlords with the unions being present at every step of the decision making process and the landlords being pushed out of every process that dispossessed them of their property.

Without the cooperation of the military and the MAP with the social movement that the story told in this chapter of Portuguese history may have be much messier and bloodier. These officials did not only help give legitimacy to the illegal actions perpetrated by the union as well as acted as a deterrent for aggression.

The lack of a class organization is also one of the reasons the landlord resistance fails to be organized. The ALA created in 1974, is condemned to fail from the beginning. The lack of a broad coalition with the small and medium farmers articulated with the radicalization of the revolution on the 11th of March makes the little power that this organization had, disappear as the turmoil starts. As their natural allies were absent from the Alentejo and their class organization lost all its negotiation power with the provisional governments, the only result they stood to obtain from violent action was further persecution. This way, when this period ended, they were able to reorganize and form a broader coalition in order to recuperate, during several years, the losses they suffered in a few short months.

The Portuguese agrarian reform would not have happened peacefully if there was not some sort of symbiosis between the government forces and the occupation movements. Without one, the other could not have done the agrarian reform by itself. This is exemplified by the act of occupation, which is an action at the social and local level being complemented with the act of expropriation which is a legal action at the government level. This makes it so that the government legitimizes the actions on the ground but also so that the agrarian reform was only implemented in places where the population has an interest in it and was organized enough to make the occupations happen.

Although there was violence in the urban centers of Portugal and there has been violence in many other cases of agrarian reform, in our case this scenario does not develop. This is because, to draw comparison, in the urban areas of Portugal such as Lisbon and Oporto, there were a lot more actors in play than in Alentejo. There are no conservative organizations and the working population is much more socially homogenous in its political beliefs and so there was not a social basis for the conservative backlash in the south of Portugal.

The difference between the Portuguese case of agrarian reforms and the other violent cases of agrarian reform is the unwillingness of the government and the military to repress its population. This was due to their motivation to break with the Estado Novo era, in which the Alentejo population had had a long period of repression by the National Guard and political alienation by the central government.

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