

By Diana Johnstone

THE HERO OF THE 1974 "CARNATION REVOLUTION" that restored political freedom to Portugal has been officially branded a "terrorist." Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho was one of 48 defendants convicted last month on the disturbingly vague charge of "terrorist association," at the end of a long show trial in Lisbon. He was sentenced to 15 years in prison.

The ever-cheerful "Otelo"—as he is popularly known in Portugal—took the news of the unexpectedly harsh sentence with his usual good spirits. The tragedy of Otelo may not be so much the personal downfall of one who loved the revolution perhaps not wisely but too well, but of the revolution itself—and the idea of revolution in the '80s.

If Otelo's morale is still high, it may have something to do with a clear conscience. Whatever his mistakes, he never sold out his ideals, never let himself be bought off. After organizing the bloodless coup of April 25, 1974, Otelo chose consistently to "serve the people" rather than to seek personal promotion.

Otelo's political consciousness came from his experience in the Portuguese army combatting the liberation movements in Portugal's African colonies, especially Mozambique. He was one of a group of young Portuguese officers who identified with the Third World revolution they were sent to fight. This identification was heightened because their own country, with its poverty and illiteracy, was the closest in Europe to the Third World. The coup led to all of Portugal's colonies receiving independence.

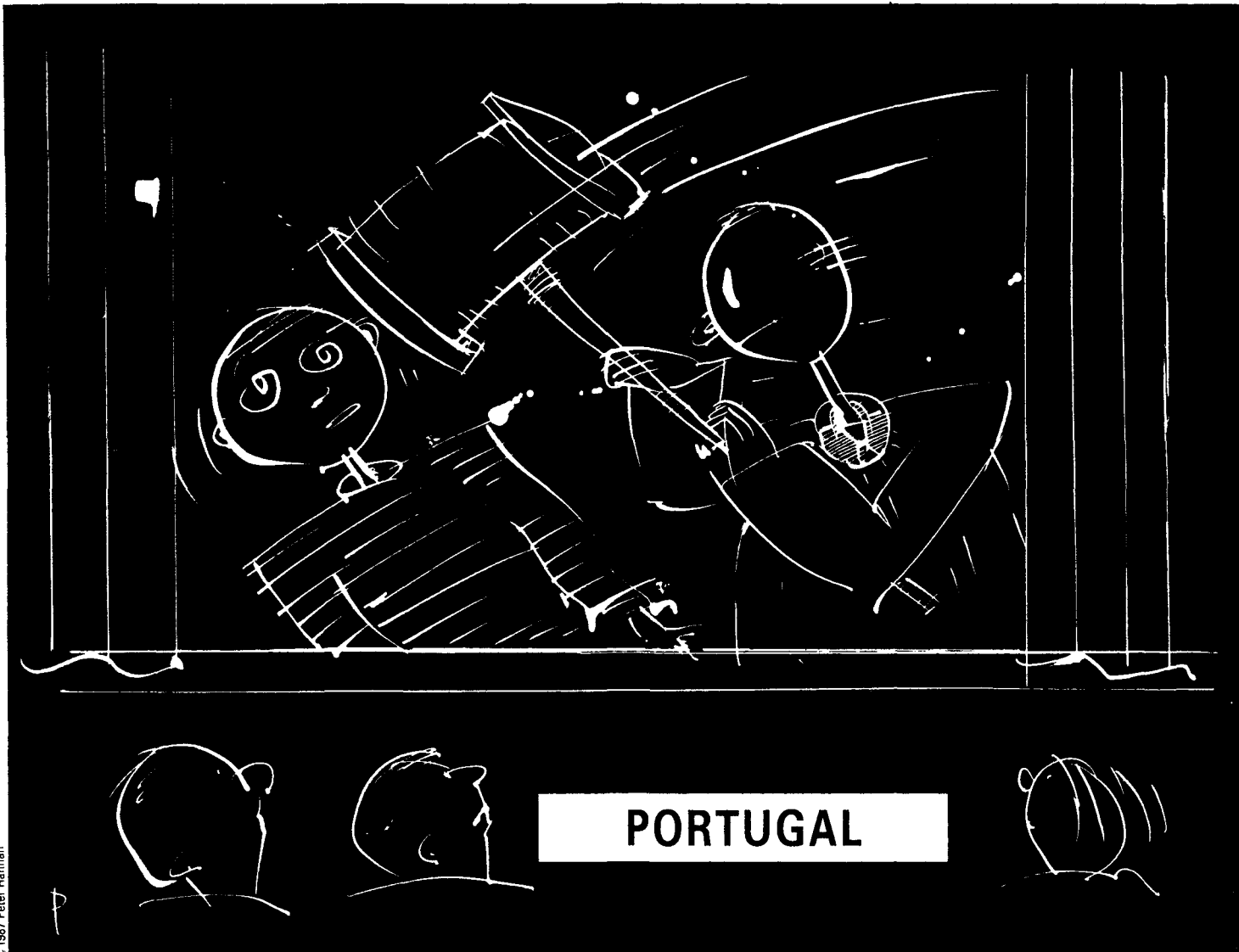
In the months following the revolt, Otelo used his military command not to seize power for himself but as a shield allowing the poor peasants in the province of Alentejo to carry out grassroots land reform. The big property owners have never forgiven him.

Hero takes a fall: By 1976 Otelo had left government ranks and the counterrevolution was underway. How far it would go was unclear. The CIA was organizing a Portuguese "contra" force, recruiting agents from the secret police that had been dissolved by the revolution. In 1977, Otelo wrote several pages of what he called a "global project" to free the country a second time in case of a right-wing coup. His idea was to organize a people's liberation army.

When he was arrested in June 1984, police seized those notes found in his home. They were the only documentary evidence to support the charges of "terrorist association." Aside from the fact that they proved absolutely nothing about "terrorist association," the notes were out of date. Without embarrassment, Otelo explained in court what he had in mind when he wrote them 10 years ago.

Otelo's political views and activities were never a secret. Having won 18 percent of the vote in the 1976 elections—the first after a new constitution went into effect—he remained the most popular figure of the non-Communist left. Otelo felt it was his mission to bring together as an ongoing political force all the grassroots revolutionary hopes that had blossomed with the "Carnation Revolution." To this end he founded his own political party in 1980, the Front for Popular Unity (FUP), which never amounted to more than a far-left fringe group. Three years ago, many FUP militants were arrested.

Guilt by "association": The point of the Lisbon trial was to convict Otelo of "terrorist association" by proving that his FUP was a



Lisbon show trial and the tragedy of Otelo

cover for a group called the Popular Front for April 25 (FP-25), which advocated and practiced violence. Thus nearly 70 people from the two groups were tried together in one big bunch.

The seriousness of the charges was demonstrated primarily by building a special security courtroom, complete with bulletproof glass cages for the defendants. The implication was obvious: if people have to have a special security courtroom equipped for them, they must be very dangerous and, of course, guilty.

But Otelo denied having anything to do with FP-25 and criticized its approach. The FP-25, led by Goben Lopes, had claimed a number of violent actions.

The past decade or so has provided ample evidence in several countries that the shat-

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tering of revolutionary hopes produces a certain number of "strays" who can be picked up by extremist groups. Those groups are in turn open to infiltration and manipulation by rightists and secret police who want to use "leftist terrorism" to wipe out what remains of revolutionary sympathy.

The FP-25 appears to be a classic example.

As in other contemporary "terrorism" trials, the prosecution depended heavily on "penitents"—the current, vaguely religious term for stool pigeons. The star witness against Otelo was a post office employee named Macedo Correia, known to the press as "the poet." Imaginative, with a lyric bent, Correia has written a best seller, *The Ashes of a Lost Era*, describing how he turned into a terrorist. The notion that revolutionary aspirations must lead to terrorist crime has a certain appeal in a period when people are lapsing into apathy.

Crime and ponderment: An oddity of the trial was that no member of FP-25 had ever been tried and convicted for any of the real crimes, including murder, committed in the organization's name. Those who testified against Otelo all got off lightly, even though they were implicated in the worst real crimes of violence.

This is becoming a familiar procedure in "terrorist" trials: a self-confessed terrorist can get off lightly by helping to convict someone else—especially someone else against whom there is no other evidence.

The charges were based on a 1982 law against "terrorist association," which itself seems to be part of a right-wing trend to unite "the West" in low-intensity war against everybody else, suspected of harboring the new enemy, "terrorism." Moreover, the June 1984 arrests were used to create a climate favorable to the passage the following month of a new Internal Security Bill. This bill pledged Portugal's Internal Security authorities to collaborate with "foreign secret services." The U.S. is widely believed to have had a hand in drafting the bill.

One of the character witnesses testifying for Otelo, Maj. Sousa e Castro, alluded to the success of right-wing officers in regaining control of the Portuguese armed forces from the coup's democratic officers. "When right-wing officers conspire together this is called a social meeting, while if they are left-wing it becomes a conspiracy," he observed.

The trial dragged on long after everyone seemed to have lost interest. The Portuguese people have been cured of the hopes they entertained in 1974. For years now, if workers are lucky enough to have jobs their big worry is when, or if, they will be paid. For distraction, people follow the soccer matches rather than politics. Portugal is back to normal, with local leaders bowing to the wishes of richer powers such as the U.S., West Germany and South Africa.

Bygone dreams: The trial and conviction of Otelo was not only a way of defeating and discrediting the idea of revolution in Portugal itself. It was also a way of severing one of the last emotionally powerful links between Europe and the Southern African states victimized by the increasingly devastating war of destruction waged by white South Africa against all its black neighbors. Otelo had rebelled against waging South Africa's proxy wars against the people of Angola and Mozambique—Portuguese colonies before the 1974 coup. But South Africa has found other proxies, UNITA in Angola and Renamo in Mozambique, with support in the U.S.—and in Portugal.

Otelo's many former fans in the European left have lost interest. The Portuguese proved too disorganized, too easy-going and too poor to carry through the revolution. Otelo, as he admits readily, has always been naive. Many of Otelo's former friends have grown sophisticated and cynical in the '80s and are embarrassed by reminders of their earlier revolutionary enthusiasm. In Otelo, that enthusiasm seems still intact. It is widely speculated that President Mario Soares will grant him a pardon. In or out of prison, Otelo is an embarrassment.

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To control the present is to control the past, said Orwell. And to control the past is to control the future.

The Reagan administration and its congressional allies are doing their best to control the present investigations into Reagan's secret foreign operations. They're trying, with some success, to limit how far back to look, what areas are to be discussed, how deep the questions will go. The hoped-for result is a rewrite of history.

With the passive acquiescence of the Democrats and the media, the new history is being forced on the books: the contra army is actually a "resistance" to a foreign occupation; Congress turned its back on its commitment to the Nicaraguan rebels; the administration, confused by ambiguous interference from the legislature, did its best to stay within the law.

Luckily, one doesn't need to rely on the official story. Compiling an independent record of U.S. policy toward Nicaragua, one finds an artificial paramilitary force, planned and paid for in Washington, that Congress was always reluctant to support. And an administra-

tion that was bent on having its way, no matter what laws had to be broken or what lies had to be told.

One of the most important contributions to a true history of the contra war is the National Security Archive's *The Chronology*, a detailed record of the events Reagan and Co. would rather have you forget. It covers most of the events on the following timeline, which attempts to provide a graphic context for the mass of information that has come out so far.

In particular, the timeline shows the succession of laws passed by Congress, known as the Boland Amendments, which unambiguously forbade the administration from trying to overthrow the government of Nicaragua, and the equally unambiguous defiance of those laws by Reagan's imperial presidency.

History is the best antidote for the current disinformation. Perhaps taking control of the past can lead to a future without covert interventions.

Compiled by Jim Naureckas

1979

July 1979 - Sandinistas take power in Nicaragua.

1980

Fall 1980 - President Carter authorizes a CIA program to funnel \$1 million to Nicaraguan political opposition, while continuing overt aid to the private sector in Nicaragua.

1981

March 9, 1981 - President Reagan authorizes the CIA to undertake covert activities against Nicaragua.

Nov. 23, 1981 - Reagan allocates \$19 million to the CIA to establish a paramilitary opposition to the Sandinistas.

1982

March 14, 1982 - The Nicaraguan government declares a state of emergency following acts of CIA-sponsored sabotage.

Dec. 22, 1982 - Congress passes its first version of the Boland Amendment, barring CIA and Pentagon from spending money for the purpose of "overthrowing the government of Nicaragua or provoking a military exchange between Nicaragua and Honduras."

January

1983

February

March

April

May

June

April 4, 1983 - "Commander Suicide" of the main contra group, the FDN, tells reporters, "We're not going to stop the transport of arms...until we cut the head off the Sandinistas."

April 24, 1983 - A five-member delegation from House Select Committee on Intelligence travels to Central America to investigate whether the administration is violating the Boland Amendment.

June 1983 - Reagan approves "Operation Elephant Herd" to bypass potential congressional restrictions on contra aid, according to CBS News.

1984

Jan. 2, 1984 - FDN spokesman Edgar Chamorro is told to take credit for CIA mining of Nicaraguan harbors, according to Chamorro.

Jan. 11, 1984 - Kissinger Commission releases its report, which warns against "the consolidation of a Marxist-Leninist regime in Managua," and calls the contras "one of the incentives working in favor of a negotiated settlement" in Nicaragua.

April 1984 - Saudi Arabia asked by CIA to support contras, according to the *Washington Post*.

April 26, 1984 - CIA Chief William Casey apologizes for not adequately notifying the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence of CIA mining of harbors.

May 1984 - CIA introduces Oliver North to contras, according to Chamorro, telling them, "You will never be abandoned."

June 1984 - Congress rejects administration request for \$21 million for the contras.

July 6, 1984 - King Fahd of Saudi Arabia gives his first monthly contribution of \$1 million to the contras.

1985

Jan. 22, 1985 - Felix Rodriguez meets with George Bush about wanting to go to El Salvador. Rodriguez later heads the El Salvador air resupply mission.

Feb. 6, 1985 - North meets with Ret. Gen. John Singlaub to discuss fund-raising from foreign governments.

Feb. 11, 1985 - Reagan meets with King Fahd. Afterward Fahd doubles his monthly contribution to the contras.

Feb. 21, 1985 - Reagan says U.S. policy is to make Nicaragua say "uncle."

March 1985 - A memo to North from Spitz Channell's fund-raising organization discusses the possibility of major donations for the contras in exchange for "one quiet moment with the president."

March 14, 1985 - Singlaub tells North he is supplying contras with trainers.

March 16, 1985 - National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane approves North's plan for contra fund-raising.

April 24, 1985 - Congress rejects request for \$14 million in covert aid to the contras.

April 28, 1985 - Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega travels to Soviet Union as part of a 20-day tour of Eastern and Western Europe.

May 1985 - Singlaub sells contras \$5 million in arms.

May 1, 1985 - Reagan declares an embargo against Nicaragua.

1986

January 1986 - North and Second begin paying contra leader Arturo Cruz \$7,000 a month.

January 1986 - North sets up secret communications network and Swiss bank accounts for contras.

Feb. 27, 1986 - Proceeds from an arms shipment to Iran are diverted to the contras.

March 20, 1986 - Congress rejects \$100 million in military aid for contras.

March 22, 1986 - A cross-border raid by the Sandinistas against contra bases in Honduras—similar to 50 or 60 raids in the past six months—is called an "invasion" by the Reagan administration.

April 4, 1986 - North writes a memo for the president saying profits from Iran arms sales will go to the contras.

May 1986 - Singlaub meets with Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams. Singlaub says that Abrams agreed to help him solicit funds, but later told him the solicitation would be handled "at the highest level."

June 24, 1986 - George Shultz has three-hour meeting with the Sultan of Brunei.

June 25, 1986 - Congress approves \$100 million in military aid for the contras.

June 27, 1986 - The International Court of Justice rules U.S. support for contras violates international law.

Anti-intervention a difficult climb

By Richard Ryan

WASHINGTON

FOR ALL THE TALK OF THE LEFT'S RESURGENCE, liberals in Congress have been unable recently to scuttle the Reagan administration's interventionist foreign policy in Central America.

All recent legislative efforts, including an attempt earlier this year to freeze unreleased contra aid, have faltered. Last month liberal Democrats in the House tried to attach three modest amendments to the Defense Authorization Bill, proposals that implicitly recog-

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