

A Parasite Country Par Excellence

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During the second half of the 15th Century and the first half of the 16th, the Portuguese pirates, incited by an unchecked greed, arrived in Angola, Mozambique, India and Brazil. Attacked by cholera, they threw themselves into the practice of genocide and pillage, savagely and sadistically murdering the people they found with the objective of accumulating wealth.

Ships arrived in Lisbon fully loaded with gold, precious stones, spices and ivory and even with elephants and rhinoceroses! All that they found they robbed! But especially slaves, African slaves, to toil and manure with their sweat the lands of Alentejo; others they brought simply to be used as servants or as symbols of 'exoticism' in the houses of the wealthiest families.

From 1500 on, incalculable fortunes began to pour into Lisbon; the Portuguese people, until then poor and repressed, abandoned their previously pursued occupations – some to dedicate themselves to this bewildering new life, others to flattery of the wealthy and still others to the mendacity.

The avarice was in such a high degree that the caravels carried loads double or triple their normal capacity, and the more they carried the faster they were shipwrecked! This is the real reason for the so-called 'tragic maritime history' which has been the source of many crocodile tears on the part of the fascist historians'.

The great German bankers of the time, those associated with the famous Fugger and Weser Houses, came to establish their main branches in Lisbon. The Italian cities of Florence, Venice and Genoa, citadels of the famous Medici, Bardi and Caponi, became totally bankrupted as they stopped being the centres of the commerce with the East, their 'glorious' place was now taken over by Portugal.

Lisbon, as the Salazarist 'historians' presumptively write, became a 'cosmopolitan city'; from all points in Europe the great traders flew to Lisbon; and bankers too, from the best representatives of the German banks to those of the prominent Hanseatic League, and from England and France. On the other hand, the Portuguese set up commercial representation in Flanders and in England.

All looked as if it would never end. The owners of Portugal were living

totally wrapped up in a golden dream of Alice in Wonderland, and the king of this epoch, Manuel the First, was given the epithet, the *Fortunate* . . .

It is only this idyllic aspect which is narrated to us by the history manuals of the Salazarists. However, the sordid side of the history of Portugal – together with the good – is presented by several historians, including J.B. Trend in his book *Portugal* (published in 1957 in London). We quote:

They [the Portuguese] did not produce anything in their country; neither in agriculture nor in industry. Although, on the surface, all looked like a perpetual carnival, the nation was in its entirety begging for bread.

And he continues:

The king had to order from Flanders many shiploads of wheat. After 1503–1504 a famine plague invaded the nation (in 1505). The tremendous wealth present in Lisbon was not usefully applied to the nation. In 1521 the hunger reached alarming proportions such that the poor who wandered through the streets of Lisbon often died and remained, for a long time, without being buried, lying on the streets. Cereals continued to be imported from abroad; Portugal began to import wheat and barley from France and North Africa as well as from Flanders.

Food products from salted meat to wheat and fish all came from abroad. All the elementary manufactured goods, from textiles to furniture, were imported. *Portugal was the Parasite Country par excellence*. This was and continues to be the preponderant feature of the Portugal of yesterday and today.

But all this is natural, some will probably say. This also happened in England during the period of primitive capital formation, when the poor wandered through the streets and were decapitated by the ‘very Christian’ King Henry the VIIth. But it isn’t! The essential thing to keep in mind is the fact that, while Holland, England, France and the other countries took advantage of the exploitation of the wealth of their colonies to industrialize their economies – to jump from the Middle Ages to Capitalism – Portugal, on the contrary, became more and more economically retarded. Instead of industrializing their country, by building up first agriculture and then small industry, the Portuguese abandoned both, and with the wealth they plundered from the African, Asian and American people of their colonies, they imported those commodities essential to the life of any nation.

All Angolans know very well that the small Portuguese shopkeeper – the one who spends his life selling all the petty things, including the five cents of manioc flour and dry beans – is a clever but insidious robber. But what is less well known by many Angolans is that these Portuguese reveal themselves incapable of understanding the most elementary mechanics

of commerce on a large scale, because for this it is necessary to have an open mind and . . . to know some accounting!

Therefore the foreigners, particularly the Dutch, were the ones who took advantage of the incapacity of the Portuguese merchants, buying the spices in Lisbon and reselling them, at a price four or more times higher than the purchase price, in several markets across Central and Northern Europe. In their dealings the Dutch took advantage, among other things, of the repeated plagues and famines which constantly invaded Portugal and which forced her to buy food abroad at extraordinarily high prices.

Thus Portugal, the then wealthiest country in Europe, found herself deeply in debt. And, as the writer Perry Anderson in his book *Portugal et la Fin de l'Ultra-Colonialisme* states 'The debts of Portugal vis-a-vis Flanders reached such a high amount that in 1543 the interest rate in Antwerp was 50%. In 1544 the real debt was 2 million *cruzados* and in 1552 3 million; in 1560 the debt was so high that the creditors refused to charge any interest.'

In all this a unique phenomenon is clearly apparent: the wealth stolen by Portugal, rather than assisting its modernization, was used in the industrialization of other European countries.

The Portuguese pirates came to the colonies to rob the spices, the gold, the ivory from India and Angola for the Dutch to industrialize their country!

And later, during the Kingdom of John III, faced with constant pressure from the numerous creditors, the pirate king decided to entrust the Jewish bankers with the mission of settling the debts of the nation; with great stupefaction the bankers arrived at the conclusion that, in order to pay for the deficit in the balance of payments, an amount was needed more than four times the annual revenue of the nation itself.

Alarmed at such a 'brilliant' record, and trying desperately to solve the situation, the 'most Christian' king of the bandits took the measure he deemed appropriate; he launched the pogroms against the Jews and set up the Holy Office Tribunal run by that most saintly man – Saint Ignatius of Loyola (the sadly famous Inquisition).

From then on, under the accusation of practising sorcery, thousands upon thousands of Jews were burnt alive, while many others were expelled from Portugal. And . . . since the money and goods belonging to them were affected' by fetish, they were all, naturally, confiscated by the 'Christian' state so that the debts could be paid.

In a sign of gratitude for the services rendered to the Church and the nation the 'great' King John III of Portugal was given the epithet *Piedoso* (Pious).

Following the commercial bankruptcy which resulted from the tremendous slowdown of the spice trade with India, another golden period occurred with the sugar trade, this time with the 'exploration' of the sugar companies in Brazil during the 17th Century. But by the end of the century new competitors came into the picture, the Britons and the French, with their own colonies in West Indies. Thus, once again, Portugal's economy fell into the

lethargic state from which it only came out in the 18th Century with the 'discovery' of the gold and diamond mines in *Minas Gerais*, also in Brazil. However, this golden epoch was of a rather short duration for in 1822 Brazil became independent from Portugal and the 'mother country' continued its normal course as an indebted, poor, and stagnated country.

But one may ask oneself again: What did all this money get spent on? Most of it was wasted on several commercial ventures which only benefited the other European countries, while the rest was lavishly spent on many luxurious objects to satisfy an infernal and offensive but . . . simple-minded love of luxury.

For example, the Salazarist 'historians' themselves, very delighted, narrate that King John V, without knowing what to do with so much gold brought in from Brazil, ordered that the *Mafra Convent* be built for him and that a huge carillon from England, made of solid gold, be used on the structure. The British industrialists, having considered this an absurd expenditure, decided to ask whether the Portuguese monarch was really ordering from England a solid-gold-made carillon. Simpleminded, the King of pirates, with the intention of boasting his wealth, ordered in reply two similar solid-gold-made carillons!

Finally, by the end of the 19th Century and during the first 67 years of the 20th, Portugal enjoyed a new period of national grandeur, thanks to the exploitation of the peoples and wealth of her African colonies, more particularly Angola.

But, as in the past, Portugal did not industrialize itself. Most of the tremendous profits made in the colonies are and continue to be sucked up by the international monopolies, while the relatively small but still big portion which accrues to the small Portuguese oligarchy is lavishly wasted in the Estoril casinos as well as at the expensive cabarets in Paris.

Therefore we are, in reality, faced by a factual demonstration of the incapacity on the part of the Portuguese leaders to bring their country out of its secular retardation. This fact is so entrenched in the mentality of the present leaders of the fascist regime of Portugal that they don't even hesitate to boast publicly that 'Portugal is and will always be an agricultural country!'

But no wonder. Why will this not be the case if this country has already accustomed itself to live as a parasite of other peoples?! . . .