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Agrarian Reform in Southern Portugal

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I. INTRODUCTION

This paper¹ has two main purposes: (a) to present some preliminary results from S. Mc Adam Clark's recent research on the agrarian reform and related developments in Southern Portugal, and (b) to set forth a critique of José Cutileiro's specific interpretation of the course of the agrarian reform within the context of the Portuguese Revolution as a whole.² Cutileiro's analysis of the post-revolutionary agrarian reform in one region of the Alentejo province in south-eastern Portugal has only recently been published in Portuguese as the "postscript" to the 1977 Portuguese translation³ of his earlier monograph *A Portuguese Rural Society* (1971). The fundamental dilemma of this postscript (based upon three short return visits in March and September of 1975, and September of 1976) lies in Cutileiro's portrayal of the weak response to the agrarian reform by villagers of the region he studied. Given the meticulous detail and analytical depth with which he dissected the local functioning of the Portuguese political system during late fascism in his earlier book, one is confronted by a series of points made in his 1977 postscript which define its major theme as one of resignation. Since Cutileiro took a distinct stand (although this was not always explicit) in his original study of the plight of the Alentejan landless labourers during the last years of Salazar's regime, how is it that he arrived at a position of such pessimism after the fall of that regime and the inception of a process of political and social revolution?

First, we will summarise some of the major points of Cutileiro's original monograph. The second section deals with the series of events since the beginning of the agrarian reform process that followed the Portuguese Revolution of 1974, both in the Alentejo province as a whole and in the parish of "Vila Velha". The third section deals specifically with Cutileiro's analysis of the agrarian reform in the parish of Vila Velha as set forth in his 1977 postscript. Particular attention is given to a number of theoretical interpretations implicit in Cutileiro's analysis which give the impression that the agrarian reform as a whole has "failed", at least in the parish under study. In the conclusion it is suggested that in the postscript Cutileiro briefly mentions and seems to rely upon one aspect of Lenin's theory of revolutionary action, and that by doing this he simplifies the process of the agrarian reform. This prevents him from examining sufficiently a series of ongoing conflicts within and between class groups, thus providing an explanatory device purportedly locating the

1 E.N.: This text is a reprint (with minor editorial adjustments), originally from *Critique of Anthropology*, 1980, 4 (15), 47-74.

2 All of the translations from the Portuguese were by B. J. O'Neill, as were the Introduction, Section II, and the passages in Section IV concerning the union/cooperative leaders, patronage, and the typicality of Vila Velha. (It is hoped that a complete translation of the Postscript will become available to English readers in the future.)

3 Significantly, the title has been altered to: *Ricos e Pobres no Alentejo (Uma Sociedade Rural Portuguesa)*.

shortcomings of the agrarian reform in the personal characters and recent careers of “vanguard” individual leaders.⁴

II. CUTILEIRO'S ORIGINAL STUDY

Before going on to analyse the major events of the agrarian reform since 1974, we can review the main characteristics of the former regime as described by Cutileiro for 1965-1967. The focus of his study was a rural parish⁵ composed of five villages, a small town, and various scattered farms. The head town of the parish, named Vila Velha in the book, had a population of 292 in 1965, the parish as a whole having just under 1,600 people (in 1978 the population was, respectively, 220 and 1100). The area's major crops were wheat (with smaller quantities of rye, oats and barley), olives, wine, and acorns, while animal husbandry included the raising of sheep, pigs, goats, cattle, and mares (Cutileiro 1971: 5, 25). The major defining characteristic of the villages, however, was their highly polarised class structure, arising from the extreme inequality inherent in the structure of land tenure and the latifundia system. This is a region of extensive and not intensive cultivation of large estates (“*herdades*”) which frequently attained a total surface area of over 1,000 hectares. Almost 80% of the agricultural population of the Alentejo province in 1963⁶ was composed of landless labourers, while in 1970⁷ the Alentejan estates of

4 The analysis is based upon three distinct areas of research: a short period of fieldwork carried out by Sandra McAdam Clark in Vila Velha, surveys of the agrarian reform in the Alentejo province published since 1974, and an internal analysis of Cutileiro's postscript itself. Sandra McAdam Clark's fieldwork was carried out in Vila Velha from May 1978 through January 1979. She would like to thank the Instituto Nacional de Investigação Científica for a research scholarship granted through the British Council, José Cutileiro for his suggestions concerning her fieldwork, and all the inhabitants of Vila Velha and Cândida Correia Segurado for their support and help during this research (thesis in preparation – LSE). She would also like to thank Aldegice Machado de Rosa. Brian O'Neill's research (1976-1978) in northern Portugal was carried out with the aid of a grant from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (thesis in preparation – LSE); he would like to thank José Cutileiro and Julian Pitt-Rivers for their initial assistance. Both authors are grateful to Peter Loizos for his supervision of their fieldwork in Portugal and currently, but he does not share the views expressed in this paper. The authors also thank Benjamin Pereira and other members of the Museu de Etnologia in Lisbon, and Joachim Pais de Brito for further help with each of their research projects, and Manuel Villaverde Cabral, Frances Pine, and Rubie Watson for helpful comments on this paper.

5 We have taken the liberty of translating “*freguesia*” as parish for purposes of this paper, although Cutileiro retains the Portuguese word in his 1971 study. No general preference for ecclesiastical over civil terminology is intended, however.

6 Cabral (1978: 423) cites the figure of 77.5%, which is based either upon the national Population Census of 1970 (INE, *Recenseamento Geral da População*, Lisbon) or the Agricultural Survey of 1968 (INE, *Inquérito às Explorações Agrícolas do Continente*, Lisbon).

7 This section relies both upon Sandra McAdam Clark's field materials collected in Vila Velha in 1978, as well as upon a series of local studies concerning the agrarian reform. See Vale Estrela's compilation of statistics (1978) as well as that of Freitas (1977).

over 500 hectares occupied 30.5% of the total amount of cultivated land in Portugal.

The differences in landholding sizes between the largest estates and the small plots owned by veritably “landless” labourers was striking: Cutileiro listed 406 individuals as owning less than 10 ha. of land and 166 of these as owning less than 1 ha. Two hundred and eighty six of these individuals were rural labourers.⁸ At the other extreme, only three latifundists (owners of large estates of over 500 ha.) along with eight other non-resident latifundists controlled 54% of the parish’s area. All of these latifundists also owned land outside the parish. In the middle were a group of 26 “*proprietários*” (large landowners) owning 21% of the land, usually from 50 to 500 ha. each, and a series of groups of small landowners, sharecroppers, craftsmen, shopkeepers, and some labourers who owned the remaining 25% of the land, usually between less than 1 ha. and 50 ha. (1971: 41-45). It is important to note here that this is a population mainly of rural proletarians and semi-proletarians, and a zone which has been characterized, for at least the last two centuries, by the absence of a numerically significant class of “peasants” (Cabral 1978: 412). The key material basis for Cutileiro’s later analysis of patterns of class conflict between this small group of landowners and the mass of landless labourers lies in the disparities revealed by these figures on landholdings. Further, politically and socially the latifundists occupied a position of such immense wealth and power that in relation to most other local men, “the gulf between them... is as wide as the difference between the respective size of their holdings” (Cutileiro 1971: 7).

The wealthiest of the latifundists reaped an income of £20,000 in a good year, in contrast to the average labourer’s yearly earnings of £9 (Cutileiro 1971: 45, 60). Such differences in financial situation are epitomized by Cutileiro’s example of a latifundist whose wheat field had been burnt by one of his dismissed labourers: the latifundist commented that “the match he used cost him more than the wheat cost me” (1971: 83). Further illustrative examples abound throughout the book, such as (a) the almost institutionalized adultery between the wives of labourers and their husbands’ employers (in some cases suggested to their wives by the husbands themselves) which was seen as a means for the labourers’ obtaining the “patronage benefits” of financial rewards and employment security (1971: 144-145); (b) the decisions preceding government measures on agriculture, which took place not in government departments but “over dining tables or in the course of the shooting parties given by the latifundists” (1971: 161); (c) the nefarious use of literacy and access to legal knowledge by people in administrative posts, such as the machinations of the local town’s Civil Governor addressing his secretary: “Dr. So-and-so, will

8 Along with these 286 rural “labourers”, Cutileiro included 42 industrial workers in a newly created factory, a small number of estate managers (“*feitores*”), and some shepherds (1971: 59-65).

you make us a law?" (1971: 194); and (d) the rather bizarre instance of Vila Velha's Misericórdia hospital orderly, who uses hospital quarters for his own private residence and on occasion beats his patients (1971: 174). At the level of religious ideology, the same use of illuminating examples appears. The entire province of the Alentejo was considered a "missionary region" by the Church due to its traditional lack of Catholic zeal – in response to a questionnaire asking for the average figures of daily mass attendance in 1960, the parish priest of Vila Velha answered "zero" and has declined to cite any figure since then (1971: 251). The latifundists, as always, were intimately connected with the sources of ideological control: one Sunday, "before announcing the time of the mass on the following Sunday, the priest turned to the latifundist and asked him in respectful tones what time he would prefer" (1971: 262).

In many ways similar to an earlier monograph by Lisón-Tolosana on a Spanish town (1966) in its thorough use of local historical documents in conjunction with present-oriented ethnographic methods, Cutileiro's book is outstanding among the Iberian community studies for its penetration of the intricacies of local government and the exploitation of power and people by a small elite. Why, he asks, given such stark inequalities in wealth and the bare subsistence level of the mass of the population, have law and order been upheld without the use of open force, and why in 1971 did social revolution seem as "remote as the Garden of Eden"? (Cutileiro 1971: 286). Cutileiro partially rejects two of the more obvious possible explanations: (a) that relations of kinship, neighbourhood, and spiritual and other forms of patronage cut across various levels of the society and neutralize its class divisions, and (b) that the "repressive machinery of the State" has used fear and intimidation "to keep the labourers in their place" (1971: 288). He suggests a middle ground solution and briefly mentions Lenin's classification of intermediate social groups as potential joiners or opposers of a revolution. Yet the existence of this "buffer group" of small landowners cannot entirely account for the marked absence of the organized expression of class antagonism. The final answer, Cutileiro maintains, lies in the political structure of the Corporate State and its systematic repression and prevention of the formation of "modern forms of social organization" such as trade unions and free political parties (1971: 293).⁹ These entities could at least have given rural labourers minimal bargaining tools against the omnipotent power of the latifundists and their political and administrative co-partners in the nearby town of Vila Nova, the district capital of Évora, and Lisbon. One of the two major reasons given later by Cutileiro for the failure of the post-revolutionary agrarian reform in the Alentejo as a whole – the lack of coherent political organization among the rural labourers – has its origins here:

9 The only political party at the time, apart from the one (and only) government party União Nacional, was the illegal Communist Party (Cutileiro 1971: 291).

the reasons for the absence of such organization should not be sought merely within the ideological and social structures of the rural community or the confused, indifferent minds of the labourers or the equally if not more effectively confused women, but rather in “the nature of industrial relations in the corporate State” (1971: 292) and the political superstructure which supported and controlled these relations.

This condition of the rural labourers, described by Cutileiro in 1971 with no apparent foreshadowing of the events soon to occur, led him to conclude,¹⁰ ironically, that any changes to come within that political structure would be “neither abrupt, nor systematic”.

III. THE AGRARIAN REFORM: EVENTS SINCE 1974

In this section a brief outline will be given of the major events which have occurred during the process of the agrarian reform instituted after 25th of April 1974, concentrating on the district of Évora and the smaller administrative divisions of the “concelho” (county) of Vila Nova and the parish of Vila Velha, and specifically upon key legislation concerning the expropriation of estates and the formation of agricultural cooperatives. This outline will provide a framework for a discussion of Cutileiro’s postscript and its treatment of the agrarian reform.

Following the beginning of the Portuguese Revolution on the 25th of April 1974 there were no immediate steps taken by those in power to institute an agrarian reform policy, although the new Constitution expressly devotes space to the problem and calls for the transformation of the latifundia system and the “creation of new relations of production in agriculture”. However, the Constitution was not finally approved until April 2nd 1976, and meanwhile land occupations had already taken place in various parts of the Alentejo province. Conflicts arose between occupying labourers, and political parties became active in supporting or attempting to suppress the Alentejan labourers as well as small and medium farmers also involved in the occupations. The agricultural labourers rapidly proclaimed that they wanted the land “to belong to those who work it”, which would involve the disappearance of the landowning class, especially the absentee latifundists. Unemployment was very high in the provinces of Évora, Beja, and Portalegre in 1974, and it is precisely in these districts that there was a strong implantation of the Southern Agricultural Labourers’ Union (Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Agrícolas do Sul), which was closely allied to the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP). Yet the rate of unemployment rose even more after the start of the revolution, partly due

10 This was a statement made retrospectively in his preface to the 1977 Portuguese edition about his earlier conclusions in 1971 (Cutileiro 1977: 403).

to the return to the land by workers from the industrial areas of Lisbon and Setúbal, and partly due to the landowners' subsequent offensive against the labourers. This created a situation whereby (a) jobs had to be secured for these "emigrants", (b) higher salaries (following a rise in wages won after the revolution) had to be paid to more employees, and (c) landowners responded by refusing to implement these rises and by dismissing a certain number of labourers, deliberately sabotaging agricultural work, breaking work contracts and "decapitalising" the estates by letting farm machinery fall into disrepair. Further, landowners smuggled cattle into Spain, thereby deliberately reducing the stock available to the cooperatives. As a result of these actions the labourers had to take over the land themselves in order to subsist and to stop the general "degringolade" (deterioration through neglect) of the estates.

On July 29th 1975 a law was passed declaring that rural properties of over 700 hectares, or an area classified as 50,000 "points", were to be legally expropriated.¹¹ Upper and lower limits were set for expropriation, in terms both of the area and the value of land – all land covering an area of more than 700 ha. was expropriable, while no unit of less than 30 ha. could be expropriated. Between these two extremes of 30 and 700 ha. any amount of land could be expropriated as long as it was calculated at a value greater than 50,000 points. The points system was calculated by taking an average surface area of land and working out the average income that could be derived from it. When the number of "points" had been determined for the various constituent plots of the landholding, this number was multiplied by the total number of hectares comprising the property. On June 23rd 1976 the law dealing with the "right of reserve" was passed, giving landowners the right to keep a minimum area of 30 ha. or 50,000 points.¹² The first draft of this law insisted on the landowners fulfilling specific conditions such as directly exploiting the land, depending on its yield for subsistence, and not owning any other properties giving further rights of reserve.

Finally, in 1977 the controversial Agrarian Reform Law (*Bases Gerais da Reforma Agrária*) was passed, and came to be known as the "Barreto Law",¹³ after the then Socialist Minister of Agriculture. One of the most disputed points in this law, which had important repercussions later, dealt with the concept of reserve, which was changed in favour of the ex-landowners who thus became entitled to more land through alteration of the points system. This directly caused the break-up of some cooperatives and Collective Units of Production (*Unidades Colectivas de Produção*). (The term Collective Units of Production – UCP – generally refers to the agricultural cooperatives under

11 Decreto-lei no. 406-A/75.

12 Decreto-lei no. 493/76.

13 Lei no. 77/77 of 29 September.

Communist Party control, as distinguished from those having an “independent”, mixed party composition. This distinction is further complicated by the frequent mis-naming of Collective Units of Production as cooperatives, and is thus not always clear-cut.) The points system was changed so as not to include forest land or cultivated land with short or medium production cycles, irrigation or civil construction works: therefore, orchards, vineyards, eucalyptus plantations, cork trees, and olive groves were no longer included in the calculations. Several “reserves” in one or many properties could be returned to their original landowners; there are examples of returned reserves which were subsequently abandoned, thus putting the rest of the cooperative depending upon them in jeopardy. At present (mid-1979) the law is being applied by force in some cases, with the Republican Guard resuming their traditional role of instruments of State repression after a period of minimal activity immediately following the revolution.

The first occupations in the Alentejo province took place both on the estates of the absentee landowners, as well as on those of the big capitalists who rented land from the latifundists; the movement was spontaneous to a certain degree, since it was not initially controlled by any political party. These first occupations took place on abandoned properties but spread to properties whose owners had refused to pay out any salary; in the forefront were the tractor owners, cultivators both of their own small plots and those of the landowners. They were joined by the casual agricultural labourers (as distinguished from permanently employed labourers). During this period, emigrants (from France and Germany mainly) returned and sometimes took over the leadership of the movement, since they were more experienced in various forms of struggle. It is important to distinguish between the different categories comprised in the term “agricultural labourer”, as conflicts arose between the casual workforce and the permanent labourers who considered themselves as part of an elite. Similarly, there were conflicts between skilled and unskilled labourers. Although the mainspring which motivated the labourers to occupy land seems to have been the increasing unemployment and greater pressure from the landowners, opinions are divided as to whether the occupiers were merely going out for “reformist” workers’ demands such as guaranteed employment, higher wages, and better labour and social conditions, or whether they were in fact trying to build a new social structure. This distinction had already been noted by Cutileiro in 1965-1967. Both then as well as in previous historical periods in Vila Velha, individual and collective grievances seemed to point only towards amelioration of temporary conditions and not to a basic questioning of the structure of society.

Within the district of Évora, the first occupations took place between February and March of 1975, following a pattern similar to that which took place in the province as a whole. The first recorded occupation was “led” again by

the tractor owners, who were followed by the temporary rural labourers; during this phase, the permanent labourers did not join in the movement. The occupations took place only on those parts of the land which could be cultivated with the help of the tractors, while large tracts of land were left unoccupied. From April to June (1975) the movement's class composition changed and the temporary labourers took the initiative away from the tractor owners and gained the backing of the Agricultural Labourers' Union and the PCP. The permanent labourers joined after the occupations, with the exception of the estate managers, who were traditionally linked with the landowners in economic and ideological, as well as kinship terms. The permanent labourers insisted on salaries being paid, and tried to prevent new labourers from joining in order to protect their own employment possibilities. From July to August (1975) two types of occupation took place: one led by the permanent labourers and the other by groups of temporary labourers guided by the union and political parties and organisations such as the PCP, the Armed Forces Movement (MFA), and the newly created Regional Agrarian Reform Centres (CRRA). The occupations were over by November 25th 1975, when the Armed Forces Movement and the PCP lost control of the centralized power structures. By this time 56% of all cultivated land had been occupied.

According to figures from the Agrarian Reform Centre in Évora, from February to November 25th 1975, around 1000 properties were occupied in the district, followed by the organizing of Collective Units of Production. The first phase of the occupations in Évora (1974-July 1975) has been viewed as aiming at the destruction of capitalism and not just of the traditional latifundia system, as there was no legal framework to the movement, while the second phase (July-September 1975) was enclosed in legality and dependent on the State apparatus and political parties. The last phase (October-November 1975) saw a growing amount of institutionalization and intervention by the political parties. Up to July 1975, 134 properties were occupied (12% of the area finally occupied) while during August and September, immediately following the passing of the first agrarian reform laws, 520 more properties were occupied (47% of the area finally occupied). From October until November 25th, the date marking the end of all occupations, 442 more properties were occupied (39.5% of the final amount). The amounts of land occupied during these three phases are also instructive. While in May 1975, only 15,000 ha. of land were occupied, a month later 20,900 ha. more were occupied, and from July to the beginning of August 60,300 further ha. were taken over. However, after October when the law dealing with agricultural credit was changed to cover salaries for the members of the cooperatives, the substantially larger areas of 120,000 ha. and then a further 200,000 ha. were taken over. There still remain (1979) 100,000 ha. of land in the district owned by the landowners and expropriable by law.

The role of the Communist Party during the process of land occupation and agrarian reform is significant. Some left-wing commentators (non-PCP) distinguish between the official line of the party (from the general secretary Álvaro Cunhal downwards) and the actions and ideology of the rural Alentejan militants who in some cases acted relatively autonomously. The conclusions of the first conference of the Agricultural Labourers of the South (February 9th 1975) in Évora supported the agrarian reform (a policy which has been on the communist agenda for a long time) because it emphasised “expropriations of large latifundia and large-scale capitalist agricultural enterprises”, but there was not a word of support for the land occupations already taking place in the district itself. The first occupations were not controlled by the PCP but, given their overall strategy, the party had to support them. An emphasis on “increased production”, a labelling of the first occupations as “wildcat” implying a certain amount of disapproval and fear of semi-spontaneous proletarian actions, and a continued insistence on increasing the area which should be cultivated, are a few of the salient points of the PCP line. This position derives from the fact that the PCP shared power in the government at this stage and was attempting to institute a rigid, State-controlled agrarian policy. There are differing views concerning this policy and the various statements made by the party, some commentators insisting that the party had no choice but to support the first occupations after they had occurred, while others consider that the grass-roots militants forced the urban-centered hierarchy to give more support to the movement. However, the view that the expropriations should not directly question the concept of private property but are useful in solving “problems of production and unemployment” is strongly entrenched in the official party programme.

In the “*concelho*” of Vila Nova ¹⁴ occupations took place from January to December of 1975. Five cooperatives were started, all of them duly legalised; one in August, two in September, and two in October. Two of the cooperatives fall in the range of between 1,500 and 2,000 ha., and the other three between 3,000 and 6,000 ha. (Freitas 1977). In February of 1976, 478 men and 91 women were part of the *concelho*'s cooperatives, while in the same month a year later there were 593 men and 76 women. Three hundred and sixty seven of the men were unskilled workers, as were 81 of the women. There were 38 male tractor drivers, 53 male foremen, 5 male assistants, and 10 female assistants. The total area of the cooperatives covered 18,139.5 ha., with an average of

14 It is significant that the areas of cultivated land that were occupied vary from *concelho* to *concelho* within the district of Évora – Vila Nova is in fact one of the relatively unoccupied *concelhos*. Apart from the major economic and social reasons for these differences, ecology also plays a part: Cutileiro mentions most of the parish's less fertile, dry and stony schist soils in contrast to the more fertile granitic soils in other areas (1971: 3-4).

3,628 ha. per cooperative. From February through September of 1975, 14 properties were occupied, their respective areas and numbers steadily increasing as the agrarian reform gathered momentum. A total of 24 further occupations took place in the month of October alone, covering an area of 9,088 ha.

In the parish of Vila Velha itself there were still three major latifundists at the time of the occupations (July 1976), although some changes in ownership had occurred since 1965 due to one case of inheritance partitions and another of the joining of two estates. In 1971, Cutileiro classified the three latifundists as all owning various estates comprising well over 500 ha. of land each: he mentions one latifundist's single estate (among his many) of about 640 ha. and another one's single estate of about 500 ha. (1971: 14-15). In 1978 the size of two of the three current latifundists' holdings were estimated at approximately 1,000 ha. each, and that of the third at 700 ha. The first Collective Unit of Production was formed on the expropriated land of one of the two larger latifundia. A second Collective Unit was formed on the third latifundium as a result of a split in the first. Both Collective Units are referred to locally as "cooperatives". There were conflicting views on the organization and efficiency of both of the cooperatives; one of them (resulting from the split) is considered to be badly run, conflict-ridden, and hierarchical. Some inhabitants criticise the enclosed and individualistic attitude of this cooperative's members, as well as their lack of concern for people not "in" the cooperative, and those without the economic support of a man (*e.g.* widows). Examples of this attitude include complaints about the members taking home agricultural tools and disagreements about the work to be done. The first cooperative was assisted in the beginning by a PCP militant who has now left, but the cooperative is still seen by both supporters and critics of the agrarian reform to be more efficiently run, better organized, and more congenial to work in. Cutileiro, however, views the situations of both cooperatives in Vila Velha in a rather more pessimistic way. He mentions the split within the first cooperative:

"The cooperative was a tense and unstable organisation. Its first manager, defeated in an election almost a year after having taken office, refused to leave and provoked a split: in September (1976) the cooperative had divided into two... the leaders of the two sides accused each other mutually of dishonesty, incompetence, and political opportunism. Both of the cooperatives were, according to their managers, in substantial debt to the State, and both doubted whether they could repay loans which had been granted them through an emergency credit scheme. There was no clear notion of the future legal status of the Units, nor were any specific economic plans for farming set up. The men were on the land and, in a certain sense, had the land, yet they had the conviction that, alone, they could do little with it..." (1977: 409-410)

“These frictions resulted in various material losses – there were tasks poorly carried out, others were either not executed at all or done out of season. Losses in moral terms were even greater – each of the managers of the two cooperatives relates detailed stories of the other’s abuse of power which fall within traditional categories of the misuse of power in the former agrarian system – favouritism towards relatives and compadres, seduction of subordinates’ wives (the managers consider themselves above other members), political intrigue at the centres of power – in this case the Agrarian Reform Centre and the Union. Furthermore they accuse each other of embezzlement and illegal sales of products...” (1977: 415)

Cutileiro’s interpretation of recent events will be discussed below; here however I will look at the ways in which classes and fractions of classes in Vila Velha itself view the changes since the revolution. At this point in my research, I can only give some indication of the class composition of these groups, but will elaborate further when discussing the conflicts within each class and between classes and/or fractions. The ex-latifundists and *proprietários* form one group, and the three shopkeepers, the two café owners, the hotel owner and his employees form another fairly distinct category. Employees of the Casa do Povo (a Salazarist institution), the doctor(s) and to some extent the priest (who also teaches at a secondary school in Vila Nova) are linked to the State apparatus and can be distinguished from both the second group mentioned above and the male workers at the nearby paper factory together with the rural labourers (members or not of the cooperatives). Women do not work in the factory, but some are cooperative members while others engage in seasonal labour. In the town of Vila Velha there was support both for the ideas behind the revolution of April 1974 and for the cooperatives formed after the passing of the laws, but there was also a feeling of mistrust for the “Left” in general and conspicuously little participation in the new democratic processes. Mistrust of bureaucratic structures, whether in prerevolutionary times or at present, is widespread especially since many of the employees in government and local administrative posts are either the same individuals as “before 25 April” or have been reinstated after an early attempt at purging (“*saneamento*”). Many villagers still have the necessity to find someone to help deal with problems such as the renting or buying of a house, the payment of a pension, the benefits which can now be obtained under the new Constitution, and the obligations of an employer.

In spite of the revolution of 1974 and its widespread changes and socialist intentions, and in spite of the strength of the PCP in the Alentejo region, politics are still very much personalised. The individual power of a person is one of the most important criteria for her/his gaining support, and new symbols are used to label people as either “good” or “bad”. In reaction to

these new political forces, however, traditional categories of classification and exclusion are used. Recently, attempts at labelling “outside”, unknown and strange groups of people who are felt in some way to threaten stability and “normality” in the community are carried over and applied to members of new groups such as the PCP (illegal before 1974). Types of people as well as clandestine activities are frequently referred to as examples: among these are gypsies, Jehovah’s Witnesses, politically active women, as well as rumours such as the “invasion” of the Alentejo by Cuban agents, and the stealing of children for indoctrination by the “comunistas”, etc... In similar terms, the division of the world into two great opposing forces is also verbalised: fears about outside interference from either the “communists” (Soviet Union) or the “fascists” (USA) were emphasised to label any difference of opinion, at times revealing confusion as to what the terms actually meant and lack of information about the overall strategies of the two sides.

Womens’ participation in political activity in Vila Velha is minimal, although in other parts of the Alentejo women have often been the most radical of workers and active in the forefront of the occupations. Since there is a high proportion of illiteracy, and as they must deal with such people as seasonal employers (of olive-picking teams etc.), ex-landowners who employed them as domestic servants, unreliable administrative bodies, teachers, doctors, and chemists, women are especially dependent on others who can read and write and who can understand complicated bureaucratic procedures. For instance, legal rights such as pension schemes, maternity benefits and medical aid were not always clearly explained and were presented as favours rather than rights: the procedures did not always facilitate easy access to legal rights guaranteed under the Constitution. Women are rarely unionized and do not know what their salaries should be, although they are now becoming more aware of their rights. This distrust manifests itself in relation to political parties, census-taking and the voting process itself, which together with a general lack of information about outside, urban-centred policies, create a tendency among women to view all political issues through the individuals who represent them, and to judge first the people then the policies. Most women still receive unequal pay and are excluded from public places such as the square, the cafe, and administrative centres in the nearby town of Vila Nova (ten miles from Vila Velha).

“Democracy” in Vila Velha is seen as almost a farce and is not perceived as coming “from the people” but rather from above, administered by similar if not the same people using different terminology in order to confuse people in the same way as before. Those who are able to use sophisticated intellectual constructs, even in relative terms, are those who wish to reverse many of the early revolutionary changes. People depend on them for explanations, skills, and information in order to elaborate on what they receive from the media (mainly television).

If we turn to consider the conflicts between groups/classes and within them, in the case of the ex-latifundists and the *proprietários*, an alliance was forged by such organizations as the Confederation of Portuguese Farmers (CAP), and by parties like the CDS and PSD who advocated stopping the agrarian reform and supported the return of the reserves to the ex-landowners. Their main centre of activity was the town of Vila Nova, as well as Évora. Although they were allied against the communists, the cooperatives, and the Armed Forces Movement, there were some internal conflicts arising out of the *proprietários*' ideologically closer link with the labourers. The shopkeepers, hotel and café owners usually supported the latifundists/*proprietários* since the former had depended on the latter's patronage in pre-revolutionary times, and had to some extent been distrusted by the labourers. The priest and the local Church hierarchy continued with its propaganda about the threat of communism, and in the case of Vila Velha, tried to influence the women, since they maintained a closer relationship with the Church than the men. The local doctors were divided in their political outlook: the older, more established ones (both from Vila Velha and Vila Nova) were by and large opposed to the agrarian reform, while the younger doctors were by and large supportive of it. The employees of the Casa do Povo were involved in attempts to undermine the agrarian reform through their backing of the Socialist Party during the elections, and were criticised by the labourers for reproducing pre-revolutionary Salazarist structures. There were conflicts between factory workers and the agricultural labourers, due to the former's higher salaries, as well as conflicts between the cooperative labourers and those labourers who were not members. The main area of conflict lies between on the one hand the latifundist / *proprietário* group, and on the other hand, the labourers who work on the cooperatives, those labourers not in the cooperatives but who support the agrarian reform, and non-labourers who are in favour of the agrarian reform. The latifundist / *proprietário* group actively seeks to undermine the cooperatives, through propaganda, threats and support for right-wing parties, and are rapidly gaining ground due to the implantation of the Barreto law, which has been suspended only recently due to the impending elections (December 1979). There is a group of PCP militants and a group of cooperative labourers who actively support the agrarian reform, but who are viewed with disfavour in Vila Velha as a whole. (These two groups are from both Vila Nova and Vila Velha.)

Thus although one group actively fights against these changes and a smaller group struggles to "defend the conquests of 25 April", the majority see themselves as carrying on much as before, as Cutileiro's passage above suggests, in spite of the upheaval from 1974 through the end of 1975.

IV. CUTILEIRO'S ANALYSIS OF THE AGRARIAN REFORM

We can now move on to Cutileiro's analysis of the course of the agrarian reform in the parish of Vila Velha. Developments after 1974, according to him, led not to the creation of a new "socialist mode of production" but rather to a situation suggestive of the post-revolutionary reinstatement of former structures of power. Cutileiro speaks first of the occupations and then of the critical lack of organized leadership:

"The agrarian reform, as it has progressed up to now, has not been a conquest but an order, grafted on a population drawn to it in haste and with no political or union experience, and which followed the 'plans' of a force external to itself (political parties, union, Armed Forces). These 'plans' opened the path of the great Alentejan millenarian dream – the end of the latifundias, the handing over of the land to the people – and they were obeyed if not always with enthusiasm, yet always with great hope. This external force exerted itself visibly, organizing and assisting the occupations... The workers should occupy the land, that was the first step towards opening a just and prosperous future; after the act of occupation was accomplished, there would arise, generated by the revolutionary process itself, the new structures that would ensure that future... Once the occupations were completed, however, the revolutionary process did not generate satisfactory new structures, and problems arose that neither the workers nor their mentors were in a position to resolve." (1977: 415-416)

"There are no local revolutionary structures that have been tempered through a prolonged political struggle, legal or clandestine, or through union struggle, or through a guerilla war, in which cadres could have been formed, hierarchies established, a new ethic validated, and which could have filled the void left by the destruction of the former regime – that ethic itself progressively becoming emptier of content and collapsing totally with the triumph of the revolution. As events occurred, the removal from Vila Velha of half a dozen families and the creation of collective units on their land destroyed part of the former structure, but the region and its problems remained, so to speak, encapsulated within the rest of parish life." (1977: 418)

The two main reasons suggested by Cutileiro for the particular course taken by the agrarian reform appear deceptively simple at first glance: (a) the lack of a coherent political programme relating to the creation of a new agrarian structure (with the exception of the PCP), and (b) the lack of preparation amongst rural labourers. However, the apparent obviousness of these reasons must be discussed in relation to Cutileiro's explanations of the aims of the agrarian

reform process where he states that the leaders must have had one of two alternatives in mind: either those leaders wished for the rapid development of a new structure in the Alentejo with the rest of the country following their lead, or the State would be forced to take control in order to make the cooperative sector work, through repression if necessary. All of Cutileiro's interpretations of various aspects of the agrarian reform process and its shortcomings are based upon these two key statements: those interpretations are the subject of this section.

Firstly, he under-emphasises the hypothesis that the agrarian reform emerged out of struggles between spontaneous occupation movements, firstly as a reaction against high unemployment and sabotage attempts by the latifundists, and secondly as a direct challenge to latifundists and "progressive" capitalist landowners. As noted earlier, it was not until distinctly later that the PCP and the Armed Forces Movement tried to establish control of these movements by actively dissuading and opposing workers' control movements, and by curbing "wildcat" occupations through the use of force. By conceiving the development of the agrarian reform process as a juxtaposition of events and leaders, the latter passively awaiting the adherence of the rest of the country or expecting the State to take over the organization and running of the cooperatives, Cutileiro similarly suggests that there is a "lack of organizational ability" amongst these rural labourers. Lacking their own autonomous drive, the rural labourers were thus dependent upon some form of "vanguard", as neither they themselves nor other left-wing parties¹⁵ (Cutileiro implies) had any operative political programmes. Similarly, Cutileiro's earlier analysis of the 1911 and 1962 rural strikes in the Vila Velha region stressed the fact that even during those rare historical instances of collectively organized action, "working-class consciousness and loyalties are ill-defined and difficult to express for lack of political organization and for fear of repression..." (1971: 89).

One result of this point of view, minimizing the labourers' potential as an active autonomous group, is Cutileiro's isolation of the Alentejan agrarian reform from other forms of activity being carried out in the rest of the country – *i.e.* the role of grass-roots militants, the non-aligned Left, the rapid flowering of experiments at autonomy in democratic structures, the formation of such organizations as workers' commissions, health centres, cultural and educational centres, tenant and consumer associations, and the generalized experience gained in collective action by both men and women. Rather than

15 Among others, the principal ones include: Aliança Operário-Camponesa (AOC), Frente Socialista Popular (FSP), Grupos Dinamizadores de Unidade Popular (GDUP), Liga Comunista Internacionalista (LCI), Movimento Democrático Português (MDP – also MDP/CDE), Movimento de Esquerda Socialista (MES), Movimento Reorganizativo do Partido do Proletariado (MRPP), and União Democrática Popular (UDP).

implying that these new structures (like the agrarian reform) are now controlled by new patronage mechanisms, the struggle for power could perhaps be situated on a different axis: that of the PCP line on the one hand, versus other more libertarian left-wing groups on the other, the latter concerned with workers' control demands and general movement towards the institution of genuine autonomy for the mass of workers and labourers. Although it could be argued that Cutileiro is discussing the agrarian reform in the Alentejo and not the revolutionary process as a whole since 1974, his consideration of the agrarian reform separately from these other forms of action underplays the fact that political consciousness gained in one area can spread to another, especially since rural labourers do have support from other sections of the country (for example, the industrial workers in the Lisbon and Setúbal areas). By regarding the question of the agrarian reform as an independent process, it is more difficult to view it as part of a general movement towards transforming conditions of existence.

A second essential issue is the question of whether these rural labourers desired a purely bourgeois "democratic" reform programme or whether they were aiming at wider revolutionary change throughout the country. Cutileiro repeatedly mentioned this point in his earlier book. Thus, during the 1911 rural strikes labourers were "making demands from their position of labourers, not attempting to change that position. These demands made life more difficult for their employers but did not directly threaten the latter's ownership of land" (Cutileiro 1971: 85). More recently Manuel Villaverde Cabral (1978: 425) has addressed the same distinction by separating demands for land reform and land partition by poor peasants from genuinely proletarian movements with distinctly socialist ideologies and the primary aim of securing labourers' jobs. The former, in broad terms, are usually concerned merely with the extension of ownership rights to land on an individual basis, whereas the latter form of movement demands a radical restructuring of both an extremely unequal land tenure system as well as the general working conditions of labourers. Why does Cutileiro hesitate in defining the agrarian reform in Vila Velha as a movement of the latter type? A partial reason may be found in his conception of the role of political leaders. His constant emphasis on individual leaders – the "vanguard" – devalues the collective action of the rural proletariat as a whole and supports the idea that the proletariat must be led, whether by Right or Left. Thus he maintains that the rural labourers are not merely dependent on "leaders" for even the most minimal organization of workers' demands (let alone larger revolutionary goals), but he also implies that the Alentejan labourers are incapable of autonomous political action outside the framework of party-line policies (referring here to the Socialist and Communist Parties). There is no analysis in the postscript of the other left-wing political programmes or of the divergence of these with the PCP

programme, although he twice mentions “parties of the Left” (Cutileiro 1977: 406-407). Further, a more detailed analysis of the potentially shifting alliances of the “semi-proletariat” (Cabral 1978: 419-420) or of various groups within the general category of rural labourers might have been useful here. This is particularly important when considering the class composition of the groups which adhered to programmes defined either by rigid party directives or more flexible courses of action.

This position concerning leadership is further strengthened by Cutileiro’s categorization of some aspects of these labourers’ political action as “millenarianism”. Two quite distinct forms of movement – occupations with coherent programmes of action, as well as occupations’ regarded as “revolutionarily illegal” due to their lack of such programmes – seem to be described as millenarian. Rather than elaborate upon his earlier analysis of concrete proletarian demands and achievements, Cutileiro now emphasizes, in ideological terms, the past desires and “dreams” of the labourers. Examples of his use of the millenarian concept appear at three points in the postscript. At one point he speaks of the “great Alentejan millenarian dream” and at another of the labourers’ “millenarian enthusiasm aimed at destroying the existing structure” (1977: 421). He then makes the distinction between movements of “mass enthusiasm” and those which are truly revolutionary:

“Because of the occupations it was frequently said that... in the Alentejo there arose a truly popular revolution. This assertion is, in the case of Vila Velha, erroneous. The occupations were directed from the centres of power. The popular response that they received was due to two causes: the express intention of those in power – in its simplest terms – was to take advantage of an ancient desire of the populace, and that power seemed consolidated enough to allow risking the fulfilment of their plans and the satisfaction of those desires. (The old caution continued, however, to reveal itself: there are very few people enrolled in political parties in the parish and extremely few activists...)

But one cannot confuse a movement of mass enthusiasm, vigorously assisted by the established power, with a revolutionary movement. For the latter to have existed one of two things (or a combination of both) would have been necessary – a generalized revolutionary consciousness, and a cohesive, organized, and firm vanguard. Neither of these existed. There are some regions in the Alentejo where the Communist Party had dedicated militants many years ago who, after the 25th of April, working within the legalized party and the Union, could perhaps have constituted that vanguard and contributed to the first premonitions of a Leninist revolution. This was not the case in Vila Velha....” (1977: 416)

Cutileiro counterposes the two forms of movement and suggests that the Alentejan agrarian reform exhibits characteristics of millenarian hopes on the part of the labourers, and consists of political manoeuvring and exploitation on the part of those in power.

By emphasising the role of outsiders during the events taking place within the parish, Cutileiro places less emphasis upon the programmes put forth by the rest of the Left and the collective activities of the rural labourers themselves, depicting them as refusing to accept changes which did not come from “above”. “If we do not [occupy] they will, was the reasoning which finally urged them to act. They were the labourers from outside, controlled by the Union; we were the men who worked on the estates” (1977: 413). The theme of the role of “outside stimulus”, whether in the form of individual outside leaders or of the effects of wider district or national movements sparking more local ones, is central to Cutileiro’s 1977 postscript and was discussed in his earlier work. For instance, during his analysis of the 1911 and 1962 strikes, he stresses this point:

“[...] neither in 1911 nor in 1962 was there any collectively expressed hope for a change in the property structure. Labourers fought qua labourers within a given order; they did not query that order. This contrasts sharply with the situation in Andalucia described by Diaz del Moral and must be attributed to less effective political instruction. Even in present-day conditions labourers express, in private, the conviction that land should be redistributed. But, in the absence of outside stimulus and support, individual aspirations are not organized in any significant and operative way.” (1971: 89)

In his treatment of the 1976 occupations Cutileiro notes that after preliminary land occupations the first Collective Unit of Production was set up by local estate labourers who, significantly, “in the face of imminent occupation by labourers from outside, had decided to get ahead” (1977: 409).

This emphasis on the role of outside forces and his references to Leninism led Cutileiro away from analysis of either the ideological constraints within which the rural labourers still operate, or the wider politico-economic structure of Portugal. In the latter case some important factors are: the international influences exerted on Portugal’s political parties, the disfavour with which European leaders viewed the agrarian reform mainly because of its Communist influence, and the ambiguity of the PCP itself in relation to Euro-communism and PCP supports for the Soviet State. In the former case more attention could have been given to the patriarchal / hierarchical forms of social relations which continue to reproduce traditionally debased categories such as “women” and “outsiders” in order to counteract rising consciousness of collectivity and

equality developed during political change. Within such a framework, it is only a minority who wish to continue with the agrarian reform process, with the majority of the country in opposition to it. By arguing that these groups are in a minority in Vila Velha (having previously stated that Vila Velha is representative of the Alentejo province as a whole) Cutileiro seems to take an ideological stance not unlike that expounded by the right-wing parties at present (CDS/PSD/PPM),¹⁶ in which “minorities” within Portugal such as the PCP, southern agricultural labourers, the “extreme Left”, and the unions are presented as out of step with the rest of the country. This view both of leaders and of minorities is reinforced by omitting the importance of male dominance. Male ideology concerning the seduction of women was and is widespread in the Alentejo as a whole, and though this happened frequently in the past (the almost institutionalized adultery) there is less pressure now for women to accept this form of economic survival for the sake of their families. By not questioning *machismo*, Cutileiro underplays the real power relations between men and women. These issues are crucial to a post-revolutionary period when, although the legal status of women has much improved, they are still subject to certain forms of oppression in most social spheres.

Another group dealt with are the union and cooperative leaders. Here Cutileiro suggests that these leaders were not perceived as “honourable” by people in the parish and gives several examples of the complaints made against them (as quoted above, the seduction of women by new “bosses”, and the occurrence of fraud). Following the passage quoted earlier concerning the absence of a cohesive vanguard in Vila Velha, Cutileiro mentions seven local leaders (1977: 416-418). He states that of the three cooperative managers, two were emigrants and none were members of the PCP prior to the revolution. While these three leaders all possessed great energy and oratorical abilities, they were viewed locally as clever and active individuals, but “not particularly inspiring of confidence” and lacking in personal, professional, and union prestige. Cutileiro reveals that two of these leaders told him that “if things became very complicated and they got tired, they would leave...”. Similarly, the three union delegates in the parish are described as lacking in former political and union experience. None of these delegates had previous connections with the PCP either. One of them did not exert the “energy and efficiency expected of him” in providing employment for labourers, and another (a sharecropper) acted in a similar way by “granting favourable treatment to some *proprietários* with whom he had relations of kinship and friendship”. The seventh person mentioned is the local leader of the League of Small and Medium Farmers (Liga dos Pequenos e Médios Agricultores). Related by kinship to the *proprietário*

16 These three are the more influential ones: Partido do Centro Democrático Social (CDS), Partido Social-Democrata (PSD – formerly PPD), and Partido Popular Monárquico (PPM).

group, this leader is described as “far from being considered a personification of the traditional values of honour and shame either by his own group or by society in general...” and as having made a “drastic conversion to the Left” following April 1974. Cutileiro’s point is clear – as a “vanguard” these leaders left much to be desired. Further, he implies that most of these leaders took advantage of aspects of their positions related to patterns of patronage or personal kinship ties, and also that many of them were either minimally dedicated, or simply unsophisticated, militants.

Cutileiro also suggests that the cooperatives were not working because of the exclusion of certain categories of people: the estate managers (“*feitores*”), renters (“*rendeiros*”), and a number of *proprietários*. In the first case, ideological links between managers and latifundists were often more clearly visible to the rural labourers inasmuch as the managers were felt to be more repressive than the absentee latifundists. Managers were judged in some cases to be traitors to their class, and in other cases as part of the oppressors’ class (especially when related by kinship to *proprietários* or latifundists). This group was both feared and disliked and, caught between two classes, chose to ally themselves with those in power. In the second case, that of renters of land, no single category accounted adequately for those who rented land, since some renters employed labour and others did not. Renters as a whole occupy a complicated class position; this is especially apparent in the case of those who do employ labour. Among these, there was antagonism between “temporary” employers and their labourers; this accounts for their alienation from the agrarian reform process, as indicated by Cutileiro. In the third case, the *proprietários* within the parish had little real fears of expropriation considering the amount of latifundists’ land still to be expropriated. They formed the nucleus of an informal right-wing group which did not disdain (and in some cases resorted to) the use of violent means for the furthering of their interests. Crucial to Cutileiro’s argument is the fact that members of these three groups either did not join or were excluded from joining the cooperative movement; for the cooperatives this meant a loss of potential technicians.

The technical aid granted to the Collective Units of Production / cooperatives came from an Emergency Credit Program and the Agrarian Reform Centres, which organized the distribution of credit facilities for: (a) the payment of labourers’ salaries, (b) aid to small and medium farmers, and (c) aid to latifundists whose land had been expropriated. Further, the composition of the Agrarian Reform Centres changed after November 25th 1975, when many of the left-wing activists were dismissed and replaced by technicians who favoured the ex-landowners and *proprietários*. By emphasizing the technical aspects of the process of agrarian reform and the lack of managerial experience on the part of the labourers, Cutileiro implies that only capitalist orientated, modernised, and technically sophisticated enterprises run by efficient

managers and contented workers are capable of “saving” the Alentejo from running at a loss and being subsidized by the rest of the country. (Significantly, the province was termed by Cutileiro in his earlier study as nothing but “a ‘backyard’ of an old civilization” – 1971: 7.) Revolution does not “work” and Portugal is more important than one province which is under the control of a non-democratic minority.

It would be interesting at this point to discuss Cutileiro's mention of the 1975 and 1976 election results both within the parish and at the national level, bearing in mind the difficulties involved in relying upon election results for the analysis of political allegiance. He interprets both the electoral success of the Socialist Party in the two “*Assembleia*” elections¹⁷ and the presidential victory of Ramalho Eanes in 1976 as partly due to an “anti-communist” stand taken by the electors as well as a rejection of right-wing policies. (In both *Assembleia* elections the Socialist Party obtained the highest number of votes in the parish, followed by the PCP, PSD, and CDS in that order.) He states that “this electoral behaviour does not appear to reveal an ample and firm implantation of the Portuguese Communist Party... the model of communism or of communist control is not to the majority's liking; thence the socialist vote within this block of the Left, a vote which, as in other regions of the country, can be interpreted to a large degree as an anti-communist vote” (1977: 411). There are, however, a few clarifications which have to be made: (i) in local terms the PS and PS/Independent list for the municipal elections in 1976 was not only an anti-PCP list but also a list standing for a right-wing position, which became clear after the local party representatives were elected (this position included opposition to the agrarian reform, maintenance of ties with ex-latifundists / *proprietários*, and lack of support for any new cultural and political projects suggested by the Left); (ii) Cutileiro does not discuss how the lists were drawn up or which groups/individuals influenced their composition (e.g. the priest, the Casa do Povo employees, *proprietários*); and (iii) there was a suggestion of a left-wing alternative to the PCP in the presidential elections of 1976, when Major Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho obtained a higher vote than Octávio Pato, the PCP candidate. If it is true to say that the electoral results were by and large “anticommunist”, it is also true to say that they were not the result of “moderate” leftism.

A major element in Cutileiro's analysis which contributes to the vision of a misguided agrarian reform is his use of the concept of patronage. In the case of those leaders to whom he devotes such attention in his postscript,

17 There have been four sets of national elections so far: (1) 25 April 1975, for the Assembleia Constituinte; (2) 25 April 1976, for the Assembleia da República; (3) 27 June 1976, for the Presidency of the Republic; (4) 12 December 1976, for Municipal Bodies (Autarquias Locais) (see MAI 1976a, 1976b, 1977).

the argument repeatedly suggests the reinstatement after the revolution of old patrons by new ones. We recall that one of the accusations levelled against the two managers of Vila Velha's divided cooperative was that each of them "favoured relatives and compadres", and that in the case of all of the three cooperative leaders, the revolution had come to be their "great adventure" and they were "obviously enjoying the patronage that their position of intermediaries between the central power and the parish allowed them to exert" (1977: 417). Clearly, these leaders are not following the guidelines of a new socialist ethic but falling back into patterns of the misuse of power at the root of the structure of the former regime. Rapidly following the first stages of the revolution, villagers themselves fell into the same patterns as some of the leaders mentioned above – *i.e.* interpreting what was to be a new form of leadership through an old style of patron-clientage which viewed the occupants of positions of power and authority merely as deliverers of goods or favours to loyal clients. An excellent example of this is the way in which the previously feared Republican Guards, identified under fascism with "the authority of the ruling classes", were now by-passed by villagers who went with complaints of a legal nature directly to the new Armed Forces headquarters in Évora. These headquarters were now considered a type of Solomonic Court of Justice where cases were put forth and from which "immediate and visible justice" was expected (1977: 407-408). The Armed Forces themselves could not fulfil these personalized expectations for very long. Yet while from the villagers' point of view the past is not looked back upon with nostalgia, the essential political predicament remains – Cutileiro implies that among those "who played the roles of the powerful or of the intermediaries of power" (1977: 421), what took place was merely a theatrical change of costume.

Patronage was one of Cutileiro's major topics in *A Portuguese Rural Society*. The effectiveness of the local system of patronage (along with political repression) in preventing the labourers from initiating any form of organized collective action (except in 1911 and 1962) is emphasized throughout the book. The use of patronage by clients is seen, from below, as an individualized solution, both partial and temporary, to the basic inequality and corruption pervading rural society under fascism. This is a crucial point with regard to the failure of collective organization; if individual clients seek to operate the mechanisms of a corrupt society for individual ends through the exchange of services and favours with individual patrons, then the chances for collective organization must have been minute. Cutileiro concluded that the whole society operated at "the level of individual interests and not at the more general levels of community, party, ideology, or class" (1971: 222). While he stressed in 1971 that patronage was not in itself a sufficient answer to the question of why social revolution never even really began in the region, Cutileiro did maintain that it was a major deterrent operating within the political system of the Corporate

State. In the 1977 postscript, patronage is also given special attention. Cutileiro implies that one prime explanation for the agrarian reform's shortcomings in Vila Velha is located in the reinstatement of the patronage system and the influence of individual leaders. He focuses on the obvious power of these leaders and their re-enactment of old patterns of privilege and patronage.

Cutileiro places only minor importance upon the role of right-wing forces following the revolution. The difficulties encountered by party militants in the region cannot be blamed merely on the relative isolation of the area, but more significantly on the entrenchment and power of the Right in local terms – *i.e.* the activities of individuals such as functionaries of State organizations (the Casa do Povo and the Junta de Freguesia), some shopkeepers, a local hotel owner, ex-employees of wealthy landed families, various informal groups of ex-latifundists and *proprietários*, and the Church. Again, this is a topic on which Cutileiro had much to say in his original book. As at other times when the local latifundists feared the onset of social protest, with the possibility of a “communist” regime taking over in Spain in 1937, a branch of the “Portuguese Legion” was formed in Vila Velha:

“This is a para-military organization modelled on similar organizations in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy and Spain, that aims to safeguard the regime and prevent political insurrection. Most latifundists, some professional men, and some proprietarios joined the Legion, and their employees, administrative clerks, and some small shopkeepers and crafts-men, all of whom were more or less dependent on them, were made to join as well.” (1971: 219)

Although in 1965 the branch was to all intents defunct, Cutileiro's point seemed to be to highlight the historical reality of the pervasive power of the Right in Vila Velha. A similar although less successful form of control was attempted by the Church: “From as far back as people can remember, the Church has been identified with the rich and with right-wing policies, and the latifundists are well aware of its potential role among the labourers” (1971: 40).

Formal right-wing groups were also formed after the revolution, for example the Free Association of Farmers (Associação Livre dos Agricultores) and later the Confederation of Portuguese Farmers (Confederação dos Agricultores Portugueses). These organizations gained progressively more power and influence after November 25th 1975 when many left-wing activists working in local agrarian reform programmes were dismissed, accompanied by general harassments of those on the Left and the withdrawal of financial support for newly formed structures and their members. The 1975 purges that Cutileiro refers to did not seem particularly effective and many of those “purged” returned to their original posts of power or were never replaced at all. Cabral gives a

good example of this process when he notes that although in 1975 the leaders of the former Agricultural Guilds (*Grémios da Lavoura*) were purged, the “old local rulers” of the Guilds regained control of the cooperatives formed within them; this testifies to the persistence of these local *caciques*’ economic and ideological power in rural communities (1978: 429-430). The clientelist nature of Socialist Party politics, due to the absence in its development of large-scale organization during clandestinity, is also not considered. In fact, it is not really clear whether, in relation to the agrarian reform, the Socialist Party has followed specifically left- or right-wing policies; Cabral maintains that in 1976 the Socialist Minister of Agriculture Lopes Cardoso, along with Prime Ministers Azevedo and Soares and the later Minister of Agriculture Barreto, still saw the de-proletarianization of the Alentejo region as a direct prerequisite for countering PCP control. Part of the proletariat would thus be absorbed by the class of small peasants on their way towards non-State controlled modernization. Further, during the first constitutional government in which Prime Minister Soares and Minister of Agriculture Barreto formed a part, the right of “reserve” for ex-latifundists was substantially increased (Cabral 1978: 426).

A final problem is the question of Vila Velha’s “typicality” within the Alentejo region. This is a crucial point, for although historically the villages in the parish seem to have had very few political active lists, other areas in the province are renowned for their militancy. In 1971 Cutileiro already touched upon the problem, maintaining that the villages he studied may not have been typical of the province and that only more complete future sociological study of the province could elucidate the matter further. There is some evidence of a reputation for non-revolutionary attitudes in Vila Velha: in 1911 in one of the villages in the parish, when knowledge of the strike’s approach became known, “everyone in the village shut himself up at home because its exact nature was not understood” (1971: 86). Voting patterns in the four sets of national elections from 1975 through 1976 are only briefly mentioned in relation to the parish of Vila Velha, without consideration of election results in the immediately surrounding parishes. Vila Velha in fact exhibited a pattern of voting considerably to the right of its neighbouring parishes in the *concelho* (MAI 1976a, 1976b, 1977). Cutileiro is aware, however, of this surrounding context and mentions it twice – in the first case he states that during his return visit in September of 1975, the small landowners, renters, managers, and shopkeepers in Vila Velha were “alarmed at the course of the agrarian reform in other parishes (nothing had happened yet in Vila Velha)...” (1977: 412). Secondly, he stresses the fact that Vila Velha was an atypical parish in that the occupations there took place very late and “as a result of the agitation that spread through the district” (1977: 413), and that it was only one year and four months after the passing of the first agrarian reform law that all expropriable land in the parish had been occupied (1977: 409). Further, the town of Vila Velha had

already a decade earlier become a local tourist site: “the charm of Vila Velha has attracted many tourists, and wealthy city dwellers have bought houses in the town for week-ends and holidays” (1971: 127).

Given that Vila Velha was not typical of the region with respect to the dearth of its own politically minded labourers, how can Cutileiro’s use of Vila Velha as representative of the Alentejo province in the post-revolutionary period be entirely justified? (He begins the post-script stating that he will “speak at many points of the Alentejo in general, and not only of Vila Velha” – 1977: 404.) What is suggested is that the historical absence of local leaders in this particular parish provided him with a situation, after the revolution, in which he could stress the role of outside forces and leadership. In other words, in a parish with few active leaders, once the revolutionary process had begun in 1974, a “vanguard” had to be brought in to lead the rural labourers.

V. CONCLUSION

A major point in Cutileiro’s analysis of the agrarian reform is his partial use of a Leninist model of revolution.

One theme of the 1977 postscript is his brief mention of Lenin’s theory of revolution. Although he seems to apply a Leninist model of the “vanguard” when discussing revolutionary activity in the Alentejo, he does not give any detailed analysis of either Lenin’s theories (on the role of the vanguard, the State) or of the PCP’s line *vis-a-vis* these concepts. He suggests that the leaders of the agrarian reform process (mainly affiliated with the PCP) desired and fought for a revolution on the Leninist model but, understandably in such a short postscript, could not discuss Lenin’s actual views on how this was to be achieved. Further, Cutileiro’s references to Lenin imply that only the PCP approached a reasonable model of a vanguard party – this is perhaps why he stressed the lack of prior connections between the seven local leaders and the PCP. At a more general level, this line of analysis suggests that in the long term revolutionary movements cannot succeed without such an organized vanguard.¹⁸

A brief look at the aims of the PCP, as contrasted to Cutileiro’s specific interpretation of what that party’s aims and strategies consisted of, may clarify a number of points. The PCP did not intend to dismantle the State, especially

18 This is a complicated theoretical question, and concerns differing definitions of “spontaneous” movements and the varying roles in such movements of leaders, whether local or outsiders. For two distinct views, see Mandel (1970) for a general treatment of the Leninist theory of organization, and Kaplan (1977) for a specific analysis of Spanish anarchism in the later 19th century. Further problematic is the question of whether the seven leaders Cutileiro mentions are to be seen, in strict terms, as either constituting members of a vanguard party, or as the “advanced workers” who provide the link between the vanguard party and the “mass of workers”.

as it chose to share power in the 1974-1975 government coalitions, attempting to control the process of agrarian reform. The State apparatus was by and large left intact apart from a series of purgings and internal reforms. While on the one hand the PCP helped with the “legalization” of workers’ commissions, and on the other hand acted in some cases against the labourers and industrial workers, it had no intention of using the State to repress a mythical majority of the country. In accordance with the Euro-communist parties’ line, the State is conceived of as a neutral entity whose “economic functions” can be used for the socialization of the productive forces. (The PCP, however, defines its theoretical position as distinct from that of Euro-communist parties.) According to the Euro-communist parties, the State is reduced to an instrument capable of being manipulated by whoever is in power. The PCP followed a strategy whereby it allied itself with various sections of the bourgeoisie against the power of the monopolies, an alliance which based itself on the concept of “advanced democracy”. Thus, a discrepancy appears between the actual aims of the PCP and Cutileiro’s apparent interpretation of the PCP as merely out for seizing State power.

Cutileiro characterizes Portugal as a country in a state of siege by an undemocratic minority. While recognizing the struggle for power which the PCP is carrying out (including an alliance with sectors of the national bourgeoisie), he might have considered the way in which other parties engaged in this alliance and acknowledged that the PCP did not propose a complete reordering of the social structure. This leaves aside the question of how the Alentejan workers and labourers in many cases organized themselves despite PCP leadership. The points made above indicate Cutileiro’s concern with the necessity for Portugal to “unite”, the needs of the “majority” of the people, and the isolation of the Alentejo province with respect to the rest of the country. Later the PCP retreated into reformist demands and was incapable of stopping the increasing attempts to halt the agrarian reform. Having constructed this interpretation of the role of the PCP, it is more difficult for him to give adequate credit to genuine activities initiated and carried out by the rural labourers themselves.

It is this over-emphasis of the role of the PCP as well as “vanguard” leaders and their individual manipulations of the traditional power of patronage which is most problematic in Cutileiro’s 1977 analysis of the agrarian reform. Considering his detailed examination of the conditions of the rural labourers in 1965-1967, it is disappointing that he should so hastily refer to a Leninist model only partially useful for the analysis of an ongoing revolutionary situation. As a result, he falls short of conveying the full complexity of the struggle between various classes and groups in the agrarian reform.¹⁹

19 The specific position of the anthropologist who is an “insider” to the society studied by him/her is also clearly of relevance. See Cutileiro (1971: preface, 1973, and 1977: *prefácio* and *posfácio*).

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