

Agricultural Sector – Before and After the 25th of April of 1974 and Portugal entrance in, the designated, European Community, in 1986 (Project iRemember)

Preceding the 25th of April of 1974, Portugal lived under a dictatorial regime, ruled, first, by *António de Oliveira* Salazar and, afterwards, until that date's Revolution, by Marcelo Caetano. For as long as forty eight years, the country lived socially under oppression and alarmism, deprived of freedom of choice and expression, respecting only the population minimal rights, determined by that period established regimen. Regardless the acquired right to express their vote, Portuguese people were submitted to a single choice political party regimen without representative alternative. National economy was mainly supported by agriculture and its population was, in large numbers, illiterate, which deprived them the knowledge of their civic rights.

Until, the also known as, "Carnation Revolution" (*Revolução das Cravos*), farmers and workers laboured from dawn till dusk, lacking, frequently, safety and hygiene conditions, stripped from the right to strike and unemployment subvention and, those few that benefited minor State support, had to prove their inability to earn some sort of income, able to sustain them and their family. Portuguese population, overall, had no right to enjoy vacations and its only spare day was Sunday, and even this not always, due to economical need. There was no minimal wage, belonging to the employer the responsibility of setting this value, which was not always the fairest. Women were discriminated, not even being allowed a word to say regarding their personal and family life. Few worked outside their household and, when it happened, the earned salary was much lower than the man. Portuguese were devoid of any rights, and could not express themselves against the dictatorial politic, or else they would be imprisoned by the Political Police (PIDE).

After the 25th of April of 1974 Revolution, this reality dramatically modified, as a year after the Constitution suffered changes, which led to Portugal living under a Democratic regimen. Amongst several achievements, were seen, as for labor market concerned, many benefits for working class, namely, all workers, regardless their race, sex, ethnicity, religion and policy preference, being given parity accessing employment, formation and professional promotion. Measures such as forty hours of weekly labor were applied, parceled eight daily hours, wherein extra hours should be paid a higher value. It was established, also, a value for a minimum wage, the right at strike and medical, maternity, paternity and breast-feeding leaves. The law protected, as well, the sick and invalids, with subventions and, also, foresees, henceforth, maternity, food and family allowances. Furthermore, workers carrying out activity under a contract without fixed term have the right to holidays and thirteenth month allowances.

The 25th of April of 1974, in Portugal, marks a political revolution, from a dictatorial regime to a democracy, which led, inevitably, to an economic revolution, stand on a closed market corporatist model (narrow relation between Portugal and its African colonies) to a regional (European Union) and global market economy.

Alongside that political and economic revolution radical modifications of cultural and social dimension can be found and, also, regarding education. From 1974 to 1976 become years of transition to a model different from the previous in all of society dimensions. Education was no exception, playing a major role shaping this new society citizens, desirable to be democratic, and the policymakers concerns towards education where schematized immediately as shown on the I Transitional Government program.

As of media, the 25th of April marks a radical shift of context and practices on social communication. Along the XX century we may individualize a set of significant events as for the social communication regards, from the Republic establishment in 1910 till the European integration in 1986. Betwixt 1974 and 1979 we are able to identify three defining moments for the media system as we today know it: freedom acquired after the 25th of April, with the end of censorship and the prevalence of a total liberty of expression, the nationalization occurred over 1975 (which affects particularly press and television) and the legislative regularization of 1979 that allows in multiple ways to define the juridical frame of social communication.

Thus, the 25th of April marked lastingly the Portuguese society, enabling finding in most indicators a clear differentiation in values, attitudes, and social and cultural habits. Portuguese current predominant values are those of an open society, allowing that a society's openness may be measured thru several dimensions, as for an instance, the right to vote or the liberty of opinion or expression.

The Portuguese society was, before 1974, typically, uninformed as regarding that most of its inhabitant's education would not surpass the fourth grade. Though new generations, along the last thirty years, have introduced fundamental changes relating this, the Portuguese society is still far from being depicted as having the essential requirements for a general manipulation of information by the majority of its constituents. If, of what skills it's regarded, the situation as changed for the after 25th of April of 1974 generations, for the elderly ones little or naught as changed, as a result of a weak investment at theirs scholar qualifications. So, if those born after 1967, acquire nine or more years of scholasticity, the opposite occurs amongst the more aged, with them possessing solely six or less education years.

Citizens with higher education completed in Portugal represent today a significant number. However, these values are still insufficient for not characterize our society's population as uninformed, for it still consists, mostly, of the elderly, them lacking the possibility of resuming studies.

In the years preceding the Revolution of the 25th of April of 1974, some of the manpower was absorbed by farming, fishing and tourism. The remainders would not suffice to fill the vacancies available at commerce and industry, that is, the population drifting from rural and inner lands, the so called rural exodus, was insufficient for these sectors manpower needs, located, mostly, at big or under development urban centers.

The last twenty years were marked by two decisive processes to understand the economical and political contours that the country bears today, the democratization initiated in 1974, with the fall of the New State (*Estado Novo*), and the accession to the European Community (EC), in 1986. In the mid-century farming and the rural society reached their biggest demographical expression, for in 1950, the rural active population surpassed 1.5 million people. After twenty years, in 1970, it saw a cut around a third of that number and in 1981 it suffered a decrease to half. That farming determinant factor to unfold agricultural production levels was its population. Mechanization was scarcely implemented (only 0.25% of exploitation where kin to mechanical labor means), the consumption of chemical fertilizers and pesticides was far reduced and the land was the key element in the organization of production and the structure of the rural society. In southern fields the land, divided in large estates, was the nuclear element of a social-economical organization, where the agricultural temporary employees were the main rural active population. Therefore, both in southern fields and family farming areas, the land structured power and social relationships that defined rural society. It was also the land, in an agriculture strictly protected from foreign markets competition and established on a technological system reluctant to embrace work productivity increase, the economical support for the agricultural activity and the element which allowed comprehension of the rents and incomes enjoyed by each of the social groups bonded to agriculture. With industrialization and urbanization breakthroughs, farming lost weight, regarding the country's economical development. The agricultural sector revealed incapable to keep up with industries evolution and, simultaneously, the country increasingly opened doors to foreign, as citizens of other countries entered, the area under cultivation was diminishing and technology thrived. The land's declining political and social weight was also clear, on this period, amongst the rural manpower of the southern field's conflicts. The small allotment as main objective or as eventual safeguard went blurring since the sixties. The tractor and the combine harvester imposed utterly and made, each day, the small cereal allotment less appealing; cultivation intensified in the finer lands and the extensification, the afforestation and the forsaking increscent in the remainders, the repression persisted, but emigration and working opportunities at Lisbon-Setubal area widened workers horizon, that departed in great number; migratory ranches from the areas family farming areas decayed, for emigration desolated their villages too. In this context, unemployment decreased and workers could demand and fight for higher wages and better laboring conditions, the big strikes that made its course thru Alentejo in 1962, marked this new period where defending one's job would stand as the local alternative for the possible exodus to the major urban centers or others countries, namely Europeans, such as France and Germany.

Following the 25th of April of 1974 Revolution's, the agrarian reform raised as a movement, in which were recognized many of those who opposed the dictatorship and led by political and union organizations at their formation or, for those bearing a well rooted history, remaking themselves legally and publically. The land issue was, consequently, in the forefront of the political and ideological debate and the Constitution enacted in April of 1976 and approved, by a large majority, in the Constituent Assembly, elected in April of 1975 foreseen, explicitly, the agrarian reform and the support for the small and medium farmers and for cooperatives and forms of collective exploitation. The legitimacy of such reform was warranted by the need of changing both life and population conditions as labor conditions, imposed, for decades, to rural workers by landowners and big companies alike, and glimpsing that this changes served as an adjustment of agriculture for its role function to play in the economic system. Amidst 1974-1976 the State power approved a wide range of measures destined to fulfill the agrarian reform and to offer support to family farmers, but its substantiation depended mainly upon the relationship of forces, established regionally, because, as previously noted, the capacity of the State empowering its measures was frail facing, in what regards farming and rural society, the regional dynamics.

In 1986, Portugal's adhesion to European Community (EC) brought, immediately, two major consequences to the Portuguese agriculture: the incoming of large sums of money and the beginning of the customs protection fall, though this one effects are being attenuated thru a long transition period. In those regions where the rural society upheld mainly in agriculture, Inner North and Alentejo, depopulation grew. In North Littoral still subsisted a rural society which, as once before was noted, did not rely exclusively of agriculture. Farming struggles hardly and unsuccessfully against the EC economy, to which is each day more exposed, in other words, it is still incapable to address the demands set on it by the current economic model. The land loses economic weight, as it is been happening since the sixties. Gone are the years when all available space in lands was not sufficient for all those willing to labor on them and the landowners that imposed their greedy interests in an economy well protected from outer interference.

Currently, the agricultural population is characterized by a major change, regarding what was previously exposed, and a large cut in manpower, essentially due to farming modernization, to other more appealing activity sectors, rural exodus, an aging population, to population's low education levels, mainly senior population, the lack of skills update, consistent to technology progress, invalidating the sector evolution's. Rural families, nowadays, tend to be multifunctional, embodying several functions and activities, allowing incoming supplements. The machinery used in this sector has been replacing manpower, reducing work stations and demanding more skill of its workers, demand, occasionally, hard to accomplish due to the low education level of much of the population that embraces this activity and their advanced age, averting them for keeping up towards technological development. Latterly, too, is a rule that parents and guardians try to grant their children and students the possibility to complete advanced studies, instilling them, early on, to be fond of other professions unrelated to rural practice.

The transmission of knowledge and techniques is becoming less common, since those who have it lack those to offer it, as like it was decades, when it was done generation down to the next. Such experiences eventually are lost to the passing of time, tending to be, increasingly, less meaningful. As well the policies implemented by our successive governments, changing conceptions from one mandate to another, now voting this sector forsaken, now employing measures for its reactivation, creating, thus, social and economical instability, for those who do embrace this activity, alike for those willing doing so. Let us not forget that agriculture has once been the most significant activity sector in our country and that, in the past, sustained families and villages, safeguarding our population from greater needs.

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