

History of Anarchism in Timor Leste

Vadim Damier, Kirill Limanov

2017

In 1892 — 1896, Portuguese anarchists conducted a series of attempts. In 1892, they threw a bomb at the Spanish consulate in Lisbon, protesting against the arrests of comrades in Jerez. Later, a bomb was detonated at the house of Count de Folgosa, who gave a reception in honor of the royal couple. In 1893, an attempt was made to assassinate the king, and on January 26, 1896, a starving worker threw a stone into the royal carriage.¹ A bomb was dropped into the house of the Minister, Dr. Joyce.

In response to the actions of anarchists and other protests, the authorities in 1892 introduced a law, according to which, the convicts for such actions could undergo deportation to the overseas possessions after serving their sentence.² On February 13, 1896, the Portuguese government passed a new law that permitted imprisonment with subsequent deportation to a penal colony for a term of up to three years, with the possibility of extending those who “by statements and words, expressed in public, in writing, published in any way, or with the help of some other means of publication, protect, welcome, recommend or provoke subversive acts as resistance to public order, even if this provocation does not have the effect, and threaten the security of people or property, as well as profess the doctrine of anarchism, leading to the implementation of such acts.” As the Portuguese lawyer José António Barreiros points out, any opposition could be brought under the category of crime.³

In accordance with this law, the Portuguese authorities began to expel anarchists in the colonies, including Timor. On the way, anarchist João Manuel Rodrigues managed to escape in the port of Cape Town from the ship “Africa”, which drove the prisoners. Another escaped anarchist Gilberto dos Santos was caught and subsequently died of a yellow fever.⁴

A group of deported anarchists was taken to Timor on September 14, 1896. Many of them soon died from severe conditions and tropical infections. As follows from a letter sent from Dili and published on June 14, 1905 in the newspaper “Epoca”, José Miranda (on December 22, 1896)

¹ C. da Fonseca. Introduction à l'histoire du mouvement libertaire au Portugal. Lausanne, 1973. P.18.

² F.A. de Figueiredo Timor. A presença portuguesa (1769–1945). Dissertação de doutoramento em história. Universidade de Porto. Faculdade de Letras. Porto, 2004. P.492.

³ J.A. Barreiros. Criminalização política e defesa do Estado // *Análise Social*. 1982. Vol.XVIII (72-73-74). No.3-4-5. P.815.

⁴ L.J.W. van der Walt. Anarchism and Syndicalism in South Africa: Rethinking the history of labour and the left. A thesis... for the degree of Ph.D. Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand, 2007. P.201.

and Bernardo Caldas (on November 18, 1897) died of malaria; yellow fever claimed the lives of José Dias de Loureira (on August 13, 1899) and Carlos Augusto da Fonseca (on October 10, 1903). The deported Rodrigo da Silva died on March 25, 1900. “The situation of the living is not much more pleasant ...”, the authors of the letter wrote.⁵ In January 1908, anarchists José Carvalho and Manuel Coelho Traficante were transported to Timor after they were deportee to Macao and organized there a group “Dawn of Freedom.”⁶ The survivors managed to return to Portugal only after the fall of the monarchy in 1911. But the health of many was irretrievably undermined: shortly after the return, Joaquim Raimundo dos Santos (participant in the assassination of Dr. Joyce) and Joaquim Marques died.

About half a dozen exiled anarchists have adapted to the life on the island, and worked in public services; they got families and stayed in the colony.⁷

A new wave of political repression in Portugal and of deportations had raised after the imposition of the state of siege, arrests of workers’ activists and an attempt on the head of the Lisbon police in the spring of 1925.⁸ Some of the detainees were soon sent to the colony, others were detained in the Portugal until April 1927, and then deported.

April 14, 1927 the warship “Pêro de Alenquer” sailed from Lisbon to Timor with the deportees on board. The voyage lasted 6 months, and on the way the ship went to the Cape Verde Islands and to Portugal Guinea, where some involuntary passengers were unloaded, but new inmates were taken on board. 75 of these “social” deportees were planted on September 25, 1927 in the Timorese port of Aipelo, where they were placed in temporary premises.⁹ Basically, these were workers and artisans accused of belonging to the “Red Legion”, of an attempt on the head of the police and of others “crimes.”

Not having instructions from the central authorities what to do with the deportees, Governor Teófilo Duarte (1926 – 1929) decided to use them to raise the colony’s economy.¹⁰ He granted them freedom within Timor and some means of subsistence, and organized public works.¹¹ However, the following governors, Cesário Augusto de Almeida Viana (1929–1930) and António Baptista Justo (1930–1933), abandoned such a relatively mild policy.¹² In 1931, there were about 60 deportees from this group on the island. In the same year, a small monthly cash payment for subsistence was assigned to them: in 1935, according to the government’s decision, it was a sum of 27 patacas.¹³

Among these deportees, there was also a printing worker Manuel Viegas Carrascalão, born in São Brás de Alportel, secretary-general of the Syndicalist Youth. He was arrested in 1925 and sentenced to 6 years in prison by a military tribunal. He remained on the island, creating a rela-

⁵ S. de S.D. Baracho. *Entra duas reacções*. Vol.3. Lisboa, 1918. P.202. See also: J. Freire. *Freedom Fighters: Anarchist Intellectuals, Workers, and Soldiers in Portugal’s History*. Montréal, 2001. P.15–16. (J.Freire wrote about “Dias Lourenço” instead of “Dias de Loureiro”)

⁶ J. Freire. *Op.cit.*

⁷ F.A. de Figueiredo. *Op.cit.* P.492.

⁸ V.V. Damier. *Zabytyi Internacional*. Vol.1. Moskva, 2006. P.368.

⁹ M.S. Barreto. *Deportação, Colonialismo e Interações Culturais em Timor: Caso dos Deportados nas Décadas de 20 e 30 do Século XX // Encontro Europa – Oriente, Oriente – Europa. Perspectivas Coloniais dos Séculos XIX e XX*. Lisboa, 2014. P.72.

¹⁰ F.A. de Figueiredo. *Op.cit.* P.707. A.M. Cardoso writes about 65 deportees brought on the ship, see: A.M. Cardoso. *Timor na 2ª Guerra Mundial. O Diário do Tenente Pires*. Lisboa, 2007. P.235–259.

¹¹ M.S. Barreto. *Op.cit.* P.77.

¹² *Ibid.* P.78.

¹³ F.A. de Figueiredo. *Op.cit.* P.707–708.

tively prosperous hacienda “Algarve.”¹⁴ Of the other anarchists and syndicalists brought in this party, there were municipal employee Alfredo Pereira Vaz; metalworker Alvaro Damas; construction worker Antonio Conceição Pereira; painter Arsenio José Filipe – anarcho-syndicalists and “bomber” who had already been deported to the Cape Verde Islands and Guinea (on the Timor, he was sent to Atauro three times, including twice for fishing with dynamite, and once in Suai for fight with the governor’s chauffeur); his brother, painter, trade union activist and bomb manufacturer Jose Filipe; metalworker Domingos Paiva, participant of the “Red Legion”; Spanish anarchist Francisco Ureña Prieto, who was previously held in Madeira; laborer Ilario Gonçalves; and José Castelo.¹⁵

Among the other anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists caught up in Timor, there were: employee of the cork industry José Gordinho; baker João Maria Major; metalworker Joaquín da Silva¹⁶, worker of the canning industry Etelvina (deported in 1931 and died on the island)¹⁷, etc.

Even more intense repressions against anarchists, anarcho-syndicalists, communists and republicans were unfolded after the establishment of a military dictatorship in Portugal in 1927. On June 28, 1931, from Lisbon, the ship “Gil Eanes” sailed through the islands of Cape Verde, Portugal Guinea and Angola. It brought to Timor 90 deportees (both political and criminal).¹⁸ On September 2 of the same year, a ship “Pedro Gomes” was sent from Belem with 271 civilian and 87 military deportees who participated in the uprising in August 1931. The ship sailed through the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal and reached Timor on October 16. People deported on these two ships were placed in concentration camps organized by the colonial authorities in the Ocussi enclave and on the island of Atauro; they had to remain there for many months. February 28, 1932 a group of prisoners managed to escape.¹⁹

Conditions in the camps were heavy. Atauro Island, 22 km. to the north of Dili, was a “natural” concentration camp, and in Ocussi, the camp was surrounded by moats and guarded by armed soldiers with machine guns; the prisoners were housed in two wooden barracks covered with palm leaves, in the midst of a rice field, in an extremely humid locality that attracted many mosquitoes. Soon, prisoners began to suffer of malaria. Many did not receiving medical care; the food was hideous and meager, and the deportees began to die. After the appeal from the League of Veterans (among the prisoners there were participants in military uprisings) to the Ministry of Colonies, the government ordered the release of deportees from the camps, but without permission to leave Timor. Almost 500 of them were delivered to Dili, accounting for almost a third of the European population of the colony. Some of them went to the mountains to do farming, others settled in the capital of colony.²⁰ In January and February 1932, most of the prisoners left the camps and were resettled under the supervision of military authorities.²¹

¹⁴ Memória Libertária. Anarquistas deportados para Timor fundam Aliança Libertária em Dili // coletivolibertarioevora.wordpress.com...

¹⁵ E. Chamberlain Forgotten men: Timorese in special operations during World War II. Point Landsdale, 2010 (E-Book). Annex A, D – ru.scribd.com...

¹⁶ E. Rodrigues E. A oposição libertária em Portugal, 1939 – 1974. Lisboa, 1982. P.279–284.

¹⁷ AIT-SP, SOV Porto. Enfrentar as ameaças do presente sem perder a Memória Libertária – sovait-porto.blogspot.ru.

¹⁸ According to A.M. Cardoso, there were 30 deportees brought on this ship on October 21, 1931; s.: A.M. Cardoso. Timor na 2ª Guerra Mundial... P.235–259.

¹⁹ M.S. Barreto. Op.cit. P.72–73.

²⁰ Ibid. P.74–75.

²¹ F.A. de Figueiredo. Op.cit. P.709.

Among those brought to the island in 1931, there were such prominent anarchists as Raul Pereira dos Santos (one of the activists of the Syndicalist youth), José Lopes, Amandio Pinto and Arnaldo Simões Januário from Coimbra. Some of the deportees tried to organize resistance. There was arson in the palace of the governor for the purpose of attempting his life. A group of anarchists organized an underground revolutionary Libertarian alliance of Timor. Simões Januário, while still in prison, managed to buy a typewriter and began to publish on it a small newsletter as an organ of the Libertarian alliance created on his initiative.²² At least three issues of the bulletin are known; the third, with a volume of 13 pages, is dated December 1932.

The underground work of anarchists on Timor and their “deep anti-nationalist aspirations” aroused the concern of the Portuguese authorities.²³ They were also accused of “harmful influence” on the local population and of support of the riots of non-Europeans.²⁴ In 1933, the group was uncovered and defeated; the alliance’s bulletin, the archive and the printing press were confiscated by the authorities, and a group of activists was arrested and sent to prison on the Atauro island (including Pereira Vaz and J. Castelo, brought in 1927; locksmith Cesar de Castro, brought in 1931; Manuel Quintas, João Maria Major). They were punished with a work on a limestone mine.

Raul Pereira dos Santos was put in prison in Batugada for writing material on “the conditions in which the natives are.” Later, he, as a member of the Libertarian alliance, was also transferred to Atauro.²⁵

On December 5, 1932, the Portuguese government declared amnesty of political deportees sent to overseas possessions. On April 27, 1933, a part of the deportees was planted on the ship “Mozambique”, which brought them from Timor to Portugal. The amnesty did not apply to the 50 “most dangerous”, to all “social” deportees and to those who were brought in 1927. The authorities did not reckon the participants of social, labor and trade union protests, including many anarcho-syndicalists and anarchists, to “political” prisoners, considering them “terrorists.”²⁶

One of the liberated was Simões Januário. Returning to Portugal, he settled in Coimbra and took part in a revolutionary strike and rebellion against the dictatorship of Salazar on January 18, 1934. Arrested again, he was thrown into prison and then sent to the Tarrafal concentration camp, where he died on March 27, 1938.²⁷ The freedom was also given to Raul Pereira dos Santos (later participated in the Spanish Revolution of 1936) and to Joao Maria Major (then again arrested in Portugal).

The remaining active anarchists continued to be persecuted. In November 1933, an order was issued to conduct a “strict investigation” of the actions of “political and social deportees.”²⁸ In 1934 there were 55 “social” deportees brought to Timor in 1927, and 50 brought in 1931 (including 11 on Atauro, as A. Pinto and S. de Castro).²⁹

With the outbreak of World War II in the Pacific, Portuguese Timor became an object of confrontation between hostile forces, despite the neutrality of Portugal itself. In December 1941,

²² M.S. Barreto. *Op.cit.* P.78; L. Portela, E. Rodrigues. *Na inquisição do Salazar*. Rio de Janeiro, 1957. P.45.

²³ E. Chamberlain. *Faltering Steps. Independence Movements in East Timor – 1940s to the early 1970s*. Point Lonsdale, 2010. P.7.

²⁴ F.A. de Figueiredo. *Op.cit.* P.712.

²⁵ E. Chamberlain. *Faltering Steps*. P.7.

²⁶ M.S. Barreto. *Op.cit.* P.75.

²⁷ M. J.M. Arnaldo Simões Januario: 70 anos depois da sua morte // arepublicano.blogspot.ru...

²⁸ E. Chamberlain. *Faltering Steps*. P.7.

²⁹ F.A. de Figueiredo. *Op.cit.* P.914–918.

Australian and Dutch forces entered the colony, and in February 1942 the Japanese troops made the same. The armed forces of Japan, having occupied the colony, launched terror against the local population and against the Europeans on the island. Under these conditions, many deportees, including Manuel Viegas Carrascalão and some other anarchists, assisted the Australian units or even fought on their side. In late 1942 and early 1943, persons who actively collaborated with Australian forces (including the anarchists Pereira Vaz, A. Damas, Antonio di Conceição Pereira, A.J. and J. Filipe, D. Paiva, F. Ureña Prieto, I. Gonçalves) were evacuated to Australia, some of them with families. Most of the evacuated were stationed in the former Bobs Farm military camp, 58 km. from Newcastle.³⁰

The conditions of life in the camp, according to the Australian authorities themselves, were “serious”, and many placed there complained about inequality of conditions. The prisoners were divided into three categories: Europeans from Portugal; priests and nuns; and, finally, the Timorese, Europeans born in Timor, and people of mixed descent. Dissatisfied people refused to comply with the established rules, to prepare food, to work on orders from the authorities and to “cooperate” with him. Some of the deportees traveled to Newcastle, found work there and established contacts there with trade union and leftist circles, including members of the Australian Communist Party. In February 1943, the camp authorities reported that 5 people caused unrest among the inhabitants and refused to work. Among them, there were anarchists A. Pereira Vaz and José da Silva Gordinho, who, according to the authorities, represented “the worst type of person who was present in the camp.” But there were other “troublemakers”, among whom the anarcho-syndicalist A.J. Filipe. Thanks to their agitation, as the authorities reported, a cry among the deportees emerged, that “all are equal in Australia”; “all Portuguese official control was lost, and a definite hatred developed.” On the night of April 27, 1943, a riot broke out in the camp. In the dining room, Vasco Macal, armed with a spoon, attacked the Portuguese official, Americo Rente; a fight ensued, and J. Gordinho called on the deportees to arm themselves with knives and deal with their enemies. The priest J. Garcia Goulart asked the Australian authorities to remove the deportees from the camp. As a result, the priests were taken out, and the rebels remained for a time in the Bobs-farm. Nevertheless, in the summer of 1943 the evacuees were divided: 360 people remained in the camp, and 170 were sent to work in Armidale and Marysville (including Pereira Vaz). After some of them returned in August-September, a group led by Gordinho and A.J. Filipe called a rally of deportees on the evening of September 14. Gordinho said: “Now we are together, we are in the majority, we are united, and if we cannot go our own way, then we will fight.” After that, the camp administration took out Gordinho, A.J. Filipe and Amadeo Neves in Newcastle, where they were sent to work in the house of the Salvation Army, and on September 23, 1943, they and 12 other political deportees (including anarchist F.Ureña) were interned at the Liverpool camp in Sydney. There they were wearing red robes of prisoners of war. Later, other groups were added to them (among them was the anarchist A. de Conceição Pereira). So, on October 26, the brother of A.J. Filipe, José Filipi, was subject to internment: he was evacuated from Timor in August and, according to the denunciation of the Portuguese authorities, must be interned as a “very bad man.” Demanding release, 27 Liverpool prisoners went on hunger strikes on January 19–22 and on February 16–29, 1944. As a result of these first protests, the first group of internees (including A.J. Filipe and Gordinho) was released and sent for “limited residence” on the Minimba farm at Singleton. 12 others, including José Filipe, were sent to the internment

³⁰ E. Chamberlain. Forgotten men. Annex A, D

camp in Tatura in early April 1944, where they were allowed to reunite with their families. In August, José Filipe and others kept in Tatura were also transferred to Minimba. The evacuees who stayed at the Bobs Farms were moved to Narrabri West in January and February 1944, and in May 1945 all Minimba residents (except J.A. Filipe and 2 others) were allowed to move there.³¹

After the end of World War II and the end of the Japanese occupation of Portuguese Timor, on November 27, 1945, 562 evacuated to Australia sailed from Newcastle to Dili on the ship “Angola.” Among them were F.Gordinho, J.A. and J. Filipe. A.Pereira and S. de Castro remained in Australia.³²

The Portuguese authorities announced in 1945 expulsion from the colony of deportees who still remained on Timor or returned from Australia. Gordinho arrived in Portugal on the same ship “Angola” on February 15, 1946, but he was arrested by the secret police of PIDE.

After 1945 there was no organized anarchist movement on Timor. The remaining relatives and members of the families of the deportees took a place in the Timorese society in the following decades; they participated in political life and resisted the Indonesian seizure of East Timor after gaining independence from Portugal (1975–1999).³³

After the liquidation of the Indonesian occupation, some workers activists of Australia tried to help strengthen non-governmental organizations in East Timor. In 2000, the Sydney organization of Industrial Workers of the World helped create the East Timor Community Computer Project. Together with other unions, the IWW collected money to buy used computers and send them to Timor. The project coordinator in Dili, a IWW member, carried out direct installation of computers to Timorese non-governmental organizations, radical left and student groups, and schools.³⁴ In Bebonuk, the organizer of the IWW opened a free computer school, which was visited daily by about 6 pupils. Later, the IWW attempted to extend the project to various parts of Timor. To support this work, the Sydney IWW organized a charity concert on May 3, 2002, all proceeds from which went to fund the project. However, already in 2002 it was reported that the project is experiencing difficulties and suffers from a shortage of funds, and the computers are almost not distributed. It was decided to gradually phase out the project.³⁵ At the moment, we don’t know anything about some organized libertarian movement in Timor Leste.

³¹ Ibid. P.37–46, 69–76; Annex A, D.

³² F.A. de Figueiredo. Op.cit. P.917–918.

³³ direkte aktion. 1992. Mai-Juni. No. 92. S. 13; CNT. 1992. No. 2; CNT. 1994. No. 167. P. 9.

³⁴ Ross. East Timor militias, NGOs, activists and anarchists – www.ainfos.ca.

³⁵ lists.iww.org.au.

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Vadim Damier, Kirill Limanov
History of Anarchism in Timor Leste
2017

libcom.org

theanarchistlibrary.org