

“THE SPIRIT OF APRIL 25 MUST REACH THE COUNTRYSIDE”: THE POLITICAL FRAMING OF RURAL CLASSES THROUGH THE PRESS DURING THE 1974–1975 PORTUGUESE REVOLUTION

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ABSTRACT

Without understanding the political foundations and the cultural shift that occurred during the Carnation Revolution, it would be impossible to analyse the responses of the new authorities in the press, one of the structuring vectors of the revolutionary reality. The practice of democracy is intrinsically linked to freedom of expression, a capacity that fosters public debate and consequently becomes one of the foundations of political life. Within this framework, the article examines this reality by exploring the convergence between political periodicals and their conception, mobilisation, and instrumentalisation as a tool for orienting and framing a specific social stratum: the rural classes. By focusing on newspapers, magazines, and party bulletins then in existence, as well as on particular publications produced or sponsored by the State, the study seeks to understand the distinct forms of political communication that the press enabled between 1974 and 1975, at both the discursive and visual levels. This approach allows us to problematise the press as a vehicle of information and as a device for constructing meaning, mobilising audiences, and generating contestation during a period of profound political and social reconfiguration. Methodologically, are combined techniques of textual criticism, the study of visual languages, and discourse analysis procedures, articulating them with a historical contextualisation of the revolutionary process. This analytical triangulation enables the identification of patterns of representation, strategies for addressing specific audiences — particularly rural audiences — and modes of legitimising conflicting political positions. In this way, the article deepens our understanding of the role of the press in shaping political publics, circulating competing narratives, and crystallising social categories during the revolution.

KEYWORDS

Carnation Revolution, periodical press, political communication, rural classes

“O 25 DE ABRIL TEM DE CHEGAR AO CAMPO”: O ENQUADRAMENTO POLÍTICO DAS CLASSES RURAIS ATRAVÉS DA IMPRENSA NA REVOLUÇÃO PORTUGUESA DE 1974–1975

RESUMO

Sem compreender os fundamentos políticos e a viragem cultural que se operou na Revolução dos Cravos, não seria possível analisar as respostas dadas pelo novo poder no domínio da comunicação social, um dos vetores estruturantes da realidade revolucionária. O exercício da democracia encontra-se conectado com a prática da liberdade de expressão, capacidade fomentadora do debate público, que, consequentemente, se torna numa das bases para o funcionamento da política. Tendo presente este enquadramento, o artigo analisa esta realidade, explorando a convergência entre a imprensa periódica de natureza política e os modos como esta foi concebida, mobilizada e instrumentalizada enquanto ferramenta de orientação e enquadramento de um

estrato social específico: as classes rurais. Ao privilegiar o estudo dos jornais, revistas e boletins dos partidos políticos então existentes, bem como de algumas publicações produzidas ou patrocinadas pelo Estado, propomos compreender as formas específicas de comunicação política que a imprensa tornou possíveis entre 1974 e 1975, tanto no plano discursivo como no plano visual. Esta abordagem permite problematizar a imprensa como veículo de informação e como dispositivo de construção de sentidos, de mobilização e de disputa num período de profunda reconfiguração política e social. Metodologicamente, são combinadas técnicas de crítica textual, estudo das linguagens visuais e procedimentos de análise do discurso, articulando-as com uma contextualização histórica do processo revolucionário. Esta triangulação analítica possibilita identificar padrões de representação, estratégias de interpelar públicos específicos, em particular o público rural, e modos de legitimação das posições políticas em confronto. Este artigo permite, assim, aprofundar a compreensão sobre o papel da imprensa na formação de públicos políticos, na circulação de narrativas concorrentes e na cristalização de categorias sociais durante a revolução.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Revolução dos Cravos, imprensa periódica, comunicação política, classes rurais

1. INTRODUCTION

The military coup of 25 April 1974 opened the doors to a “revolutionary explosion” (Rosas, 2022, p. 40) and to an “intense struggle, of contours not always clear, that overflows the walls of the centres of power” (Rezola, 2005, p. 370) between 1974 and 1976. The possibility of building democracy spread across various domains, including the press. Accordingly,

one of the mottoes of April, as might be expected, was the unavoidable “freedom of the press”. Created within a framework originating in the media apparatus of Salazarism, censorship soon fell under the scrutiny of bayonets and carnations. (Cádima, 2001, p. 321)

After an authoritarian regime in which censorship was one of the primary instruments of political and cultural control for over 40 years, the desire to write, edit, report, and publish without condemnation from censors became a contested field. The media sector presents itself as “a social institution that, in democratic societies, has succeeded in consolidating the autonomy of its field of legitimacy despite the privileged relationships it maintains with other fields. Domains such as politics, the economy, or religion have traditionally sought to co-opt it” (Luís, 2021, p. 277). During the revolutionary period, the media were the site of struggles between political and ideological forces and were far from autonomous in their functioning. They were, instead, spaces of direct political combat, with editorial boards replaced, newsrooms occupied, and content manipulated to serve interests — whether those of the revolutionary left or of moderate and conservative sectors. Within this highly politicised environment, notable episodes exemplify this dynamic, such as the dismissals of journalists at the *Diário de Notícias* (P. Gomes, 2014), the *República* case (Ribeiro, 2013), and the conflict surrounding Rádio Renascença (Santos, 2005). Beyond the proliferation of titles, the periodical press during

the Carnation Revolution transformed newspapers into “political actors” (Borrat, 1989), giving rise to a genuine “militant journalism” (Mesquita, 1994). According to Pedro Marques Gomes (2020), “to look at the pages of newspapers during the revolution is to dive into a Portugal in turmoil”, in which “journalists had little time to reflect, amid the whirlwind of events multiplying at every moment” (p. 299).

In the domain of rural society, the revolution manifested in strong mobilisation of agricultural workers in the fields of the South, culminating in agrarian reform, which received legal coverage in 1975. In the North, disputes over the restitution of common lands, the burden of land rents, and the inadequacy of social protection mechanisms fuelled significant rural social movements. For conceptual clarity, the designation “rural classes”, as employed in this study, refers to social and economic groups living and working in rural areas, with distinction primarily determined by land ownership. This category includes peasants, rural wage labourers, small and medium landowners, large estate owners, as well as temporary and seasonal.

The selection of this social category aligns with the objectives set for Portuguese society following the 1974 revolution. The Armed Forces Movement (MFA) considered that the “most exploited classes during the long tenure of the deposed regime” were “the working classes engaged in manual labour – the industrial workers and peasants” (Comissão Coordenadora do Programa do MFA, 1974, p. 3). The mobilisation of the rural population in the construction of the “new country” and the creation of an image of the people was established along a dichotomy based on property structure and class consciousness. In the North, the military was to effect a rescue of the peasants through structured intervention after years of cultural, economic, and social delay, as emphasised in the MFA’s cultural mobilisation campaigns. In the South, a higher level of politicisation rendered the region a mirror of the forward-looking aspirations that the revolution valued.

At the intersection of these dynamics — the media and political activity — titles associated with political organisations emerged or were reissued, some addressing rural themes, forming one of the many components of the “discursive boom” (M. Gomes, 2014, p. 181) of those years. From the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) persisted *Avante!*, *A Terra: Órgão de Unidade dos Camponeses do Norte*, *O Camponês: Órgão dos Operários Agrícolas e Camponeses do Sul*, and *O Militante*; from the Socialist Party (PS) came *Portugal Socialista*. On the left, other publications were founded, such as *A Terra: Órgão do MRPP Para o Movimento Camponês*, from the Portuguese Workers’ Communist Party/Movement for the Reorganisation of the Proletarian Party, and *Ribatejo na Luta* from the Popular Democratic Union. On the right, the *Povo Livre* of the Popular Democratic Party (PPD) appeared. Outside the party sphere, periodicals emerged that, while lacking evident affiliation, aligned with the revolutionary atmosphere, such as *Jornal Camponês*. State-run publications also contributed, including *Vida Rural: Revista da Reforma Agrária*, which focused on rural life, agricultural activities, and examples of agrarian reform in socialist countries, and *Correio do Povo*, which reported on the living conditions and demands of peripheral communities. This specific media field during the revolutionary period exemplifies how “it is in the course of the acceleration of its operating rhythm that a social field formalises and increases its symbolic visibility” (A. Rodrigues, 2001, p. 148).

Based on this framework, the present study aims to analyse the forms of political mobilisation promoted by newspapers and magazines directed at peasants and agricultural wage workers, who acquired an unprecedented capacity for collective action. Regarding the state of the art, in addition to comprehensive studies on the press and media in the context of 25 April (Cádima, 2001; H. Lima, 2022; Mesquita, 1994) and on international media perceptions of the revolution (M. Gomes, 2015; Luís, 2021; G. Rodrigues, 2007; Varela, 2009), historiography has prioritised approaches focusing on the role of media as political actors, such as radio (Santos, 2005) and newspapers (Figueira, 2007; P. Gomes, 2014, 2021, 2025; Sousa, 2003), analysed as active agents shaping ideological narratives rather than merely as vehicles for news dissemination. From this historiographical perspective, the article aims to introduce a previously overlooked reading: the dimension of the press oriented towards rural dynamics, also present in the Revolutionary Process in Progress (PREC).

Theoretically, it is important to distinguish between “press” and “journalism”, since most media analysed here have a partisan nature. The press forms the material and institutional foundation of print communication, having historically served as a form of political expression and, before the consolidation of journalism’s autonomy, constituted a hybrid discursive field. Journalism, in turn, emerges as a professional practice with its own discursive regime, guided by professional criteria, narrative techniques, and ethical norms, such as impartiality. Thus, the press, as an institution, can serve as an instrument for parties or social movements, employing a persuasive and opinionated discursive logic. Journalism preserves a discursive authority distinct from that of the militant or politician, legitimised by internal standards of credibility and verification rather than party affiliation. However, in doctrinal journalism — as present in the periodicals analysed — these premises merge, rendering the journalist an active political subject who “rather than reflecting reality, assumes agency over it” and promotes “a particular worldview”, although this should not be understood as “less scrupulous in the objectivity with which reported facts are narrated” (Sousa, 2003, pp. 38–39).

Concerning methodological grounding, this study relies on discourse analysis, understood as an approach that identifies and interprets communication strategies, ideological framings, and social representations conveyed by the press. The selected sample focuses on a set of periodical publications (one per party) that, given their political relevance in the revolutionary context, allow observation of the discursive construction of collective action and rural class identity. In the visual analysis, considering the expressive pictorial dimension of the sources, an observational methodology was adopted, anchored in the critical examination of covers, illustrations, and cartoons, based on the premise that images are a terrain of symbolic debate and contestation, where social representations are (re)produced, political subjects are formed, and competing visions of rural life are projected. This methodology seeks to understand how visual devices contributed to shaping, giving meaning to, and making visible the dynamics of rural mobilisation.

Through this article, by collecting data from the newspapers mentioned — from the editions of 25 April 1974 to the aftermath of 25 November 1975 — the aim is to expose the main lines of force to rethink existing historiography on the construction of democracy

and on discourses regarding a significant portion of the Portuguese population, to suggest new avenues for research, and to facilitate the intersection of different sources on the socio-political framing of rural classes.

2. COMBATIVE MILITANCY IN PARTISAN NEWSPAPERS

Between 1974 and 1976, it was evident that "the political organisation of society is grounded in interpersonal communication when it seeks to assert the identities of the participants (both individual and collective)" (M. Gomes, 2009, p. 28). The emancipatory moment represented by the Carnation Revolution paved the way for political communication and the public dimension of discourse, encouraging direct citizen involvement. Moreover, it allowed citizens to find in the media a privileged channel through which their causes could be debated and showcased, demonstrating how "language is a site of conflict, of ideological confrontation, and cannot be studied outside society, since the processes that form it are socio-historical" (Brandão, 2004, p. 11).

To understand the context in which the media emerged as a central axis of Portuguese society, it is necessary to examine how the partisan press represented an assertion of competing perspectives and advocated specific objectives. In the experience of imagining a new future, both print and audiovisual media played a central role. This multifaceted reality led to the emergence of three main currents: (a) the heirs of the Estado Novo (Portuguese New State), "who sought to delay the full dismantling of censorship mechanisms" (Mesquita, 1994, p. 360); (b) advocates of the revolutionary vanguard, who supported, in the legislative sphere, the adoption of other forms of censorship, such as the Military Censorship Law (Law 11/75, of September 9); and (c) proponents of a pluralist conception of the media system, promoting the complete absence of control and constraints on freedom of expression.

Following the end of censorship and the abolition of the Prior Examination Commission, the Portuguese media system faced rising audiences, increased newspaper circulation, and higher sales. In parallel with the densification of the political field (Rezola, 2005), the press expanded to include publications associated with parties, groups, neighbourhood committees, and workers' committees. These outlets undoubtedly influenced the ideological currents in which they were situated, though their reach rarely extended beyond the sphere of active militants and civic-minded citizens.

During the transition from dictatorship to democracy, "the doctrinal and propagandistic empire (...) predominated over information, commentary, and analysis" (Mesquita, 1994, p. 362). This persisted throughout the "Hot Summer of 1975", with highly politicised discourse, the creation of new titles, and the impossibility of journalistic neutrality, as newspapers were a direct expression of the struggle to shape the country's future. The influence of military personnel aligned with these currents on media outlets fostered a climate characterised by "oratorical and triumphalist prose, the repetition of doctrinal slogans, the silencing of relevant events, and the transformation

of rumour into news" (Mesquita, 1994, p. 364). Outside the sector nationalised in 1975, new newspapers also emerged within conservative and social-democratic spheres.

The clarification of the political-military situation on 25 November 1975 had significant repercussions for the media. The institutionalisation of the democratic order and the conclusion of the constituent process in April 1976 were enshrined in the Constitution through four articles that protected freedom of expression and prohibited all forms of censorship. Throughout the constitutional text, the freedom and independence of media outlets, as well as the establishment and operation of a public radio and television service, are explicitly guaranteed.

3. THE PRESS AS A MEDIATOR OF RURAL MILITANCY

Most of the newspapers that emerged were located on the left of the political spectrum, with the PCP and the radical left occupying prominent positions (Table 1).

NAME	FOUNDATION DATE	PARTY
<i>Avante!</i>	15 February 1931	Portuguese Communist Party (PCP)
<i>A Terra: Órgão de Unidade dos Camponeses do Norte</i>	January 1949 (third series published from August 1974 onwards)	PCP
<i>O Camponês: Órgão dos Operários Agrícolas e Camponeses do Sul</i>	May 1947 (second series published from January 1975 onwards)	PCP
<i>O Militante: Boletim de Organização do Partido Comunista Português</i>	June 1941 (fourth series published from June 1975 onwards)	PCP
<i>Portugal Socialista</i>	1967	Socialist Party
<i>Povo Livre</i>	13 August 1974	Democratic Popular Party
<i>A Terra: Órgão do MRPP Para o Movimento Camponês</i>	2 September 1975	Portuguese Workers' Communist Party
<i>Ribeiro na Luta: Mensário de Apoio aos Operários e Camponeses</i>	July 1974	Popular Democratic Union

Table 1. Party press relating to the rural world

Within the communist field, in addition to *Avante!*, published intermittently since 1931, a new series of *O Camponês: Órgão dos Operários Agrícolas e Camponeses do Sul* (founded in May 1947), *A Terra: Órgão de Unidade dos Camponeses do Norte* (in print since January 1949), and *O Militante: Boletim de Organização do Partido Comunista Português* (created in June 1941) appeared. The PCP can be said to have set in motion the Leninist conception of the press: bourgeois newspapers were seen as instruments of the ruling class, and therefore alternative outlets for workers were necessary, essential to the organisation and consciousness-raising of the masses. As it is possible to observe, the political grounding of rural classes had its roots in the period of resistance to the dictatorship. Taking advantage of the circumstances created by the MFA coup, the PCP demonstrated initiative in reissuing these titles, now that they could be read without constraints. The communist periodicals articulated a discourse of institutionalising actions, organisations,

and mechanisms that rendered revolutionary achievements durable, accentuating an ideological and doctrinal fervour, of which the continued publication of *O Militante* was the clearest expression in regulating the conduct of militants.

The PS continued to publish *Portugal Socialista*, founded in 1967, and counted on *Jornal Novo* and *República*, both of which were close to its positions. The Socialists aligned themselves with the MFA's programme, seeking to "take urgent measures towards the 'progressive reform of agrarian structures', the defence of the interests of rural workers and small farmers, and the increase of agricultural production", emphasising that "without institutionalising the intervention of the State it will not be possible to initiate the process of reform in the agricultural sector" (*Portugal Socialista*, 9 October 1974, Issue 9, p. 10). However, the party never had a publication targeted explicitly at rural constituencies, although it did include agricultural commissions within its internal structure, which primarily focused on issuing warnings and seeking solutions to problems arising from political decisions.

The UDP used *Ribatejo na Luta* as its platform for rural issues, with a distinct geographical focus, evident in its very title. Although not entirely situated within the framework of social movements in the countryside — sharing attention with what was happening in factories — it included references to labour demands from agricultural workers and to "concrete cases of exploitation suffered by rural workers" (*Ribatejo na Luta*, January 1975, Issue 6, p. 2), such as at Quinta da Cardiga or in Chamusca. By covering both groups, "supporting and publicising the struggles of the workers and peasants of the region", the newspaper sought to "foster workers' solidarity, the minimum form of class consciousness (...) disseminating the principles of Marxism-Leninism, the only guide that can lead the proletariat to the conquest of power" (*Ribatejo na Luta*, November 1974, Issue 4, p. 1). Land occupation was presented as the preferred method, as happened at a farm in Quebradas (Alcoentre), prompting to "salute the struggle of the people of Quebradas and present it as an example to be followed by the poor peasants of the Ribatejo" (*Ribatejo na Luta*, March 1975, Issue 8, p. 2).

The Maoist field articulated a nationalist and mobilising discourse through *A Terra: Órgão do MRPP Para o Movimento Camponês*, whose first issue was published on 2 September 1975. Its exhortations clearly expressed the construction of social unity as a prerequisite for seizing power. Examples abound: "poor peasants must unite with rural wage labourers and carry their struggle through to the end" (*A Terra: Órgão do MRPP Para o Movimento Camponês*, 15 November 1975, Issue 6, p. 1), or "the peasant movement is a river that needs an outlet into the sea — towards the seizure of power" (*A Terra: Órgão do MRPP Para o Movimento Camponês*, 12 December 1975, Issue 7, p. 1). One recurring theme was that of foreign interference in the agrarian reform process, portraying political actors as instruments of bourgeois power and criticising the direction of the revolution. In the words printed in the newspaper, "the Government, when it exists, and all the bourgeois parties are nothing but lackeys of various foreign imperialisms", calling for "imperialists and social-imperialists, out of Portugal! Land to those who work it!" (*A Terra: Órgão do MRPP Para o Movimento Camponês*, 15 September 1975, Issue 2, pp. 4–5).

As revolutionary options approached their final outcome, other titles emerged within the radical left, though without explicit party identification. These included *O Trabalhador: Jornal Popular da Região de Condeixa*, whose first issue appeared in October 1975, and *Jornal Camponês: Jornal de Unidade dos Camponeses*, published in December of the same year (Figure 1).

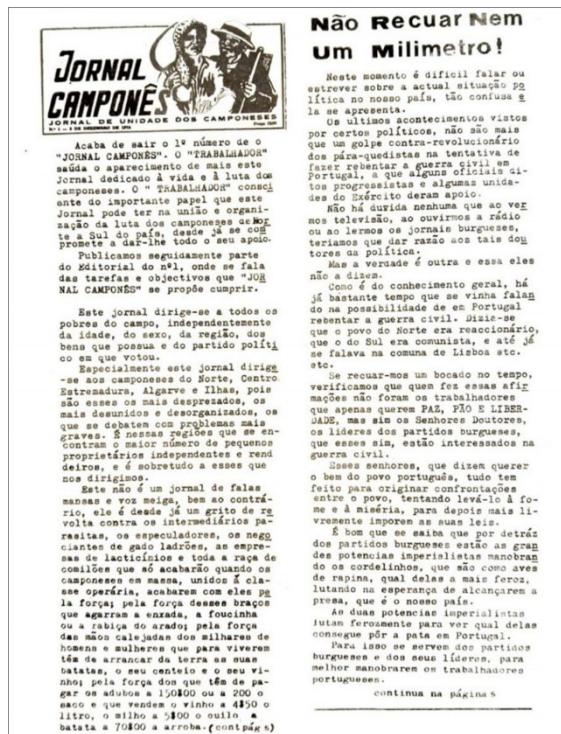


Figure 1. Front page of Issue 1 of *Jornal Camponês: Jornal de Unidade dos Camponeses* (1975)

Source. *Jornal Camponês: Jornal de Unidade dos Camponeses*, December 1975, (1), p. 4. Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Shelfmark J. 1603 P

Note. Translation: "not a millimetre back!"

The latter was markedly short-lived, with only a single issue printed. It urged readers to "not retreat even a millimetre". It declared that it addressed the "poor of the countryside, regardless of age, sex, region, property owned, or the political party for which they voted" (*Jornal Camponês: Jornal de Unidade dos Camponeses*, December 1975, Issue 1, p. 6). As the revolution drew to a close, a particular worldview increasingly viewed the press as the natural vehicle for disseminating the dialectic of specific values — a forward line in preserving the gains achieved.

The right-wing press established a clear discursive distance from the left-wing newspapers. In this regard, *Povo Livre*, the PPD's newspaper¹, is a privileged source for understanding the competing sensibilities of the time concerning the stance rural populations were expected to adopt. Shortly after its founding, in a text entitled "As Sociedades Rurais Vistas pelo PPD" (The PPD's View of Rural Societies), the party set out a clear view of the changes that the revolution might bring to agrarian social structures. The Social

¹ For a detailed study of this newspaper, see João Lima (2024).

Democrats argued that “according to the principle of equity, its objective is to promote the development of rural citizens so that they may attain the same quality and standard of living enjoyed in the urban world” (*Povo Livre*, 20 August 1974, Issue 2, p. 1). For the PPD, the agency of rural classes and their revolutionary contribution gave way to a technocratic rhetoric. Its newspaper contained no appeals to class mobilisation, emphasising instead what it considered the distortions of agrarian reform, which — in its words — was marked by lack of coordination, uncontrolled occupations, and the inefficiency of the organisations created by the Ministry of Agriculture. A central idea was that “Agrarian Reform is not an imposition from above; it must be the result and expression of the will of the rural world as a whole” (*Povo Livre*, 22 April 1975, Issue 41, p. 16).

4. THE HEGEMONY OF REVOLUTIONARY LANGUAGE AND THE DISCURSIVE STATEMENTS OF POLITICAL ACTORS

The demand for a grassroots political order became increasingly frequent, mobilising the use of a specific lexicon in which the worker-peasant alliance and the emergence of popular power were not overlooked. Slogans such as “peasants: unity for the struggle” (*Ribatejo na Luta*, August 1974, Issue 2, p. 5); “working with the people, building the revolution” (*Vida Rural: Revista da Reforma Agrária*, 16 August 1975, Issue 1, p. 4); “let us dare to mobilise the broad peasant masses” (*A Terra: Órgão do MRPP Para o Movimento Camponês*, 2 September 1975, Issue 1, pp. 4–5); “bread for those who work, let the bourgeois eat straw!” (*O Trabalhador: Jornal Popular da Região de Condeixa*, October 1975, Issue 1, p. 2); or “Agrarian Reform will continue” (*Portugal Socialista*, 17 December 1975, Issue 74, p. 14) exemplify the insistence on producing, shaping, and consolidating a sociopolitical consciousness in the service of a particular idea of the country.

Beyond this, the expression of unity between classes is evident in several formulations. For the communist press, “work among the peasants: the alliance of the proletariat with the peasantry is a fundamental question for the Revolution” (*O Militante*, August/September 1975, Year 43, Issue 3, p. 11), while the socialists addressed “the agrarian socialism of small farmers” (*Portugal Socialista*, 5 December 1974, Issue 17, p. 7). On the opposite side, when referring to rural classes, the PPD made far more frequent use of terms such as “farmers”, “rural wage labourers”, or “agricultural workers” than of “peasants”. The latter term appears only when noting that “urbanising the countryside may have a comprehensive meaning; creating a new type of peasant, technically and culturally more advanced” (*Povo Livre*, 5 November 1974, Issue 13, p. 12), foregrounding the economic rather than the political dimension.

The transformations brought about over the course of the revolution demonstrated how

the most intense political moments or events are those most likely to generate disruptions among publics, making possible their displacement from a

more passive register to a more active one, or even towards discursive positions other than that of mere recipients. (Esteves, 2019, p. 109)

The volatility of the public sphere justified clarifying political communication, making it essential that political actors' discourse be widely known. One of the mechanisms used within the newspapers² to create such cohesion was the systematic inclusion of statements from figures linked to the Government, sovereign bodies, the military, and political parties, making them "figures present on the news agenda, whether by their own initiative or by the relevance of their actions" (H. Lima, 2022, p. 327). In party publications, leaders' statements were an essential part of disseminating their thinking and positioning regarding the ongoing transformations triggered by the revolutionary dynamic (Figure 2). It becomes evident that "ideological formation necessarily includes one or several interconnected discursive formations. This means that discourses are governed by ideological formations" (Brandão, 2004, p. 47).



Figure 2. Extract from Vasco Gonçalves's speech delivered in Porto, 5 October 1974

Source. *A Terra: Órgão de Unidade dos Camponeses do Norte*, October 1974, 3rd series, (5), p. 1/Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Shelfmark J. 3363 V

Note. Translation: "we stand with the peasants, stated Prime Minister Vasco Gonçalves".

² In Figueira's (2007) analysis of *Diário de Notícias*, he concluded that "the PCP, the MFA and General Vasco Gonçalves were, respectively, the party, the institution and the figure most frequently mentioned in headlines", with the tone of such references being "laudatory and granting them greater prominence and access to newspaper space than the opponents of the propositional content presented by the newspaper" (p. 97). Sousa (2003) demonstrated, in turn, that in *Voz do Povo*, published by the Popular Democratic Union, Álvaro Cunhal was the most frequently named individual.

These political actors were the subjects of discourse, and the Portuguese people were the recipients of the messages conveyed, with newspapers serving as the primary means of transmission and dissemination. Nevertheless, given the nature of these publications, they also served as militant referents. The political orientation or explicit party affiliation of these periodicals turned them into tools aimed at homogenising and aligning political communication. By publishing extracts or the full texts of speeches, addresses, or interviews, the press intervened as part of a communicational strategy to validate a wider political action.

The Carnation Revolution constitutes a dense period for observing these phenomena. At a time when civil society mobilised around different projects, the words of political actors gained prominence. Making known the views of party leaders, military figures, or government ministers served to produce a meaningful articulation of popular aspirations and the voice of the people. In disseminating the words of political actors, these publications aimed to foster a shared sense of enthusiasm surrounding them. As civic engagement was forged alongside a new economic order for agriculture, identifying the views of leading figures became crucial. Knowing that Álvaro Cunhal saw the “defence of democracy [as] a matter of life and death for the peasants” (*A Terra: Órgão de Unidade dos Camponeses do Norte*, February 1975, Issue 14, p. 8) or that Arnaldo Matos argued that “rural wage labourers must lead the revolution in the countryside” (*A Terra: Órgão do MRPP Para o Movimento Camponês*, 30 October 1975, Issue 5, p. 8) formed part of the repertoire for political intervention. As the socialists wrote when publishing an interview with António Lopes Cardoso on the draft Rural Tenancy Law, “our rural militants and sympathisers will have every interest in knowing and debating the text” (*Portugal Socialista*, 16 October 1974, Issue 10, p. 7). Fostering debate in the preparation of political consciousness was another objective.

The party press established a historical narrative around what was termed “agrarian atavism”. References were made to how rural socio-labour life was grounded in a pattern with medieval roots. Hence, it was emphasised that it was time to put an end “to an agrarian structure which, for centuries, had been shaken only by Mouzinho’s laws after the civil war of 1830”, where “forms of land leasing with a still medieval character” persisted (*Portugal Socialista*, 27 March 1975, Issue 33, p. 11), perpetuating “medieval forms of exploitation to which fascism gave renewed force” (*A Terra: Órgão de Unidade dos Camponeses do Norte*, January 1975, Issue 12, p. 4), and “legislation that followed an orientation which, in certain cases, was almost medieval, generating entirely unjust situations” (*Povo Livre*, 4 February 1975, Issue 26, p. 4). By framing 25 April as the genesis of a new Portugal, the language used established a clear before and after the revolution, in which the involvement of political entities, sharing in popular unity, was the driving force that made the democratic regime possible.

5. STATE EDITORIAL INITIATIVES AND THE COHESION OF REVOLUTIONARY INTERESTS

Alongside the newspapers of political parties, and following the nationalisation of the banking sector on 14 March 1975, a significant number of periodicals entered the State business sector, since “even if it was a ‘collateral damage’, the entry of most newspapers

into the public sector aligned with the political context of the time" (H. Lima, 2014, p. 26). We shall examine two such cases through *Vida Rural: Revista da Reforma Agrária* and *Correio do Povo*, a magazine shaped by the action of the political authorities then in power, which went beyond mere contextual framing to intervene by exposing the issues faced by rural populations.

5.1. VIDA RURAL: REVISTA DA REFORMA AGRÁRIA

The magazine *Vida Rural* began publication in 1953, constituting, like other similar publications such as *Gazeta das Aldeias*, *Lavoura Portuguesa*, and *Família no Campo*, a space for disseminating information about rural reality through scientific, cultural, and economic articles. This publication was owned by the Empresa Nacional de Publicidade, which also owned *Diário de Notícias*, *Mundo Desportivo*, and a significant portion of the capital of *Jornal de Notícias*. The Empresa Nacional de Publicidade was, in turn, owned by Companhia Portugal e Colónias, the majority of whose capital was held by the Caixa Geral de Depósitos. With the nationalisation of the banking sector, the magazine effectively became State property. Consequently, in terms of its editorial line, the restructuring led to a change (Figure 3). A new series, subtitled *Revista da Reforma Agrária*, was created and lasted until 1976, spanning issues from 11 (19 July 1975) to 29 (22 November 1975). This subtitle aligned with the political dynamics of the time, as the Agrarian Reform Law (Decree-Law 406-A/75) was published on 29 July of that year.



Figure 3. Cover of Issue 3 of Vida Rural (1975)

Source. *Vida Rural: Revista da Reforma Agrária*, 24 May 1975, (3), front cover/Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Shelfmark P.P. 32 A

Note. Translation: "cultural revolution/new people/agrarian revolution/revolution/land to those who work it/cooperative revolution/revolutionary".

Among its contributors were agronomists, technicians, and journalists, some of whom were affiliated with the PCP. One of these was Armando Pereira da Silva, a party member and president of the Casa da Imprensa's board (1972–1973). This journalist had already engaged with rural issues when he published *Talhadas do Vouga: Ocupação Sem Limites* in 1973, a work compiling reports on the struggles of local communities against the appropriation of common lands. The magazine also featured members of the Portuguese Democratic Movement/Electoral Democratic Commission, including agronomist Blasco Hugo Fernandes and neorealist journalist and writer Antunes da Silva. Others, while not clearly affiliated, aligned with the new political context, such as Gonçalo Santa-Rita, who collaborated with the publishing house *Terra Livre*, created by the Ministry of Social Communication in 1975. Other journalists, including Afonso Praça (then president of the Journalists' Union), Dorothée Adeline Almeida, and Germano Silva, completed the team.

The magazine featured texts on agrarian reforms in socialist countries and the daily life of peasants in these regions. Before its nationalisation, it had published articles on "agriculture in the USSR [Union of Soviet Socialist Republics]" (*Vida Rural*, 8 February 1975, Issue 1134, p. 11). With the new series, coverage of socialist agrarian realities intensified (Table 2), demonstrating the role that the international dimension played in agrarian reform (Pires et al., 2025).

ARTICLE TITLE	REFERENCES
"Reforma Agrária na RDA - Um Exemplo a Conhecer" (Agrarian Reform in the GDR – An Example to Know)	24 May 1975, Issue 3, p. 7
"Lições do Chile - Uma Reforma Agrária Fracassada" (Lessons From Chile – A Failed Agrarian Reform)	24 May 1975, Issue 3, pp. 7, 16
"A Cooperativização na Revolução Agrária da Albânia" (Cooperativisation in Albania's Agrarian Revolution)	14 June 1975, Issue 6, p. 6
"A Realização da Reforma Agrária e os Resultados Obtidos na RDA" (The Implementation of Agrarian Reform and the Results Achieved in the GDR)	28 June 1975, Issue 8, p. 12
"A Importância da Agricultura na Jugoslávia" (The Importance of Agriculture in Yugoslavia)	19 July 1975, Issue 11, p. 16

Table 2. Articles on agrarian reforms in *Vida Rural: Revista da Reforma Agrária*

At a time when the construction of a "Portuguese path to socialism" appeared tangible, providing information about successes and the possibilities opened by agrarian reforms in Eastern Europe, as well as failures in Latin America, reflected the intention to implement agrarian reform in Portugal in an informed manner, based on the shared notion that "the revolutionary ideal is the goal, and its achievement depends on responsible action in the face of concrete reality" (*Vida Rural: Revista da Reforma Agrária*, 24 May 1975, Issue 3, p. 16).

5.2. CORREIO DO Povo

One of the clearest initiatives undertaken by the new political authorities to promote the political and social awareness of the population was the creation of the magazine *Correio do Povo* (Figure 4).

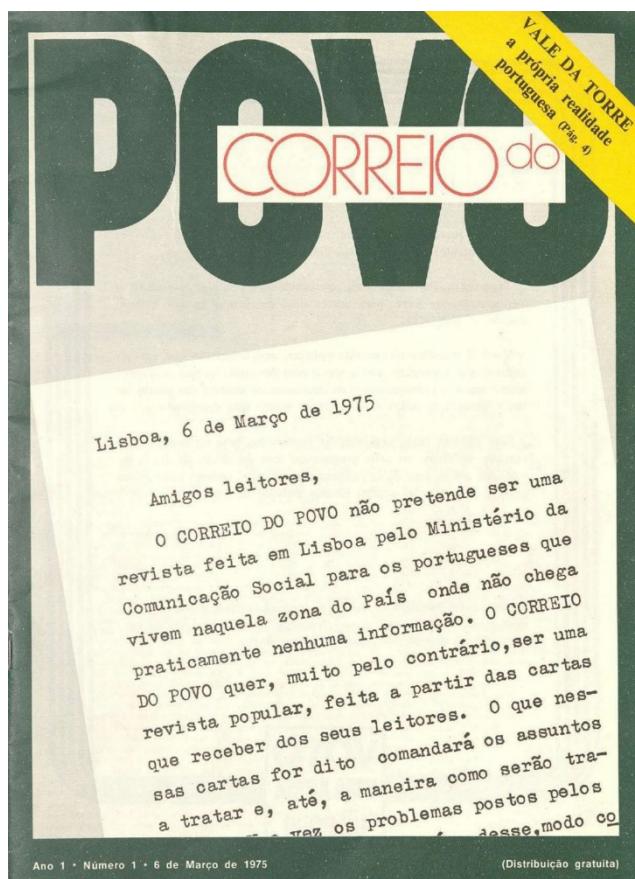


Figure 4. Cover of Issue 1 of *Correio do Povo* (1975)

Source. *Correio do Povo*, 6 March 1975, 1(1), front cover/Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Shelfmark P.P. 14339 V 14339 V

Note. Translation: "Lisbon, 6 March 1975/Dear readers,/THE CORREIO DO PVO does not aim to be a magazine produced in Lisbon by the Ministry of Social Communication for the Portuguese living in those parts of the country where virtually no information reaches them.

On the contrary, THE CORREIO DO PVO intends to be a popular magazine, created based on the letters it receives from its readers. What is said in those letters will determine the topics to be addressed and even the way they are treated (...), the problems raised by".

Published by the Ministry of Social Communication, it ran for a total of 11 issues, distributed free of charge (just like the bulletin *Movimento*, organ of the MFA³), with António Tavares-Teles as editor-in-chief. Its purpose was evident from the first issue: this magazine does not intend

to be a publication made in Lisbon (...), quite the opposite, it aims to be a popular magazine, created from the letters it receives from its readers. What is said in these letters will determine the topics to be addressed and even the way they will be treated". (*Correio do Povo*, 1975, Issue 1, p. 1)

³ For a study of this publication, see A. Gomes and Baptista (2019).

Throughout its publication period, the magazine included different thematic sections: "Correio do Povo" (People's Post), "Reportagem" (Reportage), "Desporto" (Sports), "Informação" (Information), "Pintura" (Painting), "Economia" (Economy), "Saúde" (Health), "Agronomia" (Agronomy), "História" (History), "Poder Popular"⁴ (People's Power), "Entrevista" (Interview), among others. Regarding rural society, the reports emphasised the importance of peripheral regions and the problems affecting them in terms of sanitation, housing, medical assistance, and road access. The first issue featured a report on Vale da Torre in Castelo Branco, which interviewed residents who expressed their demands regarding healthcare, education, and housing. Other reports would follow, providing national coverage of these issues: in Issue 5 (20 May 1975), a tour was conducted through the regions of Trás-os-Montes, Minho, and Beiras; in Issue 8 (30 August 1975), the Azores were the focus of the reporters' attention; in Issue 9 (30 September 1975), the Algarve region was chosen, while Trás-os-Montes received further coverage, focusing on the Montalegre area.

In the section "Correio do Povo", which gave the magazine its name, the discourse sought to describe a state of affairs in which

the authorised spokesperson can act only through words over other agents and, through their work, over things themselves, because their word concentrates the symbolic capital accumulated by the group that mandated them, of which they are the foundation of power. (Bourdieu, 1982/1998, p. 97)

By giving significance to reports, letters, and requests from rural populations, *Correio do Povo* operated under a triad between discourse (the readers' letters), the speaker (the communities), and the authoriser (the State). Out of a total of 98 letters to the editor identified between Issues 3 and 11 of this publication (Figure 5), urban areas predominate, but there is also participation from districts such as Castelo Branco, Viseu, and Bragança. Letters were likewise received from the Azores and from Portuguese communities abroad — two, in particular, sent from Canada and Germany. The themes raised mirrored the national context: when giving voice to the people, improvements in living conditions were demanded. Reports addressed the isolation imposed on villages and towns during the dictatorship, alongside thanks and requests for clarification to the MFA regarding its actions and handling of the revolutionary process.

⁴ This section began publication in Issue 9 (30 September 1975) and continued until the magazine's final issue.

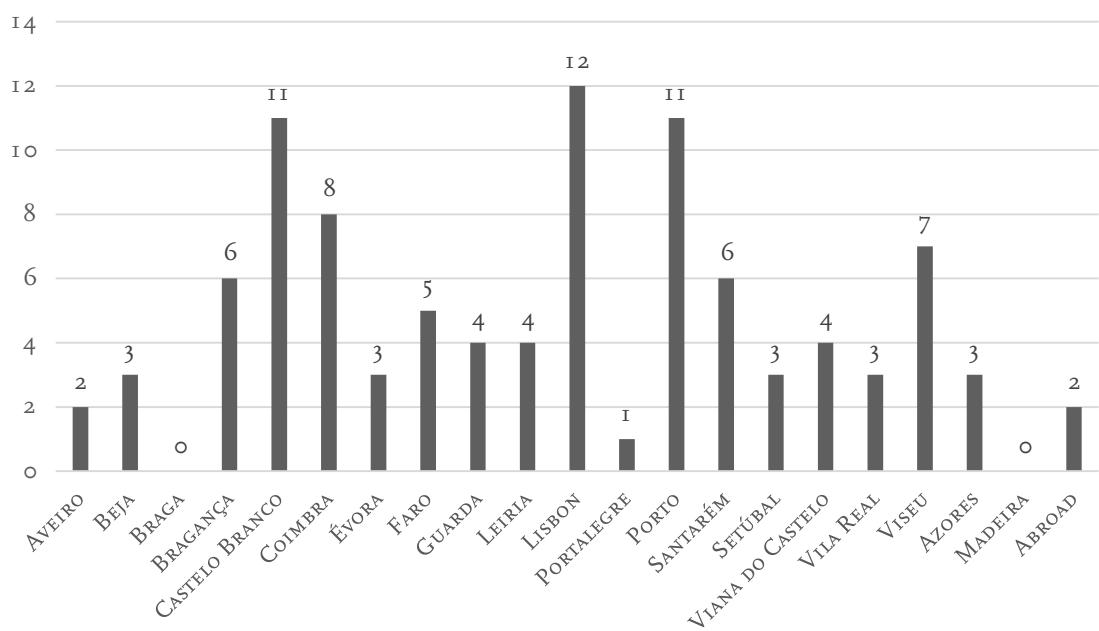


Figure 5. Territorial distribution of readers' letters sent to *Correio do Povo*

Note. Own elaboration based on *Correio do Povo*, Issues 3–11.

In *Correio do Povo*, the militant discourse was less overt than in party publications. However, the magazine's focus on reportage and the dedicated section on "Poder Popular" reflected its underlying political assumption. Its State-run nature provides insight into the priorities of the provisional governments in rural domains. Its overt political bias led to its demise under the post-25 November containment pact. The last issue came off the press on 30 November 1975, and, almost ironically, its back cover featured the poem "Funeral de um Camponês" (Funeral of a Peasant) by João Cabral de Melo Neto.

6. ICONOGRAPHY AND VISUALISM OF THE POLITICAL-IDEOLOGICAL ORDER

The public expression of political consciousness allowed the creation of signs and the replacement of symbols from the previous regime to become one of the most visible marks of the new social order. In the press, the visual nature of graphic content is often associated with ideological messages, where iconographic language serves as a metalinguistic function, referring to a political language.

In the newspapers previously mentioned, the pictorial brilliance extended to exhortative notions of the unity that should be cultivated among peasants. Simple-line images and concise, quickly grasped messages were paradigmatic in *A Terra: Órgão de Unidade dos Camponeses do Norte*. The images featured on its pages were grounded in a "strength in unity" logic (see Figure 6), highlighting the advantages of collective solidarity mechanisms. One example illustrated how the purchase of a tractor, an acknowledged shared need, became feasible only when all interested parties joined together around that common objective (see Figure 7).



Figure 6. Cartoon referring to peasant unity

Source. *A Terra: Órgão de Unidade dos Camponeses do Norte*, November 1974, (8), p. 4/Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Shelfmark J. 3363 V
 Note. Translation: "only united can we win".



Figure 7. Cartoon referring to the purchase of a tractor

Source. *A Terra: Órgão de Unidade dos Camponeses do Norte*, April 1975, (17), p. 1/Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Shelfmark J. 3363 V
 Note. Translation: "One Alone Cannot Do What All Can:/'A tractor? That would be nice, it would... But a tractor for half a hectare? And the money?/But we all need a tractor!!!/And so it was that, together, they were able to buy a tractor and make the best use of it".

As a result of the revolutionary dynamics, in *Vida Rural: Revista da Reforma Agrária*, the graphic line incorporated the work of painter and illustrator Dorindo Carvalho for the covers, visually expressing the tone of the era, addressing themes such as "popular vigilance" (see Figure 8) and "defend the Revolution" (see Figure 9). In *Correio do Povo*, cartoons by João Abel Manta (Issue 1) and Vasco de Castro (Issues 2, 3, and 6) were published, although not limited to rural themes, instead highlighting political events of the time.

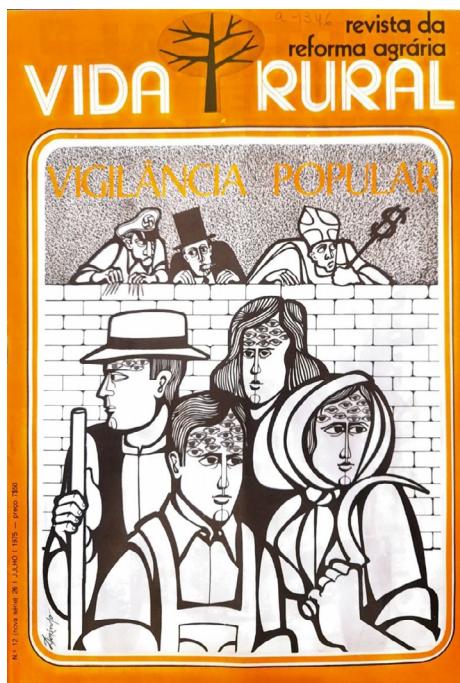


Figure 8. Cover of Issue 12 of *Vida Rural: Revista da Reforma Agrária*

Source. *Vida Rural: Revista da Reforma Agrária*, July 26 1975, (12), front cover/Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Shelfmark P.P. 32 A

Note. Translation: "popular vigilance".



Figure 9. Cover of Issue 14 of *Vida Rural: Revista da Reforma Agrária*

Source. *Vida Rural: Revista da Reforma Agrária*, 9 August 1975, (14), front cover/Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Shelfmark P.P. 32 A

Note. Translation: "defend the revolution".

In newspapers such as *Diário de Notícias*, *Jornal Novo*, and *República*, the proliferation of humour facilitated the construction of a collective revolutionary imagination. In contrast, in partisan newspapers and those associated with rural communities, graphic illustrations served as vehicles of collective memory, reinforcing shared historiographical narratives that formed part of the broader reconstruction of oppositional culture to the Estado Novo. The aesthetic grammar of cartoons and engravings in these newspapers and magazines served a communicative function of homage, forming part of "a minority segment of the media, through vectors dedicated to intervention with specific and restricted publics, seeking to make accessible structured readings (...) on the Estado Novo and fascist regimes in general" (Nunes, 2013, p. 373).

A particularly notable case was Catarina Eufémia⁵. The tragic circumstances of her death made her one of the most potent symbols of resistance to the Estado Novo in rural areas. With the 25 April Revolution, the celebration of her life became such a mark that, in political communication, paying homage to her was a cornerstone of the prevailing ideological apparatus. Iconographic uses were not neglected, and an illustrative case appears in Issue 4 of *Vida Rural: Revista da Reforma Agrária*, which featured a comic strip about her life (Figure 10). What is the significance of this act of remembrance? The text concluding this graphic piece clarifies its importance: "the memory of Catarina Eufémia is the memory of the world and of the people that must be kept clearly present" (*Vida Rural: Revista da Reforma Agrária*, 31 May 1975, Issue 4, p. 33).

⁵ Female agricultural worker from Baleizão, killed by the GNR during a rural strike on 19 May 1954.



Figure 10. Comic strip about Catarina Eufémia

Source. *Vida Rural: Revista da Reforma Agrária*, 31 May 31 1975, (4), p. 33/Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Shelfmark P.P. 32 A

Note. Translation: “‘Catarina Eufémia and the Courage to Fight’: only the hum of a horsefly in the fierceness of the blazing sun/Bent double, the rural labourers gather the ears of wheat that will become bread./But the wage is one of hunger. The profits flow to the monopolists. One must practically kneel for the day’s pay to rise by a mere pittance./From dawn to dusk, the work goes on — a heroic and self-sacrificing toil./The answer lies at the barrel of rifles./Afterwards came solitude. Silence: the clipping of every wing that sought a space to fly free./The whole life of the Alentejo rural worker is a long book of tears and renunciations, of struggle and of pain, of cries held in and of a long vigil in search of a better world. The memory of Catarina Eufémia is the memory of the world and its people — something that must remain ever present. The individual is not a schematic figure; they are their own vital process, unfolding in complete independence from any dialectic”.

The MRPP evoked the death of Ribeiro Santos⁶ to show how “remembering his example as a fervent fighter of the Democratic and Popular Revolution” was “pointing to the People, workers and peasants, the youth the only path that can liberate them from exploitation, hunger, misery, and repression” (*A Terra: Órgão do MRPP Para o Movimento Camponês*, 14 October 1975, Issue 4, p. 2). A similar case occurred with the remembrance of Alexandrino de Sousa, whose death took place during the PREC⁷. This served as a pretext for urging “the peasant people to rise against the crimes of the social-fascists (...) the peasant people, particularly wage-earning peasants and poor farmers, will avenge comrade Alexandrino de Sousa” (*A Terra: Órgão do MRPP Para o Movimento Camponês*, 14 October 1975, Issue 4, p. 8). By evoking these killings, the Maoists appealed to the participation of rural social strata, as part of a broader revolutionary transformation plan.

⁶ Law student at the Faculty of Law of the University of Lisbon and activist of the Federation of Marxist-Leninist Students, an organisation of the Movement for the Reorganisation of the Proletarian Party, killed by the General Directorate of Security on 12 October 1972.

⁷ Like Ribeiro Santos, a law student at the Faculty of Law of the University of Lisbon and member of the Federation of Marxist-Leninist Students, he died on 9 October 1975, having been drowned in the Tagus River following clashes between party militants.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Following the period of dictatorship, it became imperative to establish a new framework for civic and political participation, with the press called upon to fulfil this role. The activities undertaken during the Carnation Revolution aimed at securing rights, forming a social process that assumed different modalities of active citizenship forged through the interaction between the people and power.

The political and social transformations of the 1974–1975 biennium were inevitably reflected in the media sphere, impacting the press as a space for debate. In this context, rural classes became a privileged object of discursive mobilisation. Although a few newspapers were explicitly created to raise awareness among the peasantry — a clear demonstration of doctrinal journalism — their quantitative impact was limited. It was primarily the party-affiliated periodicals that assumed a central role in disseminating political messages and in constructing a language of social claims among peasants, wage labourers, and agricultural workers. Among these, the organs of the left and radical left stood out, constituting a key pillar in mediating between the political sphere and the rural world, contributing to the ideological shaping of peasant communities and the inscription of their struggles onto the revolutionary agenda.

Within this framework, the role of the State as a political communication actor should not be underestimated, particularly through publications such as *Vida Rural: Revista da Reforma Agrária* and *Correio do Povo*. Far from being mere instruments of technical dissemination or propaganda, these magazines can be understood as devices mediating between public power and the agricultural world, functioning as a reinforcement of the agency of rural populations in the public sphere. In this way, the State not only communicated policies but also produced political meaning through the press.

Finally, the emergent graphic visualism relied on symbolic imagery, articulating values of unity, cooperation, and the defence of the social gains achieved during the PREC. Through visual language, an iconographic repertoire was consolidated, aiming to convey the collective ideal in a tangible, plastic form. In this political aesthetic of the revolution, where the historical memory of anti-fascism intersects with the utopia of emancipation and revolutionary citizenship, the artistic expression of the press contributed to a visual narrative of rurality.

Machine Translation Post-Editing: Anabela Delgado

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