

Letters from Corresponding Editors

Portugal An Interim Report

Captain Avelino Teixeira da Mota is a highly respected scholar and naval officer whom *Itinerario* plans to make the subject of an interview in the near future. He is also the guiding hand of the *Centro de Estudos da Marinha* in Lisbon and, most recently, consented to become our corresponding editor for Portugal. Last December, he wrote us a most interesting letter which was a follow-up up to one received in October. Neither was intended for print, as he explains, because institutional changes are in process whose direction, and even form, have not yet been determined. Since he himself is an active participant in shaping these modifications, he promises us a full report in due course.

However, it might be stated here that the entire Portuguese scholarly world has been upended by the *Revolução* of April, 1974, and its consequences. The problem can be seen this way: Portugal inaugurated the expansion of Europe in 1415, built the first extra-European empire, and survived as an imperial power well beyond the time when other European states had ceased to be colonizers. Portugal never played an important part in European politics; virtually its whole 'place in the sun' involved its role in Africa, Asia and South America. Hence, many of its historians are permanently occupied with what in effect is Portuguese expansion history and 'overseas' history in Portugal is not likely to go out of fashion as it did in Spain in 1898 after the loss of the Spanish empire.

The only problem is that the Salazar-Caetano government was wholeheartedly committed to the preservation of Portugal's presence in Angola and Moçambique and saw the sponsorship of historical studies on the expansion largely as a means of convincing the outside world of Portuguese legitimacy as a political force there. The principal - if certainly not the only - agency for the publication and sponsorship of Portuguese overseas historical studies was the *Centro de Estudos Historicos Ultramarinos*, founded by Father António da Silva Rego, a priestly and prolific scholar with a firm belief in Portugal's mission as a colonial, Christianizing and civilizing force. Through government and foundation support, he built the Centro into a high-powered publisher and producer of expansion scholarship, which between 1952, the year of its founding, and 1974, published or reprinted about a hundred meticulously annotated volumes of important material, ranging from *Studia*, a journal devoted to Portuguese overseas expansion studies, to the *Boletim*, a series of calendared documents on Portuguese expansion, the *Gavetas da Torre do Tombo* and *Documentação Ultramarina*, both series of important printed documents, and finally, reprints of rare scholarly works, like Cadornega's *História das Guerras Angolanas* and Frei Paulo da Trindade's *Conquista Espiritual do Oriente*.

Father Silva Rego reached retirement age and was obliged to step down from the Centro's leadership at almost exactly the same time as the *Revolução* of April, 1974. Like many able and vigorous leaders, he trained no successor and none has since been named. Meanwhile, the new political situation virtually assured a reordering of the Centro's nature and purpose. Captain Teixeira da Mota, however, reports that the Centro's executive committee is now largely torn by proposals which threaten to paralyze, or even dismember the very Centro itself; at the moment its future is in doubt. For the time being moves have been countered which would incorporate the *Filmoteca*, the microfilm library of the Centro, into a Lisbon archive and alter the rights of the Centro's foreign members. It seems likely in any event that the Centro will presently be incorporated into a new superstructure, possibly with university affiliations. Various titles have been suggested: 'Instituto Dom Joao de Castro' or even 'Instituto de História Tropical'. Captain Teixeira da Mota promises a full future report when more is known.

Meanwhile, he is fully engaged in organizational and publishing activities at the *Centro do Estudos da Marinha* (Center for Naval Studies) whose recent output includes a volume of new Magellan scholarship, *A Viagem de Fernao de Magalhaes e a Questao das Moluccas*, a monograph by Comandante António Marques Esparteiro, *O General dos Galeões do Estado da Índia, António de Figueiredo e Utra (1678-1751)*, and Vol. V of the Centro's bound periodical, *Memórias*. In addition, Teixeira da Mota is also the author of a detailed and useful roundup of recent scholarly gatherings pertaining to naval history which his center will be happy to supply to anyone, requesting it from the Centro at Rua Jau 54, Lisboa 3, Portugal. Captain Teixeira da Mota is also secretary of the *Centro de Estudos da Cartografia Antiga*, whose publications include 17 books and some 35 'separatas', or offprints.

G.W.

