

The Music of the Revolution

From *E Depois de Adeus* late on the night of 24th April 1974 and *Grandola Vila Morena* in the early hours of 25th April, to *Uma Flor do Verde Pinho* in the Eurovision Song Contest two years later, the progress of the Carnation Revolution was marked by politically loaded songs, some memorable, others less so. This article highlights some of the key music of the April 25th Revolution and the impact that it had and still has to this day.

By Richard Mayson

E Depois de Adeus

If you happened to have been listening to the radio in Portugal on the night of 24th April 1974, you would have heard a song called *E Depois de Adeus* played at 22.55 on *Emissores Associados de Lisboa*. Sung by Paulo de Carvalho and written by José Calvário and José Niza, this was Portugal's entry for the Eurovision Song Contest, which had been staged at Brighton in the United Kingdom eighteen days earlier. It was a lovesick ballad with Paulo de Carvalho taking the role of a man who is faced with the end of a relationship and the chorus line '...and after the farewell'. The song didn't fare well in the contest, coming joint last: Abba won with a much more upbeat song called *Waterloo*.



Paulo de Carvalho singing *E Depois de Adeus* in 1974

To all but a select few, there was nothing out of the ordinary about Paulo de Carvalho's song being played on the radio that night. It had won the RTP *Festival de Canção* earlier in the year at a time when this (and the associated song contest) provided a large amount of music for Portuguese radio stations. However, for a small group of junior and middle-ranking army officers who had been meeting covertly since the previous September, *E Depois de Adeus*¹ was the first coded signal to rise and revolt. A professional dispute resulting from newly conscripted officers being fast-tracked for promotion had led to career officers turning against the *Estado Novo* establishment. Worn down by thirteen years of fighting in Africa and significant loss of life, the armed forces had ceased to believe in themselves as a solution to the African colonial wars. They had been spurred on by a book, *Portugal e o Futuro* (Portugal and the Future), written by the deputy chief of the armed forces, General António Spínola. There had already been an uncoordinated and unsuccessful attempt at revolt at Caldas de Rainha on 16th March. After this failure, the newly formed *Movimento das Forças Armadas* (MFA) knew that they had to strike quickly and efficiently to bring down the regime.

Grandola Vila Morena

90 minutes later, on a different radio station, *Radio Renascença*, another song was played. On the previous day the newspaper *República* had printed the following notice: 'The programme *Limite* has been improving for some weeks. The quality of its news items and its choice of music make *Limite* obligatory listening'.² *Limite* was a late-night programme and the newspaper endorsement was the code for key members of the armed forces to listen in. At 00.25 on 25th April 1974 the presenter Leite de Vasconcelos read out the following verse:

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrW6zP161QI>

² The Insight Team of the Sunday Times (Jenkins, S., Kellener, P., Pringle, P., Watson, P.). *Insight on Portugal, the Year of the Captains*. London, 1975

Grandola vila morena,	[Grandola, sun-soaked town,
Terra da Fraternidade,	Land of Fraternity,
O povo e quem mais ordena,	The people are those who rule
Dentro de ti, o cidade....	Within you, o city....]

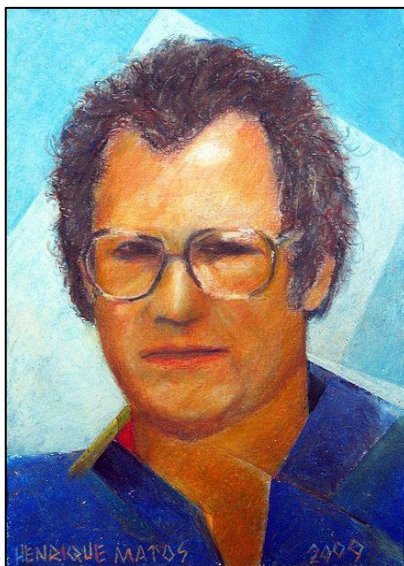
As his words gave way to the rhythm of boots marching on gravel and the lilting singing voice of José ('Zeca') Afonso, this was the code that the MFA had been waiting for. Rebel troops stationed in barracks all over the country began to make their move. By 03.00 they were out on the streets in Lisbon and by dawn they had taken control of strategic targets. By the afternoon the radio and television stations were under MFA control and by the end of the day the *Estado Novo* created by the recently-deceased dictator Salazar had collapsed. The President of the Council (and Salazar's successor), Marcello Caetano, surrendered to General Spínola. With red carnations in their guns, the regime had fallen and barely a shot had been fired.

This was the start, but by no means the end to a turbulent revolution that lasted for eighteen months. The abolition of the PIDE/DGS (*Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado/ Direção-Geral de Segurança*) secret police and the end of censorship brought about a cultural flowering that nearly led to *Grandola Vila Morena* becoming the new national anthem. It is a folk song, sung in the style of *cante alentejano*, and was first recorded on an album called *Cantigas de Maio* in 1971, but was only sung live in Portugal for the first time at the *Encontro de Canção* in the *Coliseu dos Recreios*, Lisbon on 29th March 1974. The song had been chosen as the code by naval officer Carlos de Almada Contreiras, a member of the Co-ordinating Commission of the MFA, who was from Aljustrel, in the Alentejo. Almada Contreiras liked Alentejano music and had initially chosen another Zeca Afonso song called *Venham Mais Cinco*, but this had been banned by government censors. In a chapter of a book called *Antologia*,³ compiled during the

³ Almada Contreiras, C. & Mão de Ferro, F., *Antologia, O 25 de Abril 1974, Testemunhos da Luta pela Democracia e pela Liberdade*. Lisbon, 2020

recent Covid lockdown, Contreiras describes how he drove along the *Marginal* to an apartment in Chiado where he heard the song played on the radio. He wrote ‘We gave each other an emotional embrace....and at three in the morning I arrived at the Armed Forces Communications Centre [Pontinha] to take my place in the operation.’

Zeca Afonso had impeccable revolutionary credentials. A teacher at the *Liceu de Setúbal*, he had long been opposed to the *Estado Novo* and was struck off the roll of teachers by the authorities in 1968, due to what were considered to be subversive activities. He was linked closely to the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) and other leftist groups, including the LUAR (*Liga de Unidade e Acção Revolucionária*). When the Socialist and Communist opposition leaders Mario Soares and Alvaro Cunhal returned to Portugal from exile and May Day was celebrated for the first time, Zeca Afonso’s music was sung in the streets and shot to the top of the popular charts.



José ('Zeca') Afonso
(painting by Henrique Matos)

Amália Rodrigues, the iconic fado singer and film star symbol of the *Estado Novo* gave a moving rendition of *Grandola Vila Morena* at the *Teatro de São Luíz* in Lisbon, soon after the Revolution, in June 1974. She claimed merely to ‘like the words of the song’ but shortly afterwards she was accused (falsely) of being a covert agent of the

PIDE/DGS. As the left-wing movements (including the Communists) took over the air waves, fado was attacked as a symbol of the old Portugal, out of step with the new era. For a time fado songs were banished from the air waves in favour of new revolutionary songs such as those by Zeca Afonso. Amália Rodrigues didn't sing in public again until 1976.

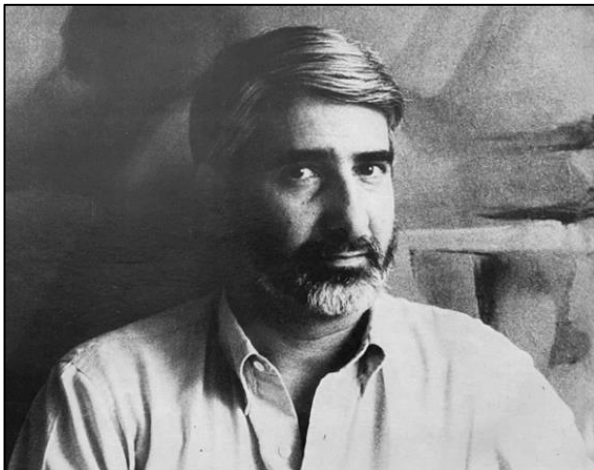
O Povo Unido Jamais Será Vencido

The Revolution brought about a popular outpouring with political meetings (*comícios*) and demonstrations (*manifestações* or the so-called '*manif.*') being allowed for the first time in nearly fifty years. Those who remember the streets at that time will recall that there was barely a wall that was not plastered with political posters or graffiti. Alongside '*Fascismo Nunca Mais*' (Fascism Never Again) the slogan '*O Povo Unido Jamais Será Vencido*' (The People United Will Never be Defeated) was adopted as the chant of the Revolution. This was a slogan coined a year earlier in Salvador Allende's Chile and was set to music in Portugal by Luís Cília, who wrote protest songs in France and only returned to Portugal from exile in 1974. There are number of different settings for this song, with the one sung by *O Grupo Coral*, written by Luís Simões Gomes and arranged by Pedro Jordão, being one of the most evocative ones. During the period of the PREC (*Processo Revolucionário em Curso* / Ongoing Revolutionary Process) in 1975, the chant became the rather more menacing '*O Povo Armado Jamais Sera Vencido*' (The People, Armed, Will Never be Defeated).

Avante, Camarada

The formation of political parties brought about the need for anthems that could be sung by the party faithful. The Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) was by far the most established political party at the time, having been operating underground for most of the time since it was founded in 1923. Composer Luís Cília was responsible for its anthem,

Avante, Camarada (Forward, Comrade), which was written in 1968 having been commissioned by party member Carlos Antunes. It was not played in Portugal until after the *25 de Abril* and is still the PCP's anthem, sung with gusto at the party's annual *Festa do Avante*.



Luís Cília⁴

Paz, Pão, Povo e Liberdade

Formed on 6th May 1974 from the so-called liberal wing (*ala liberal*) of the *Estado Novo*'s only party, *Acção Nacional Popular* (ANP), the Partido Popular Democrático (PPD) started off as a political party on the centre-left. It also needed an anthem and turned to singer Paulo de Carvalho, who composed the music for the song *Paz, Pão, Povo e Liberdade* (Peace, Bread, People and Liberty), with words by José Calvário (co-writer of *E Depois do Adeus*). Having applied at an early stage to join the International Socialists, the PPD/PSD moved steadily to the centre-right during the course of the Revolution. Paulo de Carvalho stayed on the left and sang regularly at the PCP's *Festa do Avante*. His son is the house and hip-hop singer Agir (Bernardo Correia Ribeiro de Carvalho Costa) who released an album of remixed revolutionary songs in 2021 called *Cantando Abril* (Singing April).

⁴ Photo from the cover of a 1987 Album, "Penumbra"

Desta Vez é que é de Vez (Life on the Ocean Wave)

From the summer of 1974 the officers of the *Movimento das Forças Armadas* (MFA) who had orchestrated the coup on 25th April began to institutionalise themselves into Portuguese political life. This led the movement into direct conflict with General Spínola, who had become President of the Republic in May 1974 and was to resign at the end of September the same year, warning the country of ‘new forms of slavery’. He was replaced as President by General Francisco da Costa Gomes. In June 1974 the MFA formed the 5^a Divisão (5th Division) propaganda unit, which produced a campaign of *Dinamização Cultural* (Cultural Dynamization). Aimed mostly at the conservative, Catholic north, this campaign was designed to increase political awareness in advance of the first free election for a constituent assembly, which was held on 25th April 1975. Taking on the mantle of a political movement, MFA produced some creative, if provocative, posters and adopted its own theme tune, which was played prior to regular communiqués broadcast on radio and television. From the outset the MFA’s anthem was the military but distinctly unrevolutionary *Life on the Ocean Wave*, recorded on 28th April 1974 by the Band of the National Republican Guard. This was originally a poem by Epes Sargent published in 1838 and set to music by Henry Russell. Eventually it was assigned a new title, *Desta Vez é que é de Vez* (This Time it’s for Good) and given a revolutionary timbre by José Niza (co-writer of *E Depois do Adeus*), with musical direction by Shegundo Galarza. With direct reference to *Grandola Vila Morena*, the first two verses are as follows:

O povo é quem mais ordena	[The people are those who rule
O povo é quem mais trabalha	The people are those who work
Desta vez, é que é de vez	This time it’s for good
Agora é que já não falha	Now it no longer fails
Socialismo português	Portuguese socialism
Revolução num país novo	Revolution in a new country
Liberdade para viver	Liberty to live
Pelo pão, pela paz, pelo povo	For bread, for peace, for the people]

Madrugada

By the time the annual Eurovision Song Contest came around in Stockholm on 22nd March 1975, Portugal was well on the way to becoming led by a fully-fledged military regime. Eleven days earlier, on 11th March, an attempt at a *coup d'état* by troops supporting former President General Spínola had collapsed, prompting the government to nationalise the banks and insurance companies and hand power to a Supreme Revolutionary Council formed by officers from the MFA (Lt. Com. Almada Contreiras who had selected *Grandola*... was a founding member). The winner of that year's *Festival de Canção* (the first to be staged without censorship and *smokings* [black tie]) was an army captain named Duarte Mendes. His song, *Madrugada* (Dawn), by José Luís Tinoco, was fairly unremarkable. An impassioned paean to the Revolution of nearly a year earlier, it came 16th out of a total of 19 entries (saved from ignominy by a surprising 12 points from Turkey). What did make the song remarkable however, was Duarte Mendes's threat to perform on stage wearing his army uniform. In the end, good sense prevailed, and Captain Mendes sang *Madrugada* dressed in a stylish flared brown suit and orange open necked shirt, proudly sporting a red carnation.

Força, Força Companheiro Vasco

During the spring and summer of 1975, Portugal's Prime Minister General Vasco Gonçalves emerged as the champion of the pro-Communist left. His appointment by General Spínola in July 1974 was a huge miscalculation by the new President. Given an effective choice by the MFA of either Gonçalves or Major Ernesto Melo Antunes, Spínola chose the former, rejecting the latter as a 'dangerous Communist'.



**Vasco Gonçalves,
Prime Minister 1974-75**

There was a certain amount of political naivety in the early days of the Revolution and it was Vasco Gonçalves⁵ who was in fact the closet Communist. He briefly became a hero of the left and was the only personality in the Revolution to have a song dedicated to him: *Força, Força Companheiro Vasco* (Strength, Strength Companion Vasco), written by Carlos Alberto Moniz and Maria do Amparo, which became a huge hit by accident. It was originally the B-side of a single called *Daqui o Povo Não Arranca Pé* (The People Won't Get Away from Here). These were the words of Dias Lourenço, director of the PCP newspaper *Avante!* during the siege of the RAL-1 barracks during the 11th March Coup, but it was the chant of *Vasco, Vasco* that was heard at pro-Communist rallies during the *Verão Quente* (Hot Summer) of 1975:

Força, força companheiro Vasco,	[Strength, strength companion
Nos seremos a muralha de aço....'	Vasco,
	We will be the wall of steel...]

The last verse sums up the prevailing political mood:

Há quem queira mandar para os	[There are those who wanted to
quartéis	send them back to the barracks
Os soldados, nosso povo armado	The soldiers, our people armed
Mas a casa dos amigos certos	But at the house of the right
É na rua	friends
Na rua e do nosso lado	He's on the street,
	On the street and on our side]

These words were heard regularly during the period of the PREC until Gonçalves fell from favour in August 1975. After a decidedly cranky speech delivered in Almada on 18th August, even the PCP deserted him. He was finally dismissed as Prime Minister by a rather reluctant President Costa Gomes at the end of the month and faded into relative obscurity, while retaining the adoration of the pro-Communist left. His time in government and brand of revolutionary politics is still regularly referred to as 'Gonçalvismo'.

⁵ <https://www.bokay.pt/livro/companheiro-vasco>

Liberdade

The Revolution and the promise of freedom stimulated several poets to write in praise of the *25 de April*. Some had their work set to music, including José Ary dos Santos, Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen (mother of Miguel Sousa Tavares), Natália Correira, José Jorge Letria and Manuel Alegre. In the words of José Jorge Letria (the current Chair of the *Sociedade Portuguesa de Autores*⁶): ‘...the pact between protest singers and contemporary Portuguese poets bore the fruit of April, some with a taste of a song and others merely with the rhythm and timbre of a celebratory or searching poem. The truth is that poets and songwriters together wrote the happy word *Liberdade* (Freedom) in the blue skies about a season of change’.⁷ The poet Manuel Alegre (who became the Socialist Party’s Minister of Culture in the first democratically elected government in 1976) wrote a poem simply entitled *Liberdade*. This was set to music by Pedro Jordão and sung by the distinctive voice of João Maria Tudela, a singer-musician and entertainer born in Mozambique, who had been popular during the years of the *Estado Novo* but eventually fell out with the regime due to his working partnership with Ary dos Santos.

The period of the PREC came to an end when the Revolution finally ran out of steam following the coup and counter-coup of 25th November 1975. The 5th Division and its Cultural Dynamization programme had been disbanded when Vasco Gonçalves was dismissed in August, and the MFA effectively fell apart, splitting into three opposing political strands. The moderate wing, led by Melo Antunes and the so-called ‘Group of Nine’, were in the ascendant and formed the Council of the Revolution during the transition period, until it was abolished with the revision of the new constitution in 1982.

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociedade_Portuguesa_de_Autores

⁷ Letria, J., *A Canção Política em Portugal: da Resistência à Revolução*, Lisbon, 1978



João Maria Tudela (1968)⁸



Manuel Alegre (2017)⁹

Radio Renascença had been an international *cause célèbre* in 1975 when it was occupied by Communists. Its transmitters were blown up in November 1975 (at the instigation of Prime Minister Admiral Pinheiro de Azevedo) and a month later it was returned to the Catholic Church. By early 1976, fado was being played on the radio again. At the time of her rehabilitation, fado singer Amália Rodrigues defended herself thus:

“I have not the character of a revolutionary, I am afraid of revolution; I can’t bear a certain brutality or aggressiveness. Salazar did not invent the fado. It goes back five centuries to the time of the Portuguese discoveries and Camões often talks about *triste fado*... Everyone abroad comments that Portuguese workers are not politicised. Why do they expect me to be politicised when I come from the same background? I learned to sing the fado at my doorstep because of my ‘class condition’... I never thought about politics previously because I was not interested in them. Politics are based on hope and I have discovered I am a nihilist. But now I can understand that they can

⁸ <https://eurovisionworld.com/national/portugal/grande-premio-tv-da-cancao-1968/joao-maria-tudela-ao-vento-e-as-andorinhas>

⁹ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manuel_Alegre.png

make politics out of an artist or a public figure like me. [...] I agreed to sing José Afonso's *Grandola* not because I am a revolutionary, but because I liked the words of the song. I sing songs which please me, without asking whether they are revolutionary, or not".

Uma Flor de Verde Pinho

In the period that followed eighteen months of revolutionary upheaval, nationalism gradually replaced radical political fervour in Portuguese culture. By the time of the RTP *Festival de Canção* in the Spring of 1976, the atmosphere was very different from that of a year earlier. For the first time, only one singer was chosen to perform all the songs and Carlos do Carmo¹⁰ was asked to



Carlos do Carmo on the day of the Eurovision Song Contest, 1976

perform the eight entries, with the public invited to vote by post (Portugal was on the way to becoming a democracy). Carlos do Carmo was an establishment figure; a fado singer who supported the *Estado Novo* before the *25 de Abril* and sympathised with the Communist Party afterwards.

¹⁰ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eurovision_Song_Contest_1976_-_Portugal_-_Carlos_do_Carmo_6.png

The winning song in the RTP contest was *Uma Flor de Verde Pinho* (A Green Pine Flower), a poem by Manuel Alegre, set to music by José Niza. This was a non-political but very Portuguese lament about the tragic romance of Pedro and Inês de Castro in the fourteenth century. The first verse is as follows:

Eu podia chamar-te pátria minha	[I could call you my homeland
Dar-te o mais lindo nome	Give you the most beautiful
português	Portuguese name
Podia dar-te um nome de rainha	I could give you the name of a queen
Que este amor é de Pedro por	As this love is like that of Pedro for
Inês...	Inês...]

Lisboa Menina e Moça

Campaigning for Portugal's first free parliamentary elections was underway by the time of the Eurovision Song Contest in The Hague in April 1976. The date had been set for the second anniversary of the 25th April *coup d'état*. Presidential elections followed in June and a democratically elected constitutional government was installed. *Uma Flor do Verde Pinho* came 12th out of 18 entries, a slight improvement on previous years. However, the song was fairly quickly forgotten. There is one song from this era that has stood the test of time: Carlos do Carmo's *Lisboa Menina e Moça* (Lisbon Girl and Gal), which was adapted from a poem written by Fernando Pessoa by Ary dos Santos and Fernando Tordo and set to music by Paulo de Carvalho. The words and melody have become a classic, subsequently adopted as the city's unofficial anthem. *Grandola Vila Morena* survives as an anthem with political connotations – like the red carnation – that are not palatable to everyone (for years there was busker at the top of the Rua Garrett in Lisbon who played *Grandola* continually). Both these songs are loaded with *saudades* and are a fitting tribute to a very Portuguese revolution, which, in a convoluted and turbulent way, ultimately led to the country becoming the mainstream European democracy that it is today.



Richard Mayson first visited Portugal aged 9, in 1971 where his father had business interests in the textile industry. He remembers the 25th April Revolution clearly and followed events closely, keeping a diary and archive of newspaper cuttings on the subject from 1974 until 1982. After leaving Uppingham School in the UK, he spent his gap year in Portugal, working in a bar and restaurant in Praia da Luz before going to the University of Sheffield to read Geography. His undergraduate dissertation on the microclimate of Port vineyards led him into the wine trade, working for The Wine Society. Richard Mayson was awarded the Vintners' Company Scholarship in 1987 when he spent three months travelling around the vineyards of Iberia. He specialises in the wines of Portugal and has written a number of books on wine including: *Port and the Douro* (1999 and subsequent editions); *The Wines and Vineyards of Portugal* (winner of the André Simon Award 2003) and *Madeira: The Islands and their Wines* (2015). His most recent wine book is *The Wines of Portugal* (second edition due in 2025). He writes regularly for *The World of Fine Wine* and *Decanter* magazines, chairing the Port and Madeira panels in the *Decanter World Wine Awards*. He was Pro-Chancellor at the University of Sheffield from 2018 to 2021 and in 2023 he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by that university. He is also interested in twentieth century art and architecture and wrote a book on the artist L.S. Lowry, *Lowry's Lamps*, published by Unicorn Press in 2021. He is currently preparing a book on the northern artist Trevor Grimshaw, a contemporary of L.S. Lowry. Richard Mayson splits his time between the Derbyshire Peak District in the UK and Estoril in Portugal.