

MARCELLO CAETANO
PRIME MINISTER

THE TIME HAS COME
TO VOTE

A RADIO AND TELEVISION
BROADCAST ON 24 OCTOBER 1969

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SECRETARIA DE ESTADO DA INFORMAÇÃO E TURISMO

1969



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INCORPORAÇÃO

THE TIME HAS COME
TO VOTE

FOR THE
BETTER

The election campaign closes today. If we compare it with previous campaigns, above all the last one, which was the presidential election, we must recognize that it has taken place in an orderly manner. There are always, of course, isolated incidents. A few days ago, at the end of an election campaign in a democratic country of Central Europe, characterized by several skirmishes between the adepts of various parties, the newspapers announced that the final figures for the period showed scores of wounded. Compared with that, we must agree that we have provided an example of good behaviour and mutual respect.

A short time ago the opposition candidates met in a provincial town and decided to maintain their candidatures in the election. They announced that they would do this «in spite of the acts of intimidation directed at them». Here there is a lack of respect for others. The Government has intimidated nobody. It laid down norms to be adopted and did its best to have them obeyed. The fact that greater disturbance in the life of the country was avoided proves that these norms were acceptable ones. But it is not true

that the authorities or any responsible body threatened or coerced the members of the opposition groups.

What many people have charged the Government with is the freedom with which the propaganda of subversive doctrines has been spread, in documents and speeches: the advocacy of strikes and direct action, the attack on Portugal's position in the overseas provinces, and the insults addressed to respectable figures.

It may be that the opposition candidates have received anonymous, irresponsible threats or attempts at intimidation. All of us, members of the Government and candidates of the National Union, have received them, too, and we regard them with the scorn they deserve.

The opposition candidates could thus have done without calling in foreigners to check election propaganda and the way the elections were held in Portugal. I am deeply hurt that Portuguese citizens should have gone so far. It is regrettable that they should have called on members of the directive organs of the Socialist Internationale and various foreign socialist parties to observe and check political actions that only concern the Portuguese people.

These persons entered Portugal as tourists. As such they could travel about, make excursions and see what they wanted, with the same freedom and open-handedness which we grant all the tourists who come to see our land and our way of life. But of course, like any other foreigners, they were subject to the internationally recognized duty, respected all over the world, of not interfering in the home life of the country.

We knew, in any case, that we could not count on their objectivity, or impartiality as regards Portugal, its political system, its institutions. They would necessarily slander us and one of them even began to write a report in this critical vein as soon as he arrived here, for transmission to a newspaper in his country. But we had to demand that on Portuguese territory they should behave with the same correctness that the government of any country would demand in similar cases from Portuguese citizens on its own territory.

At times there is talk of going back to the system of parties. Can we really be ready to tolerate the interference in Portuguese political life of parties, associated with, dependent on and obeying, internationales, whether the second or the third, whether bearing the yellow colour of socialism or the blood-red of communism?

I believed that there might be differences of opinion between Portuguese people, but I did not think there would be anyone who would, consciously and deliberately, abdicate all national dignity; so I have been deeply surprised and greatly saddened, indescribably hurt to discover that at a public meeting someone, with special responsibilities, gave a special welcome to a Swedish socialist who was present and congratulated him, and expressed gratification, on the help that the Swedish government and socialist party were giving to the anti-Portuguese movements in Africa.

I did not expect such a thing. I did not imagine that it could possibly happen among Portuguese people, at a meeting of Portuguese citizens, in Portugal.

There is no doubt that these people placed their rôle as citizens of the Internationale above that quality that they should exalt above all others — that of being Portuguese citizens. But can they, then, be worthy to represent Portuguese people?

We must now vote. Some time before the election campaign began I said that it was necessary to make it quite clear, in the forthcoming ballot, that the Portuguese people were not in favour of abandoning the Overseas Provinces.

This phrase was much criticised in certain quarters, who considered that it entailed the subjection of our overseas policy to a plebiscite.

There can be no discussion about our Homeland: no one can question this proposition. But while it is absolutely right that the matters concerning the unity and wholeness of the Homeland cannot be discussed by its citizens, this does not mean that they all fulfil this duty. What should be is one thing; what is, another. In this election campaign we have seen that some have in fact discussed our overseas policy; they have used, almost word for word, many of the reasons, arguments and solutions put forward abroad by Portugal's adversaries. We should gain nothing by being unaware of this. Nor would it be an intelligent move to pretend to be unaware of it. We have to answer them at home as we do in international assemblies. We must show the world that in adopting a given policy the Government enjoys the support of the electorate.

There can be no doubt about this point: the authority of the Government to carry on with its overseas policy, at

home and abroad, will be reinforced or weakened according to the way the electorate votes.

We expect the adversaries of that policy to vote with the Government. Worst of all would be abstention: the abstention of certain right-thinking people, those who have their own excellent solution, those who agree with restrictions, those who take the opportunity to express their personal resentments or their long-standing dislikes, those who consider themselves very intelligent or very patriotic and for that reason refuse to recognize any intelligence and patriotism in their rulers, the abstention of those Pilates who have insufficient courage to face the harsh dilemma confronting the Nation, whether we like it or not, and who finally decide to wash their hands of it and leave it to others to get us out of the mess. The dilemma is this, I would repeat: are we to continue to defend the Overseas Provinces or are we to hand them over to our enemies?

Much is said about participation, the part to be played by the individual in the life of the community. Well then, these elections provide an opportunity to participate, that is, to accept responsibilities in the governing of the Nation.

We must realize that we cannot continue to live isolated from the drama of contemporary politics. The society in which we live is threatened by totalitarian communism and by anarchism. Let us not be taken in by the honeyed voices of useful innocents. Let us not be lured by the mirages of an ideal society where no one has anything to criticise and all live happy and contented. The

Berlin Wall stands as a warning example of the end-product of such promises of bliss.

The doctrines of these movements, masked by the label of democracy, are expanding in our midst, penetrating day by day in youth circles, insidiously gaining ground.

In the view of many people, what the Government should do is to intensify the action of the police, sharpen and extend the censorship, put down at all cost any activities contrary to the social order.

Of course the Government will not fail to do its duty in this struggle. But I wonder if it is advisable to allow the majority of people to live in ignorance of what is going on? Does the matter concern everybody or does it not? Can the Government alone teach, challenge, fight, while the citizens concerned live their peaceful lives, contentedly digesting, not depriving themselves from time to time of the pleasure of entering the chorus of anti-Government propaganda, and even fostering it?

Can there be any advantage in depriving the Portuguese of the normal reflexes of an enlightened political conscience in the face of unjust, baseless attacks, even if they are skilfully wrapped in a florid style?

Is it best to cultivate selfish ease, encourage mental indolence, and do nothing about the lack of preparation for the struggle which, if it is not engaged in time in the sphere of the intelligence and daily activities, may lead to a civil war?

Reform or revolution was the other option that I put before you the last time I spoke on television.

This dilemma subsists. Revolution may come along slowly and quietly. It may wear the mask of peace-loving innocence. It may insinuate itself in the guise of a likeable democratic process. The electors should not let themselves be deceived; with their vote they will decide for peace or for a civil war, in the short- or long-term.

Here, too, abstention is useless, for it solves no problems. Nor does absence exempt one from responsibilities; nor can it, in the future, lighten the consciences of electors of the burden of regret, even remorse.

To vote next Sunday is not an arduous task. A vote is no great effort to make. But the way in which each elector votes may have broad and far-reaching repercussions on the life of our nation. Everyone should realize this; everyone should understand the seriousness of his decision. On that vote depends the internal authority of the Government to make the necessary reforms, carried out in order and security, avoiding all adventures that lead one knows not whither. On that vote depends the international authority of the Government to defend the supreme interests of the Homeland in the best manner.

I spoke just now about responsibilities. I shouldered mine one year ago. I do not shirk them. It is now for the electorate to shoulder its own responsibilities. I am sure that it will prove able to choose the cause of the Homeland, the cause of Order, the cause of the Overseas Provinces, the cause of a future won by labour in a climate of peace and solidarity among all the citizens of Portugal!

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