

The Portuguese Colonial War: Why the Military Overthrew its Government

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....3

Before the War9

The War19

The April Captains33

Remembering the Past44

The Legacy of Colonial Portugal.....53

Bibliography60

Introduction

When the Portuguese people elected António Oliveira de Salazar to the office of Prime Minister in 1932, they believed they were electing the right man for the job. He appealed to the masses. He was a far-right conservative Christian, but he was less radical than the Portuguese Fascist Party of the time. His campaign speeches appeased the syndicalists as well as the wealthy landowners in Portugal. However, he never was able to get the full support of the military. As a result, the Portuguese presidency was since given usually to a high-ranking general loyal to Salazar. After his election, he ended many of the institutions that had been laid out by the revolution of 1910, which had established the Republic and ended monarchical rule. He “looked out for the well-being of the nation,” taking the role of *pater patriae*. But unlike the other leaders of the time Salazar did not embrace his popularity until his late years in office, making few public appearances. Ralph Fox, a British Communist in 1933, explained, “He never appears in public, nor speaks on the radio, nor reviews the army, nor wears a uniform, nor murders his enemies with his own hands, nor has his photo hung up in every window.”¹ This hermetic approach to government may be explained by paranoia and by the rational fear of assassination. As a result, he took a more hands off approach to government.

In this role, he created many of the police agencies that remain active to this day. These agencies were often seen as repressive, using them as apparatuses of the regime itself. They included the secret police (modeled on the Gestapo), The Guarda Nacional Republicana or GNR (for control of rural disturbances), the Polícia de Segurança Publica or PSP (for breaking up

¹ Ralph Fox, *Portugal Now* (London, 1933), 61.

demonstrations), the Guarda Fiscal (fiscal police), and the Polícia Judiciária PJ (Judicial Police).² The Secret Police, called the Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado or PIDE (International and State Defense Police) became the main tool of the authoritarian regime of Salazar's Estado Novo, ensuring that the control of the country be maintained within the Party of National Union. The PIDE is perhaps the most villainized organization of the Estado Novo. Many novels have been written about the cruelty inflicted by this organization. The agents of the PIDE were omnipresent. To clarify, one did not know where they were because they had infiltrated themselves in such a way that they were indistinguishable from the general public. One common story told amongst the Portuguese was that of a professor in Coimbra who encouraged his students to express themselves in the classroom, but he mysteriously disappears along with several students. These people were never to be seen again. One did not question such a story at the time because during the time of Salazarism, curiosity and individuality were perhaps the most dangerous qualities one could have. This narrative was widespread and it defined just how large the threat the PIDE became in Portugal during the 20th century.

The PIDE also had a reputation for cruelty during its interrogations. They tortured their prisoners, using beatings, electrocution, and simulated drowning to get answers and for suspects to denunciate other "offenders." The people who were captured or harassed by the secret police found themselves spending long prison sentences, enduring the harsh torture, while others were exiled to the overseas territories or to one of the various concentration camps that Salazar built,

² Ronald H. Chilcote, *The Portuguese Revolution: State and Class in the Transition to Democracy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 35.

All the agencies except the PIDE are still an integral part of the Portuguese government. The GNR serves as a police that monitors most of the rural areas of Portugal and they are the authorities charged with protecting motorists, monitoring the Portuguese highways. The PSP deals with maintaining public security. They are the police force of the city and are often in the public eye as they are considered "peace keepers." The Fiscal Police act much like the Internal Revenue Service. And the Judicial Police ensure the security of the courts as well as prisoners who are transported to and from the courts.

spending the rest of their lives doing forced labor. The most famous of these concentration camps was Tarrafal located in the Cape Verde islands where the Portuguese government put its political prisoners as well as its most violent criminals. The lucky ones were executed and others who could not tolerate the torture of prison committed suicide. Most of these people went “one way” and many did not come out of those camps. The PIDE thus becomes significant because they were the main policing force in the territories. Especially because many anti-Salazarism advocates resided in the colonies, thinking that they were safe from his wrath thanks to the distance between them. However, at the height of the Estado Novo after World War II, the PIDE persecuted all resistance, often attributed resorting to the political assassination of prominent dissenters, though that remains to be speculation as the Secret Police left little evidence of their actions. All Labor Unions were abolished, communist volumes were destroyed and any suspected affiliates were imprisoned. Over the course of the 20th century many small revolts occurred, many having to do with the exploitation of African workers by the private industries as well as the deplorable conditions in which they lived their day to day. The PIDE then was the agent to quiet these voices, leaving behind massive body counts in the process.

The way the government ran the colonies did not help the escalating animosity either. Portugal never fully controlled any of its colonies and it suffered from the competition with other European powers. Instead the country took a similar approach to that of Spain in Latin America. Portugal used the principles of an *indigenato* regime, giving the African colonies some autonomy, but at the same time requiring them to pay taxes to the crown as well as the Republic after the revolution. Most of the African economy was rural and agrarian. Most of the indigenous population continued to live in huts because they refused to part with their traditions and any attempts by the Portuguese to modernize these areas was nullified. Because of the

various military campaigns in the colonies, the Portuguese had to find new ways of accruing revenue. According to the historian, Peter Karibe Mendy, “To redress the cost of numerous military campaigns, and, later, the cost of colonial administration, the Portuguese authorities introduced a hut tax in 1903, before the territory was under effective domination.”³ However, many of these people lived off the land and devoid of any interaction with the modern world. The failure to pay this tax levied upon them left many without homes as they were relocated further and further into the brush. Even those that worked on the various plantations throughout the colonies were at the mercy of the world markets. For example, cotton was one of the richest commodities of Angola, yet the Angolan cotton worker was paid barely enough to let him or her provide for him or herself let alone a whole family. “To meet the sudden surge in demand for raw cotton without depleting reserves of foreign exchange, Salazar fixed the price of colonial cotton at 20 per cent above world levels in 1937 and kept it automatically pegged there.”⁴ This price-fixing turned out to be quite lucrative as Europe erupted into war in 1939, but it was at the expense of many African workers. As Amilcar Cabral, the president of Guinea-Bissau’s PAIGC explained, “I saw folk die of hunger in Cape Verde and I saw folk die from flogging in Guiné (with beatings, kicks, forced labour), you understand? That is the entire reason for my revolt.”⁵ The legacy of exploitation on part of the Portuguese left a deep scar within its African territories and its continuation of this exploitation only escalated their cries for sovereignty to rid them of colonial rule.

³ Peter Karibe Mendy, “Portugal’s Civilizing Mission in Colonial Guinea-Bissau: Rhetoric and Reality,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1, (Boston University African Studies Center), 47.

⁴ Gervase Clarence-Smith, “The Impact of the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War on Portuguese and Spanish Africa”, *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 26, No 4, World War II and Africa (Cambridge University Press, 1985), 313.

⁵ Douglas L. Wheeler, “Origins of African Nationalism in Angola: Assimilado Protest Writings, 1859-1929,” in Ronald H. Chilcote, ed. *Protest and Resistance in Angola and Brazil* (Berkeley, 1972), 86.

In addition to these socio-economic issues, political reasons also justified the conflict that emerged in the sixties. Salazar remained relatively outside of the conflicts of Europe except for the fact that England and the United States used the Azores as a fueling station by entering into treaties with Portugal. The Azores thus becomes Salazar's "Ace in the Hole," a bargaining chip in most negotiations. Portugal's entrance into NATO in 1949 reflects just how crucial the islands were for the US who allowed a fascist dictatorship to enter into the treaty. When Portugal entered the United Nations in 1952, it was with the reluctant votes of the United States and England as well as other western countries. However, its entrance into the United Nations was a conditional one. To be a member Portugal had to let go of all its colonies as defined by Article 73, which states that "the definition of a colony as a territory occupied geographically, ethnically, and culturally by an administrating country."⁶ Because of this definition, Portugal fell under the category of a colonial power. As a result Portugal redefined its colonies into overseas provinces evoking the doctrine of "pluricontinentalism." Under this doctrine, Portugal's holdings in Africa and Asia were not "colonies" but overseas provinces" (*províncias ultramarinas*), and the national territory stretched, in the expression of the time, *do Minho a Timor* ("from the River Minho to East Timor")⁷ In other words, the international community and the United Nations recognized the overseas' territories right to independence and sovereignty, but the Portuguese undermined their efforts. And various times throughout the 50s and 60s liberation leaders like Dr. Agostinho Neto made appeals to the United Nations so that the General Assembly could ratify the sovereignty of the colonial territories. The African Liberation in the 50's only added to this fervor as Portuguese Africa could not unshackle itself from its

⁶ Mário António Fernandes de Oliveira et al, *A Descolonização Portuguesa: Aproximação A Um Estudo*, (Lisboa, Instituto Democracia e Liberdade, 1979), 25.

⁷ Norrie MacQueen, "Re-Defining the 'African Vocation': Portugal Post-Colonial Identity Crisis," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* Vol. 11, No. 2 (May 2003), 181-183.

colonial past. It took a war that lasted 13 years for these territories to be recognized as independent nations.

Here lies the purpose of looking at the war as a whole because it is a watershed moment. It is this event that brings Portugal once again center stage as news of its cruelty, and the African plight became more and more the subject of discussion in foreign newspapers. Even the young men who were sent to the front lines in order to keep the empire together began to sympathize with the cause of liberation. It was these men who would eventually overthrow the government established by António Oliveira de Salazar in 1932. Curiosity brings me to ask what caused this sudden shift among the Portuguese military. Was it the brutality of war? Was it the interactions with indigenous populations? Or was it simply disillusionment with the government itself? To answer these questions I have consulted various texts detailing personal accounts of war experiences as well as historical texts and articles that reflect upon this time period. In addition to this, I have interviewed various men that include my uncle who had enlisted in the army and who had participated in the wars of independence in one of the former colonies. Most of these men are part of the Portuguese immigrant community of New Jersey and I will use pseudonyms to maintain their anonymity. This is not a sociological study or an in depth analysis. Most of their political views lie to the right of the political spectrum and they were not participants of the revolution. These men have also been influenced by the time they have spent away from the country, as they became observers of Portuguese society after the wars. These men are not a representation of what occurred in Africa between the years of 1961-1975 and their political views do not reflect upon that of the entire Portuguese army, but their narratives shed some light on a conflict that is not well-known outside of Portugal.

Before The War

The last two decades of the New State took their toll on the Portuguese people. The regime's effort to transform Portugal's economy into a productive agricultural society failed. As a result, Portugal fell behind most of the industrial countries in Western Europe. The war in Africa only exacerbated this problem. The war showed how fragile the empire had become. Its efforts to maintain control over its African provinces drove Portugal into massive debt and forced the Portuguese people to sacrifice in order to save the "Pátria."⁸ In such a volatile economic climate, many Portuguese emigrated to France, Germany, and even to the United States. My own grandparents became victims of both Salazar's foreign and domestic policies. After completing his obligatory military service, employment opportunities other than continuing in the military did not exist. After several years of wandering from job to job, my grandfather followed some friends and acquaintances from the village to Germany in 1965, searching for greater economic opportunities.⁹ My grandmother followed along with my mother, then three, a year later. They remained there until 1980 and even my aunt was born on German soil. Therefore my family avoided witnessing the decline of the regime along with the revolution and only returned when Portugal became a full-fledged democracy, preparing to join the European Union.

Lack of education was a consequence of the Estado Novo where only the elite received that honor. When Salazar took power in 1932, he ushered in a return to traditional values. This ultra-conservative government created an atmosphere hostile to education, despite the fact that

⁸ Roughly translates to nation or fatherland.

⁹ Philip L. Martin, Mark J. Miller. "Guestworkers: Lessons from Western Europe." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (April 1980) pp. 315-330

Salazar himself had been a University professor. It was a privilege to have schooling beyond a fourth grade level. For example in Guinea-Bissau, only 14 people had attained university degrees, including Amilcar Cabral at the time of its war of independence.¹⁰ Before 1975 there were no universities in the colonies and if Africans wanted to continue their education they had to attend a university in Portugal. Especially in rural Portugal, the Portuguese viewed education pragmatically, praising utility over substance. The education given to students taught in schools created an appreciation for practicality, focusing on manual labor. Families grew in number because children doubled up as farmhands and then were encouraged to find gainful employment in adolescence via apprenticeships. Despite the fact that neither my grandfather nor my aunt had studied beyond the sixth grade, they helped me do my research by, driving me to every archive, burying their noses in books, conducting university level research at my side, and reading about a history that they thought they knew, but had never experienced.

Many Portuguese remained in the country. Because of the laws of conscription, all men completed two years of obligatory military service. These men registered for the selective service at their “Juntas de Freguesia,” similar to the organization of a township in the United States. In Portugal, villages are grouped into freguesias. In other words, those who belonged to a certain village registered in their respective freguesias. For example, the village from which my parents come, Souto da Carpalhosa, has a population of almost 4,000 and is itself a freguesia with 23 other villages subordinate to it.¹¹ Although the exact date of its charter is unknown, in 1218 the village was already a freguesia. The village church was restored between 1907 and

¹⁰ Peter Karibe Mendy, “Portugal’s Civilizing Mission in Colonial Guinea-Bissau: Rhetoric and Reality,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1, (Boston University African Studies Center, 2003), 57.

¹¹ *Souto da Carpalhosa*. (<http://www.memoriaportuguesa.com/souto-da-carpalhosa>) Jan. 29, 20112

1938 by local patrons, including my great-grandfather. The majority of the town's inhabitants hold land to grow substance crops to sustain the household and they sold the surplus to make a small profit. The conscription for the African wars robbed most rural villages of adult men, leaving farming to old men and women of all ages.

When the war broke out in 1961, the number of men conscripted to combat the liberation movements in Angola reached 75,000.¹² At the conclusion of the conflict in 1974, over 149,000 troops remained spread out over the three theatres of the war.¹³ Two of my grand-uncles found themselves in this situation. My uncle Zé came from a family of four siblings, my grandfather and their two sisters. After my Grandfather immigrated to Germany, he assumed the responsibility of caring for the whole household. With his conscription in 1966, he shipped off to Mozambique, leaving my two aunts to take care of the house and provide for an ill father and mother. His narrative ends here since time ran out to continue my interview. The government drafted my other uncle towards the end of the war. In extensive conversations over the phone, he recounted his experiences in Africa. His country called him in 1971, when he was barely a man of 21. He reported to the military barracks in Leiria where he underwent physical training. After completing six weeks of training, he went to north Angola, specifically the region around Cabinda. Very little information left the African provinces, leaving soldiers like my uncle completely in the dark about what challenges they faced on arrival.

The Estado Novo made it almost impossible for a Portuguese man to travel to Africa and vice-versa. The only people granted tickets to go to Angola, Guinea-Bissau, or Mozambique

¹² "Faltosos: Recenseados Apurados"

(http://www.guerracolonial.org/specific/guerra_colonial/uploaded/graficos/estatiscas/recrutamento.swf) Jan. 29, 2012

¹³ "Efectivos Totais: Efectivos Totais-3 Teatros De Operações."

(http://www.guerracolonial.org/specific/guerra_colonial/uploaded/graficos/estatiscas/efectivos.swf) Jan. 29, 2012

were exiled political prisoners or businessman who possessed wealth tied to colonial resources. The government even restricted the ability to carry money when traveling from Africa to Portugal. In other words, no information came out of the colonies. The *Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado* or PIDE (Portugal's secret police) reviewed and censored newspapers and radio broadcasts before they ever reached the masses. Only in 1960 did Portugal's first television station, Rádio e Televisão de Portugal or RTP begin broadcasting across the nation. However, the inhabitants of villages like mine did not have money to buy expensive televisions. The one television in town was located in a café where men congregated to watch their Sunday football matches. The new media presented a problem. The government owned and controlled what was broadcast on RTP. As a result, television served to propagandize for the regime. Salazar took advantage of television, broadcasting all of his speeches to the masses simultaneously via television and radio. During its regular broadcasts, especially those with large audiences, the government played announcements about how men who came of age were to register for their military service. During my research through the regional newspaper, *Região de Leiria*, I frequently came across articles that explained the process of registration as well as where its readers could send their children or where young men could effectively sign up as volunteers¹⁴. With these broadcasts, the government made certain that you, a Portuguese man of 18, viewed military service as an obligation and a "privilege."

My uncle was reticent about the war so I tried contacting more veterans for interviews. I asked my parents, acquaintances, and even my Portuguese professor if she knew anyone who took part in the wars. I was able to locate five more former soldiers, each with a unique story to tell. Each of these men comes from the same district as my own family and many from the same

¹⁴ "Recenseamento Militar." *Região de Leiria*. January 4, 1962. Pp. 1

socio-economic circumstances and had similar experiences during the war. With each of these interviews I was able to sit down and talk to each person in order to get to know them. In addition to these interviews I also consulted various personal accounts written by those who had experienced the war. For example, Captain Salgueiro Maia, who in his personal account recounts his experience as a soldier within one of Portugal's overseas provinces. From each of these fragments, I hope to piece together some of the narrative of Africa and how the African Wars unfolded, ultimately leading to the end of Portuguese fascism. But before delving into these individual histories, I will describe the characters who take part in this narrative.

On the Sunday morning of November 6th, in a small home in Perth Amboy, I was able to sit down with my first interviewee. João Carlos came from a village on the outskirts of the city of Caldas da Rainha. His household, already suffering from the war, watched as the government sent his brother to Africa. Conscripted like his brother, he caught a bus to an army barracks in Leiria where he trained to become an officer of the military police. He accomplished all this before his twentieth birthday. On October 25, 1964, then 19, he boarded a boat and left for Africa. While on board the vessel he turned 20, signaling a period of transition. In the time it took him to reach the shores of Guiné, he became a new man. I do not want to say that he was prepared for the challenges he took on during his eight years there, but, as José said sternly, “When I got on that boat, it was with the expectation of never returning, and if I did return, it would have been a true miracle.”¹⁵ Hearing this gave me chills as I listened to him speak. However, this idea for him was a pragmatic way of thinking. If soldiers did not spend their time thinking about ways to return home, they could effectively carry out their duties. He took on a new persona in order to survive which brought him both advantages and disadvantages.

¹⁵ Interview with João Carlos at his home in Perth Amboy, NJ on November 6, 2011.

The next interviewed took place at the Thanksgiving table. Telmo Caetano, my brother's godmother's father, presents a stark contrast to other men I interviewed. Unlike the other men, he came from the city. That did not mean that he acquired more education than his cohorts, but that perhaps he was more sophisticated. He met people who became his patrons in the city. These acquaintances proved very valuable for a man during the war period. Because at that time Portugal worked much through a patronage system, just knowing the right person could get you out of delicate situations. This person usually referred to as a "padrinho" or godfather, used his influence for the benefit of those who gave him patronage. When he presented himself at the recruiting office, Telmo entered just like any other recruit. But when the time came for his class to get their assignments, he called someone at the barracks in Leiria who he knew through some acquaintances. The result was that he escaped the threat of a commutation to Africa. Instead, he became an officer in the military police, charged with catching soldiers going to Africa who planned on going AWOL.¹⁶ The military police kept soldiers in line and made sure that they conducted themselves in a manner representative of the military. For example, they went to the taverns where soldiers congregated and attempted to prevent fights among the soldiers. Many fled the country in order to escape the obligations of the military service. The military police given the task of rounding up deserters and absentees inadvertently became the tools of the oppressive government. Although this man did not spend any time in the overseas wars, his narrative remains relevant as he partook in the events leading up to the revolution.

My Professor of Portuguese introduced me to this next soldier. Joaquim Almeida came from humble beginnings, but now serves as the current president of the Association of

¹⁶ Interview with Telmo Caetano in Elizabeth, NJ conducted on November 24, 2011

Commandos in Newark, NJ, and served in Team Two of the commandos.¹⁷ Like Carlos, Joaquim Almeida also came from the Caldas da Rainha region. Drafted into the army in 1970, he excelled during recruitment, earning the opportunity to join the commandos. He spent three years on active duty in the elite special forces of the Portuguese army, the division of the Portuguese military designed to fight a guerilla war. Trained by the notorious French Foreign Legion, their training took place for three months in Portugal and another three months in Angola. Almeida compares them to the Green Berets in the US.¹⁸ Although he remained hesitant to talk about the training exercises he endured, Almeida did recount some stories. The first was something the military officer called the “week of insanity.” Soldiers had their whole day turned on its head. As he explains, “we ate breakfast for dinner, lunch at midnight, and dinner for breakfast. All while conducting our military exercises at night and then sleeping till the sun set to begin again.”¹⁹ The other story is far more gruesome. Candidates (what they called recruits) worked to the point of exhaustion. Then they were told to run a mile. Meanwhile a truck would drive in front of them trickling water from its tank. Many soldiers fell to the ground licking the dirt, trying to suck up any moisture that still remained. “That was how they taught us how to ration water. They made us experience what it was like to have none.”²⁰ Undoubtedly these hazing rituals had to have included various torture techniques as these soldiers were tasked with collecting intelligence as well as carry out covert missions. As a result of these trials, these soldiers became the best trained forces of the army. Recruited from the far corners of the empire, the men had allegedly endured poverty and extreme hardships before

¹⁷ The commandos like other armed forces are divided into teams numbering no more than five members, each with its own assignments.

¹⁸ Interview with Joaquim Almeida at the headquarters of the Association of the Commandos in Newark, NJ on November 28, 2011

¹⁹ Interview with Joaquim Almeida

²⁰ Interview with Joaquim Almeida

entering the commandos. He explained, “When I went into the commandos, my grandmother entered into a panic because they had told her that only maniacs were commandos. Even today they continue to say the same thing, but we weren’t crazy. We just had a different mindset because of what we had to endure in our training.”²¹ Unlike conscripts, every single commando was simultaneously adept at first aid, a radio technician, and a navigator. In other words, his function as a commando called on him to know how to read a map, how to dress wounds, and how to use radios and the codes that went with the communications. Even though this situation seems arduous, causing the most psychological trauma, those who finished the program probably did not have the same difficulties as conscripted soldiers when it came to dealing with the situation in which they found themselves in Africa.

The next person I interviewed came from a town called São Mamede near Fatima, the religious epicenter of Portugal. The area surrounding Fatima, a rural area known mostly for raising livestock, was one of the poorest parts of the country. Many people lived in one room shacks where the whole family ate and slept. Enlisting in the army provided an escape for this man who until he left Guinea-Bissau never ventured one-hundred kilometers from his village. Unlike his cohorts, Mateus Carvide volunteered for his military service at 18. In 1968, he left his village and got on a bus to Leiria where the army selected him to go to the training facility in Estremoz in the Southern region of the Alentejo. While there, he became an infantry rifleman. Because of the fact that he volunteered, it meant that he had an underlying reason. His patriotism seems to have led him to believe that the war itself was justified in order to maintain the integrity of the empire and its people. Another possibility, instead of waiting for his

²¹ Interview with Joaquim Almeida

obligatory military service, he decided to enlist in an elite corps. Africa provided a new setting and a new opportunity to start over as well as the prospect for adventure.

The final person I interviewed, Adameu Ferreira, befriended Carvide during his service. The fact that they hailed from the same region of Fatima only strengthened their friendship. They trained at the same military base and they spent time in the same barracks in Guinea-Bissau. Drafted in 1968 at a later age than his colleagues, Adameu Ferreira was already married and a father of a newborn child. Like many soldiers, Adameu had established himself in a job before entering the military. Suddenly, he found himself in a military uniform running back and forth carrying heavy equipment. And in no time at all, the army relocated him to an unknown continent where he feared an enemy he did not know. Unlike all the other people I interviewed, he had a great deal to lose. While all the others accepted the fact that they could die, Adameu convinced himself of his return. Whether it was sheer force of will or just luck, he unlike many soldiers was eventually able to return home.

Africans also participated on the Portuguese side. Like the Portuguese conscripts, the Africans lacked possibilities for advancement and Salazar's government made it ever more difficult to have social mobility. Because if one looks at the army in the colonies before the twentieth century, it was about 75% African due to the reluctance of the crown to send European troops because of the cost.. This changed with the Estado Novo. According to historian Douglas Wheeler, "The racial composition of the armed forces present in the territory, then was now altered to 75-80 per cent white and 20-25 per cent black, clearly a reversal of the traditional

ratio.”²² A few Africans received scholarships to study in Portugal, but lacked any alternatives other than staying in the rural areas, moving to the cities to look for employment, joining the rebels, or joining the Portuguese armies. Brothers divided over this choice. Because of the draft, Africans like the Portuguese faced serious penalties if they did not join. Generations of Africans like generations of Portuguese peasants, lived in the same towns and never left their villages. When the Portuguese conscripted Africans, some of these young men may have seen an opportunity for escape. Another reason they joined may have been the possibility that they saw a way to protect their families. Most of the Portuguese and Africans had lived sheltered lives under the auspices of their respective families. However, in the war they relied on themselves while also placing their lives in the hands of their comrades. At the same time the weight of the world came down upon them and they barely avoided being crushed.

The Portuguese soldiers forced to defend the “pátria” submitted to the Estado Novo’s demand that they maintain the African territories under Portugal’s sovereignty. The Portuguese and the African people today still bear the scars of the war, and many who lived under the regime of Salazar continue to live in fear. The Portuguese veterans abandoned their families, their friends, and anything that was familiar in order to please the regime. Salazar took them away from all who loved them and placed them in a situation where everyone was a potential enemy. Their country asked them to sacrifice so much, but in return they received little or no benefit for their sacrifices.

²² Douglas L. Wheeler, “The Portuguese Army in Angola,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Cambridge University Press, Oct., 1969), 431.

See Also: Norrie MacQueen, “Belated Decolonization and UN Politics against the Backdrop of the Cold War Portugal, Britain, and Guinea-Bissau’s Proclamation of Independence, 1973-1974,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 4, (MIT Press, Fall 2006,) 9.

Mário António Fernandes de Oliveira et al, *A Descolonização Portuguesa: Aproximação A Um Estudo*, (Lisboa, Instituto Democracia e Liberdade, 1979).

The War

Don't even talk about the North. The "turras" from the UPA did not spare anyone. Women and children were killed with machetes. Women had knives stuck in their pussies. The white man's heads were cut off and their dicks stuffed in their mouths. If the army hadn't arrived, I don't know what would have happened next.²³

Although grotesque, novelist Manuel Alegre's depiction of the atrocities committed by the Angolan rebels demonstrates the environment in which Portuguese army's soldiers found themselves. The event depicted above is one of many examples of atrocities committed by both sides. It began with the arrest of Agostinho Neto, the president of the MPLA, in June of 1960. The backlash that resulted from his supporters caused bloodshed in the streets of Luanda. In order to control the protestors, the PIDE mounted guns and mowed down all the marchers, the resulting casualties were 30 dead, and 200 wounded Angolans. However, it was not until the bombing of PIDE headquarters in Luanda in February of 1961 that Salazar decided to mobilize the army in order to quell the rebellion in Angola. The other provinces of Guiné and Mozambique also experienced similar massacres before the war erupted and they followed suit, respectively in 1963 and 1964. Factions that had been underground rose up against their government demanding independence. This resurgence of groups that held animosity towards their oppressors culminated in the arrival of Portuguese troops in August of 1961, beginning the war of the Ultramar and the wars of African Independence for the rebels.

²³ Alegre, Manuel. *Jornada de África: Romance de Amor e Morte do Alferes Sebastião*. 3ª edição, Publicações D. Quixote, Lisboa 2007. Pp. 41.

Manuel Alegre was a strong dissenter of the Estado Novo. Many of his novels deal with this time period, expressing the suffering of both the Portuguese and the Africans fighting for independence. He along with Mário Soares were founding members of the Portuguese Socialist Party and he remains active in politics even now.

The war created an unknown enemy, who could hide in plain sight. The Portuguese gave them the moniker of terrorists. Various factions developed as a result of the war. Guiné was predominantly controlled by the Partido Africano para a Independência de Guiné e Cabo Verde or the African Party for the Independence of Guiné and Cape Verde (PAIGC). In Mozambique, The Frente de Libertação de Moçambique or FRELIMO, divided the province and terrorized its European inhabitants, especially the business community. During the war, Angola became the most fought after Portuguese territory. It was there that Portugal's wealth had been concentrated. Angola's factions constantly fractured, and infighting was a frequent problem amongst them. The most powerful of these factions were as follows: the Movimento Popular da Libertação de Angola or the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) led by Dr. Agostinho Neto; the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola or the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) led by Jonas Savimbi; Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola or the National Front for the Liberation of Angola of Holden Roberto (FNLA); and the Frente para a Libertação do Enclave de Cabinda or the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC), which professed the desire for independence of the Cabinda region of Angola, much like how the region of Catalonia has professed in Spain. Although these factions differed about the events unfolding and held different aspirations for their provinces, the Portuguese did not make such distinctions. The Portuguese believed that their enemies were foreign communist separatists from countries like the Congo and Guinea-Conakry who having achieved their own independence were promoting wars in Portuguese territory. The existence of opposing factions and the militant groups into which they developed were a result of both an intellectual awakening as well as hundreds of years of oppression.

Another enemy became the climate and the terrain itself. The African experience differed for every soldier. Portuguese commandos, for example, worked in specific operations that lasted up to five days and then they would have almost a month off without any military duties. Joaquim Almeida spent most of his time in Luanda and Lousato, two of Angola's major cities. He spent most of his time enjoying the beaches of Angola and every now and again he was sent to the jungle. Ventura said, "Angola is a paradise, there is no place like it. The sand is clean and the beaches are marvelous."²⁴ In fact Angola was often called the jewel of Africa because it had every valuable natural resource. It had large reserves of diamonds, petroleum wells, gold, and other precious minerals. Angola was the life blood of the empire all its wealth was concentrated within the colony. However, the bloodiest of the battlefields in the African wars was the jungles of Guinea-Bissau. Many now consider it to have been economically dispensable. As historian Norrie MacQueen writes, "With only 36,000 square kilometers of largely unproductive and inhospitable land, and wholly surrounded by former French territories of Guinea Conakry and Senegal, Guinea-Bissau had a widely dispersed population of roughly 500,000 in 1973. The colonial economy, to the extent it existed, consisted of cash crop exports (mostly ground nuts)."²⁵ Acclaimed Portuguese author, João de Melo once wrote, "If Angola developed as the jewel of the Portuguese empire, Guinea was never more than a scrap of brass."²⁶ Although there was no extrinsic value to this part of the empire, Portugal's doctrine of pluricontinentalism made them reluctant to surrender the territory as they felt it was necessary to preserve Portugal's space. Representatives of the government cited a domino theory that if any

²⁴ Interview with Joaquim Almeida at the headquarters of the Association of Commandos in Newark, NJ conducted on November 28, 2011.

²⁵ Norrie MacQueen, "Belated Decolonization and UN Politics against the Backdrop of the Cold War Portugal, Britain, and Guinea-Bissau's Proclamation of independence, 1973-1974," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Volume 8, No. 4, Fall 2006 (MIT Press), 7.

²⁶ João de Melo, ed., *Os Anos da Guerra 1961-75: Os Portugueses em África*, Vol. II (Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 1988), 102.

territory was given sovereignty that the whole integrity of the rest of the empire would be compromised. Guinea presented the greatest of challenges and its rebels were the most skilled and persistent of all the territories. As Portuguese historian, Jaime Nogueira Pinto, explains, “In Guinea a colonial army of about 32,000 soldiers (both European and locally recruited) was effectively pinned down by a PAIGC guerilla force numbering no more than 7,000.”²⁷ Guinea-Bissau was the only one of the Portuguese colonies where its control constantly fluctuated between the rebels of the PAIGC and the Portuguese army.

The majority of my interviewees took part in the battles of Guinea-Bissau. Most of the fighting took place in the dense jungles, with little visibility. An ambush was always expected. The soldiers that confronted this new terrain explain the difficulty to adapt to this new environment. Mateus Carvide spent the duration of his service in the jungles of Guiné around the area of Tite in the northwest of the country. Carvide, remembers, “The vegetation was very dense and the leaves were razor sharp. We were constantly being sliced open by the brush because our skin was not yet able to deal with the new environment.” He goes on to add that, “The first three nights the mosquitos ate us alive and malaria was a constant threat and many soldiers came down with symptoms of the disease.”²⁸ Before they left for Africa, the army issued pamphlets informing soldiers on how to detect malaria, and how to recognize its symptoms as well as those of other diseases and parasites they would encounter along the way. Besides facing disease, the climate turned out to be an enormous threat to the health of the Portuguese soldiers. Portugal experiences a Mediterranean climate with relatively little humidity. In the African Provinces, especially in the jungle, temperatures were elevated and the

²⁷ Jaime Nogueira Pinto, *O Fim do Estado Novo e as Origens do 25 de Abril* (Lisbon: Difel, 1995), 430.

²⁸ Interview with Mateus Carvide at his residence in Long Branch, NJ conducted on January 2, 2012.

humidity unbearable. Soldiers constantly travelled through bogs and swamps in order to reach their targets, spending hours, even days with their feet soaked, making gangrene very prevalent. The other conundrum was the fact that the enemy recognized the terrain better than any Portuguese soldier did. Ambushes were constant threats. After all the rebels were protecting their country against foreign aggressors.

Because of the fact that the army did not recognize the terrain, it became crucial to recruit indigenous African men. According to all the veterans I was able to interview, the native populations were a welcome addition to the efforts of the armed forces. They, unlike their Portuguese counterparts, had lived in the area for most of their lives. Not only did they know the terrain, but also they were useful as spies as they could infiltrate enemy camps with ease. As João Carlos recounts, there was a black captain of a commando squad, Marcelino (he only used a first name) who he befriended. "That guy would go a couple days early in plain clothes to these enemy villages and survey the enemy positions. Then when we arrived at the rendezvous point before entering an enemy territory; he would point out exactly who was stationed where and he would even draw maps of the installations," explained Luís while acting out the scene with his gestures.²⁹ However, the same was true about the other side. Unlike the Portuguese soldiers who were always in uniform, most of the rebels wore plain clothes, were shoeless, and looked just like any other person in a village. Either the army integrated the African soldiers into white platoons or they were placed into all black platoons. Nevertheless, the army provided an opportunity for Africans to gain a living and sometimes even win high-ranking positions in the military.

²⁹ Interview with João Carlos at his residence in Perth Amboy, New Jersey conducted on November 6, 2011

The army's relationship with the indigenous populations from what these men recounted was amicable. Soldiers stationed in the jungle depended on the local businesses in order to survive. They paid women to wash their clothes and they went to the local bars to drink. In essence, the presence of the military in these obscure villages created a revenue stream that would not have existed without them. The Portuguese, at least those I spoke to, viewed their African neighbors as Portuguese. For all intents and purposes they were equals both on and off the battlefield where color no longer was an issue. Although communication was difficult with the Africans, the black soldiers acted as intermediaries. There were constant efforts by the military to help the provincial inhabitants. The army for example took on a secondary role as nation builder. For example, this program was responsible for building 62 schools in the Uíge district of Angola, a complete contrast to the policies of the past. As historian Douglas Wheeler explains, "The psycho-social programme had envisaged a role for the army in rural development, resettlement, primary education in the bush, medical aid, and agriculture in the areas reclaimed or reconquered from the 1961 African attacks."³⁰ My uncle for example was assigned to one of these psycho-social programs and claims that he helped create parties in the barracks and, invited the residents of nearby villages to a day of cinema or any other gathering.

Even the highest ranking military officer, General António Sebastião Ribeiro de Spínola claims to have shown the Guinean people that the Portuguese were there only with good intentions by having soldiers distribute pamphlets with slogans on them wherever they went. While at the Historic Military Archive in Lisbon, I came across one of these pamphlets. On one side there was the slogan in Portuguese and on the other side, the message was written in Creole.

³⁰ Douglas L. Wheeler, "The Portuguese Army in Angola," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Oct, Cambridge University Press, 1969,) 434.

The message was as follows: “Whoever wields this paper embrace him as your brother...”³¹ Although there is this message of camaraderie between the Portuguese and their African brothers. I found many contradictions to these happy memories. A book entitled Missão na Guiné that Mr. Carvide had purchased when he had arrived in Guiné, detailed every aspect of the province from its geography and topography to the various tribes within its borders, and was published by the Portuguese Army. But as I ruffled through the pages of the text, there was a serious bias. Guiné was made to look primitive as it only possessed one semi-industrialized city, Bissau. Its people appeared to be uncivilized, and the photos which it displays always depicted people in their traditional tribal clothing; when in actuality very few if any wore such costumes. Even their religion was made to appear backward. According to the book, “The Majority of the native population—with exception of the fulas, mandingas, beafadas, nalus and sossos which follow Islam—continues to maintain their primitive beliefs, despite the efforts of our missionaries, which try without success to help them see the Christian truth.”³² This statement alone defines what António de Oliveira de Salazar’s government represented. At the same time the statement demonstrates how disconnected and disjointed the armed forces were from the regime itself. Although the army by definition is an extension of the government the ideas professed by its generals and the soldiers themselves did not appear to coincide with those of the government.

Most of the operations that took place were in the jungles of the provinces. A new term even developed in Portuguese rhetoric, “Bush Warfare.” While stationed in the jungle, soldiers built barracks out of what was available. Makeshift shelters built out of palm trees and covered

³¹ Military Pamphlet within the official report for Operation Trident. Arquivo Histórico Militar do Exército Português Rua do Caminho de Ferro nº2 Lisboa.

³² Estado Maior do Exército. *Missão Na Guiné*. 1967

in layers of dirt, were usually the lodging of necessity. Soldiers experienced erratic schedules as they were supposed to be ready at all times. Sleep became almost impossible because of the all night mortar-fire of the rebels. Soldiers became so used to enemy fire that they could identify the make, weapon, and the exact caliber of the round fired. According to testimony, the rate of fire as well as the sound the muzzle made was the only way to identify the enemy's position. Portuguese soldiers were issued a G3 Battle Rifle, while the rebels used whatever weapons they could find. When the war began the rebels had very little resources so they fought with machetes, and other farm tools like scythes and pitchforks. But as countries like the Soviet Union, China, the United States, and Cuba took to the cause of African Liberation, money and weapons began to flow across borders into the provinces. For example, the United States used the CIA to covertly direct funds to Holden Roberto and the FNLA in Angola. Others like Cuba sent troops to aid in the efforts of liberation, including the platoon Che Guevara commanded. This transition is made apparent by the fact that the Portuguese Air Force had remained uncontested in its efforts, but by 1973 the skies over Africa were no longer safe because the rebels had gained access to surface-to-air missiles.³³ There were American guns, Russian guns, French guns, RPGs, mortars, everything needed to advance the war.³⁴ The most common of these weapons was the Kalashnikov. Even weapons produced and manufactured in Portugal itself found their way into the enemy's hand. João Carlos recounts one incident, "With Marcelino's help, we apprehended an arsenal of every type of firearm from every nation imaginable. They were all unused and still wrapped and packaged as if recently arrived."³⁵ With

³³ Norrie MacQueen, "Belated Decolonization and UN Politics against the Backdrop of the Cold War Portugal, Britain, and Guinea-Bissau's Proclamation of Independence, 1973-1974," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 4, (MIT Press, Fall 2006,) 9.

³⁴ Interview with João Carlos at his residence in Perth Amboy, NJ conducted on November 6, 2011

³⁵ Interview with João Carlos at his residence in Perth Amboy, NJ conducted on November 6, 2011

this extraordinary success, he reported to General Spínola himself. From this day on both these men gained the confidence of the General; João Carlos even became one of Spínola's bodyguards when he returned to Portugal in 1973. If they had not apprehended this Arsenal, the rebels would have had the same weapon as the Portuguese, facilitating ambushes.

Most troops were mobilized by foot or by helicopter, rarely by land vehicles because so many anti-tank mines were deployed throughout the provinces. When deployed, soldiers would travel miles to their destinations, often spending days in the jungle. Because of this, soldiers felt the necessity for ingenuity. An infantry soldier carried around their standard issue rations, which usually contained non-perishable items like canned sausages, a chorizo, saltine crackers and perhaps bread that they were able to get out of the mess hall back at the barracks. Others resorted to stealing from their superior officers who enjoyed preferential treatment. One of the major requests of those who wrote home was for food. According to Adameu, "everything we had was salty, so salty. We had to force ourselves not to drink because we only had one canteen of water."³⁶ Lack of potable water sources was another dilemma that soldiers confronted when deployed. There were frequently snipers posted to pick off thirsty soldiers. This very incident afflicted José Luís, who had trained as a sniper himself, recounts, "I had stopped at a river bed to drink and as I dropped down to splash some water on my face, I heard gunfire and felt a burning sensation in my leg. I had been shot. My first instinct was to find cover so I dove behind a boulder while my team drew him out with fire. I looked down my scope." As he recalls the incident, he simulates holding a rifle, squeezing his finger.³⁷ Wounded three times in combat, he

³⁶ Interview with Adameu Ferreira at the residence of Mateus Carvide in Long Branch, NJ on January 2, 2012.

³⁷ Interview with João Carlos at his residence in Perth Amboy, NJ conducted on November 6, 2011.

admits today that if the man had been a better shot he would not have been talking to me that day. Fighting a war in a jungle produces many undesirable variables.

As a result, it needed to be fought a different way in order to be won. Instead of searching for an enemy who could hide anywhere, they decided to flush them out. Much like Vietnam, the Portuguese began a war of attrition. Although the testimony of these veterans does not mention the tactics of attrition, they use euphemisms like “clean” to explain this new strategy. One of the largest military offensives in the whole war, Operation Trident, lasted nearly a year. From early 1964 to 1965, its main objectives were to knockout out enemy strongholds located on the archipelago off the coast of Guinea-Bissau. It was a three pronged attack concentrated on three specific regions: the islands of Caiar, Como, and Catungo. The objectives as laid out in the official report were: to capture the enemy alive or dead, specifically the troops of the PAIGC; destroy any shelters where the enemy could hide; and to cut off access to the mainland. Before troops embarked, artillery would batter the island for hours. Meanwhile, the Fiat G91 Fighter aircraft rained bombs and napalm over the islands. Despite this troops met strong resistance. As a result many villages needed “cleaning,” meaning any trace of the rebels had to be wiped out. Surprisingly, the official report details the atrocities committed by the Portuguese and exactly the number of huts that they burned. After a year of constant barrage, the operation created heavy losses on both sides and many of the high ranking officials the Portuguese wanted to capture had fled to neighboring countries. A tactic implemented often by the rebels. In Guiné-Bissau they fought over individual battlefields while the other provinces appeared to be more easily controlled by the Portuguese.

Unlike Guinea-Bissau which was predominantly controlled by the PAIGC, various factions competed in the province of Angola, facilitating the army’s effort to contain the

insurgency. As Joaquim Almeida explained, “the terrorists were not able to control a piece of land that was the size of a football pitch and if they did, it was not for long.”³⁸ This statement may reflect the attitudes of the commandos. To this day he remains adamant that victory was possible if it had not been for Portugal’s political failure. The commandos were the most loyal to the army and it was this institution that did not ever stray from the army’s indoctrination. Despite not having achieved any territorial gains, the insurgents continued to be a problem. They were not as ignorant as the Portuguese described them. Many of the rebel leaders were highly educated with university degrees. they had thrown away their privileged status to take up the cause of independence. They continued to operate in the dense jungle and they constantly relocated in order to avoid the military because they had to use any advantage they could as they were dwarfed in number compared to the size of the Portuguese armed forces. Trying to fight this enemy was a losing battle. No matter how many successful campaigns had taken place, total victory never came. For one thing the Portuguese could not get the insurgents out of the jungle and the jungle was endless. The rebels could scatter and ambush their adversaries. The rebels, lacking arms and ammunition, sometimes resorted to setting booby traps. They strapped bombs to animals, women, and even children, taking advantage of the relationships that soldiers developed with villagers. Knowing that children visited the camps and barracks, they would attach bombs to them, remotely detonating the explosive device from within the jungle.³⁹ The Portuguese have dual memories about the Africans they were fighting. On one hand, they speak fondly of the villagers they met and the Africans who fought alongside them. On the other hand,

³⁸ Interview with Joaquim Almeida at the headquarters of the Association of Commandos in Newark, NJ conducted on November 28, 2011.

³⁸ Interview with João Carlos at his residence in Perth Amboy, New Jersey conducted on November 6, 2011. Many of the soldiers who I had interviewed talked about these tactics of using children as suicide bombers. Although this was only in some cases and not all the groups they fought resorted to such tactics.

³⁹ Interview with João Carlos at his residence in Perth Amboy, NJ conducted on November 6, 2011.

they demonize the rebels and act as if those fighting for independence used unfair tactics and were responsible for severing the feelings of fraternity at the beginning of the war.

The battlefield was not the problem. Every person adapted to his or her situation. It was when soldiers were off the front lines that the toll of the war became apparent. To keep soldiers busy, the army gave each soldier a task in order to keep them from thinking about what they were doing and what might happen to them. Some of the soldiers turned on one another. The case of João Carlos, who fought with other soldiers, even attacked his superior officer. Others drowned their sorrows with alcohol. Many of the soldiers I interviewed confessed that they were always drunk when they went into battle.

Many soldiers wrote home. They could either pay for regular postage and seal their letter or send a free aerogram. A free aerogram, which was open on both ends with an easily removable seal, permitted the secret police or PIDE to read letters at will, making sure that no information ever left Africa. Some would deal with their experiences by writing about them and even turned them into songs and poems. Soldiers often used the melodies of familiar songs and provided them with new lyrics. One such song is represented here:

Hino de Lunho

São reizinhos	They are the Kings
Da nossa guerra	Of our war
Senhores por escolha	Big Shots by choice
Mandadores sem prática	Ordering without any knowledge
Aceitam cunhas	They take checks
E dizem que não	But say they don't
Passam as rondas	They do their rounds
Sob os céus de África	Over the skies of Africa
Estou farto deles, Estou farto deles, Só mandam vir e não fazem nada.	I'm tired of them, I'm tired of them, They just give orders and never do anything
Quantos Mercedes, senhor capitão, Até agora foram fornicadas?	How many Mercedes Mr. Captain Have been blown up?

This song written by Alferes Herculano de Carvalho became highly popular amongst the military since it demonstrated the hardships of day to day life, but also the attitude towards superior officers. As seen in the verses above, many soldiers did not respect their superior officers. According to Salgueiro Maia's account, some soldiers were court martialled for singing this song at a party with their superior officers in 1972.⁴⁰ The increasing antagonism between soldiers and their officers planted the seed that grew into the eventual revolution of 1974.

The war brought with it many hardships. The colonies were devastated by the war. Everything that had once given beauty to the African territories had been destroyed by the hubris of both sides of the battlefield. The aftermath left the former provinces without any recourse to rebuild their war torn lands. For the Portuguese, the end of the war meant an age of democracy. For the former African provinces it triggered decades of civil war as the competing factions that had once been united against colonialism began to compete for dominance as well as the

⁴⁰ Maia, Salgueiro. *Capitão de Abril: Histórias da Guerra do Ultramar e do 25 de Abril*. Editorial Notícias, Lisboa 1992. Pp. 50

exploitation of its resources by countries who claimed to be aiding their cause. The battle for the Third World continued in Africa. The United States and the Soviet Union the inhabitants of these countries by turning their countries into the battlefields of a proxy war the two superpowers themselves were not willing to engage in.

The April Captains

When António de Oliveira Salazar died on July 27, 1970, Portugal mourned the death of its “benevolent” father. He had held power for over 40 years. Surprisingly, Salazar’s death affected even those who opposed his policies. He created a social and cultural revolution, contributing to the propagation of folklore as well as promoting Fado in Portugal⁴¹. Salazar’s image remains untouched to this day among certain people. So when he died in 1970, many pondered the future of the Estado Novo and wondered who would lead it. The man, who succeeded him, Marcelo Caetano, like his predecessor, was a professor at the University of Lisbon. During the Years of the Estado Novo, he was an integral part of the party as he was charged with developing supporters among the youth (Mocidade Portuguesa) and guiding them into leadership positions.⁴² However, when he ascended to power after Salazar suffered a stroke in 1968, the public had little knowledge of who he was. The only public office he held during the Estado Novo was his three year term as minister to the colonies between 1944 and 1947. Popular views of Caetano as inexperienced led to rebellion and an end to fascism in Portugal.

In 1973 Marcelo Caetano was invited to England in order to celebrate the 600th anniversary of the alliance between the two countries. Prior to his arrival, *The Times* of London began to run stories about the atrocities committed by the Portuguese in Mozambique, including the army’s policy of burning villages suspected of aiding rebels as well as its rampant use of

⁴¹ Fado is the traditional music of the Portuguese often sung by a woman and accompanied by string instruments like guitars. Its lyrics are often dark and reflect a social-critique.

⁴² The Mocidade Portuguesa was founded in 1936 and it was inspired by both the Hitler Youth and the Italian Fascist Opera Nazionale Balilla. Membership was compulsory between the ages of seven and fourteen, and then voluntary until the age of 25. The Organization was disbanded after the revolution in 1974.

napalm.⁴³ Caetano was met by harsh criticism and was unable to answer any of his critics' questions. Never had the official been so humiliated and now once again Portugal had found itself at mercy of the world's scrutiny. The result of this humiliation led to a reformation of the Estado Novo. The resulting reformation became known as the *Primavera Marcelina* (the Marcelo Spring). According to Portugal's former finance minister, Diogo Freitas do Amaral, "Formerly a close associate of Salazar, Caetano permitted a measure of limited liberalization, including some relaxation of secret police activity and the return from exile of Socialist leader Mário Soares."⁴⁴ Although Caetano was a member of the old guard, he realized the need for change. He attempted to introduce a National Assembly, which would be a liberal wing to the existent government, but the other officials of Salazar's government hindered any of his attempts at reform. The government inhibited any attempt at change, continuing its repression and the secret polices activities remained unabated.

As the war continued, the army fell apart. The traditional academic schools were not producing officers quickly enough. So the army devised a new way to promote soldiers according to their decorations in combat. As João Carlos would often repeat, "You had to have cold blood in combat,"⁴⁵ meaning a soldier had to be stone-faced and not show any emotion on the battlefield. Soldiers had to depend on their training. Although it appears that the military was rewarding soldiers for their valor, what ended up happening was that many soldiers focused on accruing medals. These medals brought raises in salary, but not the training necessary to lead the men under their command. Even-though these soldiers possessed battlefield experience, they

⁴³ "Portuguese Massacre Reported by Priests," *The Times*, 10 July 1973, 1.

⁴⁴ Diogo Freitas Do Amaral, "Reflections on the Portuguese Revolution," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 10, No. 2, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999,) 113.

⁴⁵ Interview with João Carlos at his residence in Perth Amboy, NJ conducted on November 6, 2011

lacked the tactical knowledge that they would have learned in the military academy. Even more important, most of these men had little or no knowledge of the underground political movements. In general, the soldiers under their command disobeyed and actually resisted their superior officers. Their lack of respect and deference contributed to the rupture that would cause the creation of the Movimento das Forças Armadas.

Those officers who had gone to the military academy in Lisbon spent several years studying war theory, and by the time they were dispatched to Africa and given their assignments, they knew how to organize troops and how to deal with challenges presented during battle. Paradoxically, the officers trained in the academies were more sympathetic to their African opponents and more willing to promote their liberation. The academy graduates had witnessed the student revolts at the Universities of Lisbon and Coimbra. Many were familiar with Alvaro Cunhal's Portuguese Communist Party, and some officers even joined the underground movements, and secretly distributed pamphlets to promote protest. Telmo Caetano, who as an officer of the military police in Leiria, watched soldiers return from Africa and he also watched how the police treated protesters. Never a supporter of the government at all, he made the decision to join the underground movement, distributing pamphlets when off duty.⁴⁶ The horrors of war further radicalized soldiers of the African wars. They witnessed several atrocities committed on both sides. They also sympathized with the plight of the indigenous population. Unlike Salazar and Caetano's policies, these graduating officers believed that the indigenous population deserved the right of self-determination, a sentiment echoed by some of the leaders of the armed forces like General António de Spínola. With the influence of the Portuguese left as well as their own experiences in Africa, these young men began to plot the end of the war.

⁴⁶ Interview with Telmo Caetano in Elizabeth, NJ conducted on November 24, 2011

Although it is not known exactly when the plotting began, by 1973 the Captain's movement was already in full force.

The other problem that presented itself was that Marcelo Caetano wanted to ensure that he had as much control over the armed forces as Salazar had had. As a result the paradigm shifted once again. As historian Diamantino Machado explains, "high-ranking military officers were publicly to display loyalty to the coalition's regime, and to call for increased support for the war effort."⁴⁷ Ability to perform was no longer a priority in the army. Instead, performance was replaced by loyalty. Those who swore oaths of loyalty continued to hold the goals of the Estado Novo, maintaining the integrity of the empire as well as continuing to garner support for the government, received special treatment. This requirement led to even more discontent amongst soldiers below the rank of colonel and even affected some higher ranking officers. The most significant moment came in 1973 when Caetano invited General António de Spínola to Lisbon. In November of 1973 he was offered the position of Minister to the Overseas Territories, but he refused the position. After nearly a year outside of military operations, his colleague General Francisco de Costa Gomes, convinced Caetano to give him the position of Vice-Chief to the Armed Forces. Spínola exercised this charge until March of 1974 when he resigned. His resignation was due to the fact that both he and General Fernando Costa Gomes refused to participate in a public celebration honoring the government. To understand why this event was so crucial, one has to look at these men's accomplishments.

General Spínola held a privileged position in the army as general of all the armed forces in Guiné. When that province fell under martial law, the regime selected him as the military

⁴⁷ Diamantino P. Machado. *The Structure of Portuguese Society: The Failure of Fascism*. (Praeger Publishers 1991,) 158.

governor of Guiné. Those who served under the man idolized him. Every single soldier whom I interviewed had some story about Spínola's kindness. According to them, Spínola was a compassionate leader whose objective was to make the war as palatable as possible for the soldiers stationed in Guiné. He became an active leader, visiting soldiers on a regular basis. He approached soldiers and asked them how they were feeling, and even discussed the food. Adameu Ferreira recounted a time when the general came to the base and asked him how he was doing. He replied, "General I am doing fine, but the mail is a week late." With a smile on his face Spínola replied to Adameu's grievance, "Don't worry soldier. I'll take care of it."⁴⁸ Not two hours had passed when a small plane came bearing the mail. From that point on, the mail arrived at the same time every day. Former soldiers even recounted stories about Spínola being on the front lines holding his monocle in one hand and shooting his pistol with the other. Anecdotes like these contribute to memory of Spínola as a heroic figure. He became the object of many myths, and, according to men like João Carlos, who was close to him, there was no man who did more for soldiers than the general. Despite the lore surrounding his image, some groups met his ascension to power with great resistance.

Although the general was crucial to the fall of the regime, lower-ranking soldiers successfully organized the offensive that made the coup possible. As historian Diamantino Machado recounts, "By 1972, the total strength of the Portuguese armed forces was approximately 220,000 men, which was an extremely high proportion of the total continental population of just over 8 million [in Portugal]."⁴⁹ These men experienced the horrors of war and

⁴⁸ Interview with Adameu Ferreira at the residence of Mateus Carvide in Long Branch, NJ conducted on January 2, 2012.

⁴⁹ Diamantino P. Machado. *The Structure of Portuguese Society: The Failure of Fascism*. (Praeger Publishers 1991.) Pp. 156

because they were officers, they were subject to the whims of the government, meaning that they would have to keep returning to Africa. After over a decade of war, the army was on its last legs. The result of this situation was that junior officers, whose identity is not known even now, joined the plan to overthrow the reactionary government, creating the Captains Movement. As Machado explains, “In September 1973, approximately 140 junior officers, none above the rank of captain, and almost all with service in the colonial wars, met at a farmhouse near the town of Évora, in southeastern Portugal.”⁵⁰ Not only did they wish to bring an end to the war, but they wanted to reveal what had happened during the course of the war. The PIDE (the secret police) suppressed all public knowledge about the war, and, even those who came back from Africa could not publish any of their accounts because of fear of government repression. My research in local and national newspapers, failed to turn up stories about the war. All notice of the war predicted victory. Most outsiders were unfamiliar with it, and the government tried to maintain the silence. When I searched for Portuguese newspapers in the United States, I discovered that there were few holdings for 1961 to 1974, a gap closed once the revolution of 1974 occurred and reopened Portugal to the world.

Foreign journalists who smuggled themselves into the provinces and the foreign missionaries appear to have been the only outside observers to what had been taking place in Africa. According to Marcelino dos Santos, a Mozambican poet and founding member of FRELIMO, “Considering the Portuguese government evermore incapable of inaction, referring to the ‘massacres’ made known to the global public by missionaries, like the employment of

⁵⁰ Machado, Diamantino P. *The Structure of Portuguese Society: The Failure of Fascism*. Praeger Publishers 1991. Pp. 159

herbicide by South African planes under the protection of the Portuguese air force.”⁵¹ The reason why this is significant is because this herbicide had adverse effects on both the population and the vegetation, poisoning sources of potable water and destroying sustenance crops of these border villages. Another stark revelation was that although the number of recorded casualties amounted to around 8,000 killed and 15,000 wounded, the actual number was much higher. It was almost impossible to record to the exact number of casualties because the wounded were so mutilated that only dog tags made identification possible. As one former soldier João Carlos, who spent over eight years in Guiné recounts, “What ended up happening was that there no longer a body to send to the soldier’s family. So the army sealed all the caskets, often filling them with nothing but rocks.”⁵² As a result, the family would conduct a funeral and bury the casket thinking it contained the body while it remained in Africa. These secrets would all come to light after the coup.

Music was the one medium capable of conveying the truth about what was happening in Africa, and most artists criticized their governments through song. These songs traveled underground in the music of revolutionary artists like António Vitorino, Sérgio Godinho, and José Manuel Cerqueira Afonso dos Santos, known simply as Zeca Afonso. His song, “Grandôla, Vila Morena,” talked about the town of Grandôla in the Alentejo, espousing a message of equality and fraternity. The song was banned by the government because its chorus envisioned a place where the people ruled themselves without the need for government. Paulo Carvalho’s “Depois do Adeus” (After the Farewell), Portugal’s entry into the Eurovision song contest in 1974, played at 10:55 PM on April 24, 1974, it became the signal for troops to prepare

⁵¹ Mário António Fernandes de Oliveira et al, *A Descolonização Portuguesa: Aproximação A Um Estudo*, (Lisboa, Instituto Democracia e Liberdade, 1979),135.

⁵² Interview with João Carlos at his residence in Perth Amboy, NJ conducted on January 29, 2012.

themselves. The second signal came at 12:22 AM, on April 25, 1974; when Rádio Renascença played “Grandôla, Vila Morena,” warning the military to take their positions to launch the revolution. The narrative of the revolution is one known by every generation and has remained a vital part of the Portuguese identity. To this the 25th of April remains one of Portugal’s most celebrated holidays, and for many “Grandôla, Vila Morena” has become an alternate national anthem for the Portugal itself.

Once the signal was sent a young captain of the military who had spent several years in Africa and was now an instructor at the military academy at Santarém, Fernando José Salgueiro Maia, mobilized his troops and several vehicles in order to rendezvous with other soldiers in the capital. Although he faced resistance from his superior officers, he took control of the military academy, imprisoning those who resisted. Mobilizing the recruits, he took a convoy 44 miles to arrive in the capital. At the same time other soldiers took control of the airport, in effect cutting off all methods of escape. Meanwhile, a group of soldiers took control of both the Rádio De Portugal (the government’s radio station) and Rádio e Televisão Portuguesa (Portugal’s TV Station) studios, effectively taking control of the largest radio and television stations in Portugal. Their public broadcasts informed the public about the coup and advised everyone to stay at home. However, the public did not heed their warning and the masses of people flooded the streets to celebrate. Women shouted for, “sexual freedom,” journalists cried out for “freedom of speech,” and interviewed anyone they found in the streets. Others screamed, “Long live democracy!” and “Down with Salazar!” The defining moment of the coup that demonstrated the public’s opinion of the revolution was when, flower vendors from the Lisbon markets began placing flowers in the barrels of the soldier’s guns. The carnations gave their name to the revolution itself. This bloodless revolution occurred when Captain Salgueiro Maia’s troops

faced the military police who protected the Imperial Ministry. The police and soldiers arrested their officers leaving the ministry in the hands of the MFA.

The revolution briefly turned bloody when the secret police of the hated PIDE opened fire into a crowd of protesters outside its headquarters, killing four people. Marcelo Caetano barricaded himself in the Quartel do Carmo, the headquarters of the GNR (the National Republican Guard), in the center of the city and refused to surrender. Claiming that he would not turn over power to a low ranking officer like Maia, since it would allow “power to fall into the hands of the people.” Caetano agreed to transfer power to General Spínola, who sent Caetano and all of his ministers to the Madeira islands, from which Caetano left for Brazil where he spent his final days. The Estado Novo had fallen and democracy was restored in Portugal.

Suprisingly enough, news of the revolt did not reach my town of Souto da Carpalhosa until two weeks later. The regional newspaper, *Região de Leiria*, at first did not mention the revolution since the local governments suppressed the news. On the first of May of 1974, an article, accompanied by a photograph of a demonstration on the Praça Rodrigues Lobo, the busiest plaza in the city of Leiria finally appeared. The collapse of the Estado Novo (New State) left behind a power vacuum, which exiled leaders of all persuasions filled. Left leaders, including Mário Soares and Alvaro Cunhal, returned to Portugal, as did other leaders. Political parties, including the social democrats of the PSD, the socialists of the PS, and the communists of the PCP came out in public. Unlike their predecessors, these parties leaned toward the left of the political spectrum; many in France and Germany feared a communist revolt in Western Europe would occur, including the United States. Howard Wiarda, Henry Kissinger’s aid, was sent to Portugal in 1975. In a letter to Kissinger he wrote, “Portugal is beginning to look like the tilting member in a new domino theory that envisions the whole northern rim of the

Mediterranean possibly turning red in the not too distant future.”⁵³ The assumption of power by the military only exacerbated these fears.

From the start the Spínola government was set on a course of failure. Despite his image as a military hero, his connection to the prior government only hindered his efforts. The MFA had completely removed its support from the Junta Nacional (Spínola’s provisional government). In addition to this, the army became disobedient, barricading themselves in protest to the continuing wars in Africa. One example of this was that of the military base in the city of Caldas da Rainha where 33 military officers were arrested along with their recruits.⁵⁴ Only the commandos remained loyal to the government and during the transitional period they continued to tow the line no matter who was at the top. In fact in the cases of the military’s disobedience many times the commandos were used as a policing force to bring the army back in line. Thus the Special Forces took on an additional function.

Perhaps one of the major flaws of Spínola’s administration was that he adamantly defended pluricontinentalism. According to historian Kenneth Maxwell, “As the fundamental divergences between Spínola and the PCP over the direction of domestic and colonial policy became more apparent it brought closer collaboration between the PCP and those of the MFA who were also opposed to Spínola’s attitudes.”⁵⁵ As a result Spínola had lost the support of the army and it had become at odds with the largest party of opposition towards the Estado Novo the Portuguese Communist Party or PCP. He no longer could sway the government into implementing his policies so he resigned in November of 1974, fleeing across the border to Spain, bringing along with him a battalion of loyal soldiers where they would plan a counterrevolution. The

⁵³ Kenneth Maxwell, *The Making of Portuguese Democracy*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995), 108.

⁵⁴ “Insubordinação Militar.” *Região de Leiria*. May 5, 1974.

⁵⁵ Kenneth Maxwell *The Making of Portuguese Democracy*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995), 84.

communist party was perhaps the most powerful party in Portugal at the time of the provisional government. As Maxwell explains, “the urban middle class, the civil servants, and white-collar employees who might have joined the oligarchy against the left were, in this period, amongst the most vociferous leftists.”⁵⁶ Paradoxically the people who would have supported Salazarism, were the most left in terms of political participation. Spínola did try to return to expel the communists from Portugal, but the coup failed. Although communism is strong to this day in Portugal, its shortcoming was that it failed to pass the land reform, which was Alvaro Cunhal’s platform in the elections of 1975. After all the fervor of the year of transition the MFA also lost a lot of support. As Salgueiro Maia, hero of the revolution explained to the press on April 25, 1974, “The armed forces should not espouse a political role, but rather act as guarantors of a democratic system on a western model.”⁵⁷ One year after the overthrow of the regime Portugal finally held its first democratic election for its representative government, concretizing the dreams of many who had live under an oppressive regime for over four decades.

⁵⁶ Kenneth Maxwell, 84

⁵⁷ Kenneth Maxwell, 87.

Remembering the Past

The war took place in 1961 when these men were vibrant and youthful. They thought themselves invincible. Now half a century later they are asked to remember what it was like to be living in that period of time. With almost 50 years between these events it is easy to see how a person can begin to forget or even add on to events that actually happened. Details begin to slip with age and circumstance. Some Portuguese soldiers aided future historians by tattooing significant dates on their arms. These included the day they left, the day they returned, and the number they lost and sometimes even the number they killed. Therefore to achieve a better picture of what happened during the war and the revolution that followed, I will analyze both the narratives of veterans as well as historians who have extensively researched how the military's experience in Africa led to the collapse of the Estado Novo in 1974.

Unlike the other countries who supported the guerilla movements in Portuguese Africa, Cuba sent its own troops to fight alongside the guerillas. These soldiers were generally viewed by the soldiers unfavorably because they represented not only a communist country, but also a foreign power meddling in the affairs that concerned only Portugal and its provinces. This animosity towards outsiders is also reflected towards the soldiers of the countries that bordered the Portuguese colonies. For example, when João Carlos recounted a story about capturing a Cuban captain named João Rodriguez Peralta who was training and commanding Guinean forces to combat the Portuguese, he hesitated. However, from my research I realized that the man he described was in fact Pedro Rodriguez Peralta captured in 1969 and released after the revolution. The Cubans were highly skilled and caused many problems for the Portuguese because of the

years of guerilla warfare in the mountains of Cuba. This simple slip changes his whole narrative. Historians working with oral histories sometimes lack the background to understand what the subject is saying. However, one thing João Carlos remembered without fail was the exact date of an event. In fact it was fascinating because he recorded his history all over his body with tattoos. Whenever he needed to remember something he would look at his arms, his tattoos a constant reminder of the burdens he was forced to carry. For example, a small tattoo of Africa and a date marked his arrival in Guinea-Bissau. Battles were commemorated as well as with the number of killed on the battlefield. The other aspect I found fascinating was how his demeanor changed when he began talking about his time in the war. Oral historian Alistair Thomson explains, “that oral research requiring a human relationship has spurred some oral historians to consider the consequences of remembering for the narrator as well as the benefits for researchers.”⁵⁸ He nervously smiled and laughed about some of his memories and I could see that he was hiding his true feelings from me because he did not want me to evaluate him in a negative way. It was as if he was transported back to Africa the way he retold his narrative.

In contrast, the interview I conducted with Adameu Ferreira and Mateus Carvide were each person filled in gaps in the conversations. These two men spent their whole time in Africa together and created a close bond. Over the course of the interview, they commented on each other’s stories. Whenever any of them remembered a story the other would add to it, allowing me as the researcher to gain at least these two perspectives of the war. Even though their experiences were similar, their perceptions of the events they shared could not have been more different. For example, they recounted a story about how Adameu was caught sleeping when he

⁵⁸ Alistair Thomson, “Fifty Years On: An International Perspective on Oral History,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 85, No. 2 (Sep., 1988), 588.

was supposed to be keeping watch. The commanding officer, though apparently enraged, simply woke him up and asked him not to do it again.⁵⁹ Their ideas of the revolution also differed.

Both men had emigrated by the time the Portuguese Revolution occurred, Adameu had gone to France while Mateus had been making a living in the United States. One said that the revolution “was necessary because no one could speak.” The other said that the revolution “produced too much instability.” They were especially nostalgic when they described the villages in which they were stationed, wishing they could have seen what became of their colleagues and the villagers they befriended over the two years that they were in Guinea-Bissau.

The soldiers’ memories of Africans took many forms. The soldiers often demonized the the rebels’ actions, but just as often sympathized with their desire for independence. However, the Institute for Democracy and Liberty, an organization created to study decolonization of Portuguese Africa, held a different view, “Less aggressive than the FNLA and the MPLA, UNITA limited itself to targeting armed soldiers from the Portuguese army and the Benguela, a vital rail line for both Zambia and the Zaire.”⁶⁰ Guerilla wars contribute to particular animosities because the rebels do not fight according to traditional methods of war, many Portuguese soldiers complained that they were cowards. Nevertheless, as the weapons became more sophisticated, there was less direct confrontation between adversaries. It wasn’t that they were cowards, but they were intelligent enough to realize that they would not have won if they fought according to the rules set by the Portuguese. The Portuguese lack of ability to deal with this tactic hindered the regimes’ efforts to maintain control of the empire. As Salgueiro Maia

⁵⁹ Interview with Adameu Ferreira and Mateus Carvide at his residence Long Branch, NJ conducted on January 2, 2012.

⁶⁰ Mário António Fernandes de Oliveira et al, *A Descolonização Portuguesa: Aproximação A Um Estudo*, (Lisboa, Instituto Democracia e Liberdade, 1979), 231.

explains, “Another characteristic that was interesting about the Colonial War was the fact that many officers did not know how to adapt to a guerilla war.”⁶¹ The success of the rebels might not be attributed to their tactical knowledge, but to their unbreakable spirit. The African’s success was due, in part, to their commitment to winning their independence from an oppressive colonial power.

Captain Salgueiro Maia’s account highlights the failures of the Portuguese army that was ill-trained and ill-equipped. After 1973, the army operated without reserves to replenish the ranks.⁶² The war entailed burning the tobacco and coffee crops, but also forcing the mines to shut down. As a result, neither Portugal nor the colonies had the economic resources it needed to continue fighting.. According to Diamantino Machado, “the wars were a drain on the national budget, and military expenditures were using the capital necessary for investment and economic growth.”⁶³ In other words, the war bankrupted the Portuguese as much as their colonies. Rural Portugal under Salazar suffered large famines, especially in the region of the Alentejo in the south.⁶⁴ In 1973, food shortages, rising prices, and long lines outraged Portuguese women in the cities. Public demonstrations against these injustices became more prevalent, leading to the already mounting tensions with the government. Many farmers and truckers were in the army and women and older farmhands could simply not produce the surpluses necessary.

Despite the fact that the army was given the majority of the nation’s budget, the soldiers complained about their equipment. Since virtually every battle took place in the brush of the

⁶¹ Maia, Salgueiro. *Capitão de Abril: Histórias da Guerra do Ultramar e do 25 de Abril*. (Editorial Notícias, Lisboa 1995,) 79.

⁶² Salgueiro Maia. *Capitão de Abril: Histórias da Guerra do Ultramar e do 25 de Abril*, 83.

⁶³ Diamantino P. Machado, *The Structure of Portuguese Society: The Failure of Fascism*. (Praeger New York, 1991,) 137.

⁶⁴ See José Cardoso Pires, *O Hóspede de Job*, D. Quixote Publications, Lisboa 1963.

jungles of Africa, especially in Guinea-Bissau and Angola, soldiers wore cotton uniforms with leather boots along with a cotton cap, but the extreme temperatures and humidity made these clothes unbearable. According to my interviews most soldiers when off duty would walk around barefoot and shirtless because the temperatures were elevated, surpassing 40 degrees Celsius. The G3 Battle rifles they were issued, were of German design weighed over nine pounds. Adameu Ferreira, for example, was charged with carrying the shells for the bazooka, while another soldier carried the launcher itself. Both these pieces were cumbersome to carry as the bazooka made it virtually impossible to effectively move through the brush as it would often become entangled by the dense vegetation. Like the guerillas they fought, the Portuguese had to carry all their supplies with them in addition to their heavy weapons. Their adversaries often did not have this problem because they usually only carried their AK-47 battle rifle with them, allowing them to move quickly without having to worry about equipment. One African soldier who fought for the União das Populações de Angola or UPA (The Union of the Populations of Angola) “complained that they gave him bullets ‘to kill the white man,’ but they did not give him any bread.”⁶⁵ The Portuguese, who ate local food, ate rice for breakfast, lunch and dinner when they had the resources to prepare it. Otherwise they starved or ate what they could catch. The lack of resources contributed to the frustration and anger of the Portuguese soldiers and junior officers who wanted to go home.

Many of the soldiers used local Portuguese newspapers to voice their grievances.

Although these newspapers were censored by the government as they were stamped *Visado Pela Censura* (Reviewed by Censor), many soldiers were able to share some of their experience

⁶⁵ James Ferreira. *Angola: Do Maiombe à Baía dos Tigres*. (Agência-Geral do Ultramar, Lisbon, 1966,) 28.

The UPA was a movement that was powerful at the beginning of Angola’s War of Independence, but the constant infighting fractured the movement into the several parties that were crucial to the efforts of liberation.

through their letters. The Newspapers became a conduit for maintaining ties to home. Local Portuguese newspapers were filled with letters and even paid ads, calling on women, “Madrinhas de Guerra” (godmothers of war) to be their pen pals. This program was initiated by the National Feminist Movement (Movimento Nacional Feminino) in Portugal who felt the need to actively write to soldiers, thanking them for their valor and the efforts they were making for Portugal in Africa.⁶⁶ The goal of these letters was to boost morale and to make the war more palatable for those who found themselves overseas. It is important to note that the MNF was a strong supporter of the military. The letters written by these women always exhibited words of encouragement, asking about the life in Africa and its people. The soldiers responses were devoid of any details of the war because they did not write about it or because it did not pass the censor when published in the newspaper. Instead, these letters focused on the quotidian and interactions between soldiers and the African people themselves, detailing how they lived and how accommodating the local people were to soldiers. The soldiers filled their letters with requests for their local food and other mementos of home. Others would send poems and songs. Some men maintained their connections with their correspondents and others even married them. However, due to these letters lack of depth, it was difficult for anyone in Portugal to know exactly what was taking place in the territories until after the revolution of 1974.

Other rare glimpses of ordinary soldiers appear in television segments from programs like “Mensagens do Natal” (Christmas Messages) that aired on *Linha da Frente* (Frontline). The Program followed Captain Salgueiro Maia three years before the revolution when he was stationed in Guiné. Although the captain had already died of cancer in 1992 at the age of 47, the

⁶⁶ The National Feminist Movement (MNF), founded by Cecília Supico Pinto, and supported by António de Oliveira Salazar was active between the years of 1961 and 1974. It was a strong supporter of the Colonial War especially when these wars intensified.

TV network RTP showed the footage to his family, and his widow remembered her emotions when she first saw the film: “It brings me back to the beginning of my marriage when I didn’t know if he would ever return. I even got a call once telling me he had died in a military operation; I spent the whole time trying to reach someone, ultimately hearing his voice at the end of the day.” Another individual invited to a viewing was Colonel José da Glória Bechior, now 73 and President of the Oporto Chapter of the League of Combatants. He had joined the commandos in 1963, rising through the ranks to become a lieutenant and then a captain. During his time stationed in Mozambique, where he led two squadrons and then a battalion, he recorded two messages for the network. Forty years later, when he viewed his presentation, he recalled his illness, believed to have been contracted in Africa, as well as other hardships he endured.

Another subject of RTP’s study was Ana Maria da Costa Lemos, who was one of the first women volunteer nurses permitted to go to Africa after the army opened several nursing posts in 1961. She became a paratrooper for the medical corps, dropping in to war zones to deliver medical care to troops. Her tape made in 1967 was filmed right after she completed her first successful jump at 24. “I remember that moment getting out of the plane. I was absolutely terrified. I began to have doubts about what I was I was doing and why I was doing it, but once I jumped off the plain and got that rush of adrenaline there was no turning back.” She like many soldiers recalled being at the front as a physical challenge that allowed her to overcome her personal limitations, but she seemed to have few lingering doubts about the war or its horrors.

Since the original footage was highly censored, the interviews understandably were, as António Silva, a former cameraman for RTP, recalled “messages conveying their emotion and their longing for home.” Those who watched the old footage swelled with pride at what they had withstood, but even without censorship, RTP or the subjects themselves expressed no doubts

about what they had done in Africa or how losing the war precipitated the Portuguese Revolution of 1974.

Perhaps the greatest challenge I faced was one that all oral historians face. As historian Kathleen M. Blee explains, “oral historians emphasize caution, distance, and objectivity, in interviews.”⁶⁷ After sitting down with these men and talking to them, I was enthralled by what they told me. Perhaps I would have even taken their word as Gospel if I had not had someone evaluating my work. I began to develop empathy with these former soldiers who had endured such tumultuous pasts and I wanted my audience to feel this as well. With one particular veteran, João Carlos, I saw some parallels. He was the same age as I am, when he was conscripted, and I envisioned how my own life could have turned towards that direction as well. While I wonder what my future will entail and what career to follow, this man’s only thoughts were of survival. He also seemed to really enjoy retelling his narrative because no one had ever approached him about his past and it was something that he never really talked about. Here is where objectivity ceased. Because these men welcomed me so openly, I felt I had the responsibility to recount their narratives in a matter that was representative of them. Although my proximity may hinder my objectivity, the relationship that I have developed with these individuals over the course of this work has allowed me to gain access to personal accounts that perhaps others would not have been so successful in attaining.

Looking back at the revolution of 1974, they like the whole country erupted in euphoria. However, while the social and political instability that followed left a bitter taste among the subjects of my interviews, most of the veterans who spent time in Africa view their time in the

⁶⁷ Kathleen M. Blee, “Evidence, and Ethics: Lessons from Oral Histories of the Klan,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 80, No. 2, (September, 1993,) 597.

wars with a mixture of nostalgia and sorrow. They remember their youth and comradeship of their fellow soldiers. But they believe that African independence was inevitable and view the war as having been unnecessary.

The Legacy of Colonial Portugal

Since the Portuguese Revolution nearly four decades have gone by, but much of Salazar's influence still remains. The police agencies he formed while in office still remain active and serve as a continuing reminder of repression. The roads he built to accommodate the automobile are used by hundreds of thousands of motorists every day. The bridge over the Tagus named after Salazar also remains as a symbol of the oppressive government (though it was renamed after the revolution). The bureaucracy that had been in place during the Estado Novo regime still exists, and some of its members continue to actively participate in politics. One harsh criticism that remains today is the fact that none of the members of the government were ever arrested and no one was ever accused of committing war crimes. The other is the treatment of returning soldiers from Africa a legacy that continues to haunt the country.

The soldiers returning home had little to look forward to. The government was in shambles and democracy was more a promise than a reality. Unlike the United States where soldiers enjoy a myriad of benefits like a free education, healthcare and government pensions, Portuguese veterans returned to a country with an uncertain future. There were still no jobs, so, like others before the war, many immigrated abroad. The war left many disabled veterans, and according to official statistics, 15, 507 men became permanently disabled due to their battle wounds.⁶⁸ Because Portuguese medicine was underfunded, many vets were confined to wheelchairs or given wooden or plastic prosthetics, without any hope for the future. The government offered miniscule benefits, but they were insufficient to pay for doctors, hospitals, or

⁶⁸ Associação dos Deficientes das Forças Armadas. "Deficientes: Deficientes Militares que Durante a Guerra Colonial Adquiriram Deficiências Permanentes Nos Três Teatros de Operações." (http://www.guerracolonial.org/specific/guerra_colonial/uploaded/graficos/estatisticas/deficientes.swf) February 16, 2012.

medications. As in post-Vietnam America, many of the veterans became homeless. Even today one can see old men hobbling around with useless prosthetics. Public funding to the Catholic Church enabled it to offer food and clothing to some disabled veterans, but these men received no significant support from the government until 1980.

Many of the veterans suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Others endured insomnia and fear of loud noises. One veteran reported that, “We would hear the sound of fireworks and think we were under attack, running the other way and ducking behind the nearest barrier.”⁶⁹ This coupled with rampant alcoholism created a new subset of the population. João Carlos, who came to the United States in the late 70s, and was for many years a sanitation worker, fought with alcoholism for nearly forty years. In a moment of sobriety he recalled that “During the war we drank to forget, after the war we drank to remember.”⁷⁰ Soldiers who conducted military operations in an inebriated state were common as many drowned their sorrows to alleviate what they experienced on a day to day basis. When these soldiers later consumed alcohol they return to that state of mind, often becoming aggressive and violent. Many of these men came back broken because of what they had endured, having left their humanities on the battlefields of Africa. These men found it hard to rejoin civilian society, often operating outside it. For example, many would congregate with other veterans because these had shared the same experiences and thus could understand what other former soldiers were going through. However, these men never quite returned to the normalcy needed to attain success.

However, there were groups that benefitted from the war. For example, the commandos, as was said were “born in war to fight the war.” Their training pushed them to become efficient

⁶⁹ Interview with Adameu Ferreira at the residence of Mateus Carvide in Longbranch, NJ conducted on January 2, 2012.

⁷⁰ Interview with João Carlos at his residence in Perth Amboy, NJ conducted on November 6, 2011.

killers, often having to conduct the most difficult of missions in the middle of warzones. Many of these men watched or even participated in the atrocities, which included the rape of women as well as burning entire villages to the ground which served to take away the enemies' positions or discourage the locals from supporting the cause of liberation. Most who were commandos at this time seemed to enjoy the prestige that came along with wearing the insignia. Some even stayed in the countries in which they were fighting. For example, Joaquim Almeida, a former commando, talked about a commando who had been in Angola, and who, when the territory gained its independence, became a military official in the Angolan army and is now a high-ranking official in the current government. Many former commandos have become prominent members of society. Because the corps was built on the principle of fraternity and loyalty, the first commandos that were discharged, created the Association of Commandos in 1973. This organization has grown exponentially as lodges are present in most Lusophone countries. Joaquim Almeida serves as the president for the association for the chapter in Newark, New Jersey. Much like a fraternity the commandos kept close ties with one another, and many used these ties to become influential persons. The commandos have a slogan "Mama Sume," which is the ceremonial cry of the Banto tribe in Southern Angola before men would go on a hunt for a lion. It meant that they were ready for anything even if it meant death. This mindset lingers and the commandos believe (at least according to Joaquim Almeida) that it would have been possible to win the war if the army had not betrayed them. They felt that what happened on April 25, 1974 undermined the entire mission itself. For them the mission was to win at all costs. Anything else would bring shame to the country and to the army as a whole.

One organization that has been monumental in helping veterans is the League of Combatants. First formed after the First World War by veterans, it was designed as a place to

aid those who had been harmed by the punishing effect of trench warfare. The organization today has ballooned to include lodges in over 10 different countries. Unlike the Association of Commandos, the League is open to combatants and non-combatants, meaning one does not need to have been a veteran to participate in the organization. Although the Portuguese government has chartered the organization, most of its funds come from private donations and the dues of members.⁷¹ The organization offers its members psychological counseling and treatment for those suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. It also offers medical services for those who cannot afford its fees. The day I visited the headquarters in Leiria, there was a long line of people waiting for free consultations. Since they have strong ties to the military, the organization also reunites soldiers who had not seen each other for decades, inviting these same soldiers to the various events the organization holds throughout the year. The organization has been instrumental in gathering support for legislation favoring veterans. The League presides over all military funerals, offers free cemetery plots, and tombstones that bear the symbol of the League. In the last few years, the organization has made an effort to organize all the veterans of the African wars. The League is the only organization that tries to preserve and honor the memory of every combatant.

2004, the 30th anniversary of the Carnation Revolution led to the publication of numerous books and articles, including studies of how the veterans of their colonial war had suffered. Starting in 1995, the government first attended to the victims of PTSD by setting up hotlines and clinics. Paulo Portas, leader of the CDS-PP (Portugal's Popular Party) and then Minister of Defense, introduced bill 9/2002 which would give pensions to combatants and anyone who spent

⁷¹ Interview with João Barbas, General Secretary of the League of Combatants in Leiria, conducted on January 11, 2012.

time in Salazar's prisons. In an interview that Paulo Portas gave to *Correio da Manhã*, he argued that the country had an obligation to honor its veterans from Portugal.⁷² The opposition wanted to include veterans from São Tomé, Cape Verde, India, Macao, and East Timor as well, but they were not able to gather enough votes to amend the bill. As a result, colonial veterans who fought on the side of the Portuguese were not included. One month after the 30th anniversary of the military's effort to bring democracy to Portugal, the Portuguese veterans were finally recognized for their service.

The one group who the law completely neglected was that of the indigenous soldiers who had been excluded from this pension system. Taking up the cause of these soldiers was again, the RTP. The network produced a half-hour program dedicated to telling the story of a group of African soldiers from all parts of the former empire who travelled to Portugal to see if they could gain compensation for their military service to the war and had been unable to earn a living. They received no government assistance whatsoever, although some were amputees and others confined to wheelchairs. Some were living homeless shelter or on the street, although they had been living in Portugal for years. The armed forces claim that there is no record of these men's service. Most of the Portuguese Africans repatriated in the 1970s were unable to enter the labor market thus they were pushed towards lower-socio economic areas. Most of the Angolan and Cape Verdean immigrants live in what is called the "Bairros de Lata," similar to a ghetto. These are areas of high crime and very little security that seemed to have been simply abandoned by the government. Portuguese cinema has highlighted and glorified the struggles of these

⁷² "Cessam Trinta Anos de Injustiças," *Correio da Manhã*, February 13, 2004 (kimbas.no.sapo.pt/noticias2.html) February 16, 2012

neighborhoods through films like *Zona J*. Outside of these areas, there is very little interaction between blacks and whites. As a result, much of the public is ignorant about this group.

However, nothing lingers on more than the legacy of the secret police or the PIDE. Not only did they terrorize the peoples of continental Portugal, but they also harassed the inhabitants of colonial Portugal. Salazar practically gave them carte blanche as the secret police were never held accountable for anything they did. Many of the atrocities attributed to the Estado Novo were carried out by the PIDE. Even the Portuguese military could not escape its wrath as they infiltrated the ranks of the army, imprisoning anyone who showed any hint of dissent towards the government, which makes the revolution even more of an incredible feat. The PIDE has also been implicated in many of the atrocities committed during the African wars. The secret police were very efficient in accomplishing its goals. Its mission was to protect the government at all costs. The assassinations of many of the rebel leader's seemed to be the final efforts of the crumbling regime to win the war, including the PAIGC's Amilcar Cabral, the FNLA's Holden Roberto, and FRELIMO's Edouard Mondlane. The fact is that these officers' identities have yet to be revealed and that they are still walking around today, possibly even still working in the government haunts many of the Portuguese who lived through the persecution. Recently, it has gained a mystique. Talking about the PIDE is no longer a taboo, and the narratives of this clandestine organization, have spurred a whole genre of Portuguese novels and soap operas with agents as main characters in their plots. Many actually have depicted agents as anti-heroes. This shift of public perception of the most hated aspect of the Salazar regime is a testament to just how much time has gone by since the fall of Portuguese fascism.

After nearly 45 years people in Portugal have begun to take an interest in the history of the colonial war. One has to only enter a bookstore in Lisbon or Oporto to note how many new

books fill up the tables, dedicated to some form or other of remembering the colonial past or Salazar's supposed legacy.⁷³ Those who fought in the war felt ashamed as they view themselves as having taken part in the last act of a dying empire. Many look back with regret at what they have done while others take pride in their actions. Young men went to Africa and returned as men, many of whom left their humanity in Africa. Now after half a century Portugal has begun to reacquaint itself with some of its former colonies to reconcile their shared pasts.

⁷³ Paulo de Medeiros, *Luso-Brazilian Review*, Vol. 48, No 2, (University of Utrecht, 2011)

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