THROUGH ARMED STRUGGLE: COLONIAL OCCUPATION, NATIONAL LIBERATION WAR AND INDEPENDENCE IN MOZAMBIQUE

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Introduction

The *Daily News* of Tanzania recorded Samora Machel's visit to a FRELIMO[2] school that proposed the following arithmetic problem in a class:

> During an attack on an enemy post, the fighters used 11 out of 24 grenades that were in a box. "How many grenades were left in the box after the attack?". Machel asked for a volunteer to solve the problem and soon a young man volunteered. After he answered, Machel posed another question, "Each of the eleven grenades fragmented into 48. How many shrapnel were formed?" (Christie 1973, n.p., our translation[3]).

This school was located in the Nangade area, one of FRELIMO's three pilot centers in Cabo Delgado, a province in the north of the country. Machel's stance reflected the political line of FRELIMO's Central Committee in understanding education as an area "vital for the total liberation of the Mozambican man, liberation from the evils inherited from colonialism and also liberation from economic underdevelopment" (Machel 1979, 3). The subjects that were taught in elementary school were arithmetics, science, politics, drawing,

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2 Frente de Libertação de Moçambique, in Portuguese, literally Liberation Front of Mozambique.

3 In the original: *"No ataque a um posto inimigo, os combatentes utilizaram 11 das 24 granadas que estavam numa caixa. "Quantas granadas ficaram na caixa após o ataque?". Machel pediu um voluntário para resolver o problema e logo um jovem se ofereceu. Depois de ter respondido, Machel pôs outra questão: "Cada uma das onze granadas fragmentou-se em 48". Quantos estilhaços se formaram?"* (Christie 1973, s.p).

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geography, and Mozambican history. In addition to these subjects, children also learned subsistence agricultural production, handling of firearms, and debated the national culture, with choir, dance and drama presentations.

In fact, according to Meneses (2015), in the case of Mozambique, the struggle against colonial domination and the achievement of independence were some of the founding moments of its national history, marked by the political project of FRELIMO, the main nationalist movement during the struggle for the country's independence, and a political party since 1977. This has been the main political group in power throughout the history of the Mozambican state, even after the introduction of multi-party elections in 1992.

Portugal, in turn, openly allied itself with the racist regimes of Southern Rhodesia and South Africa and gained support from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). It should be noted that in Southern Africa colonialism survived through these three regimes, whose final marks of defeat were Namibia's independence and Nelson Mandela's release from prison, both in 1990 (Saul 2011).

Using primary sources from University of Coimbra's Documentation Center "25 de Abril", the objective of this paper is to understand the context of Mozambique's national liberation war, which took place between 1964 and 1975, and to characterize FRELIMO's role in this conflict from a historical perspective. The paper is divided in three parts, aside from the introduction and concluding remarks. First, the article narrates, in broad strokes, the colonial occupation of the Mozambican territory between the end of the 19th and the 20th century, to then approach the national liberation struggle. The third part describes FRELIMO's work, its formation and its role in the struggle for independence.

The research design draws on three qualitative methods. From (i) consulting a historical archive, the Documentation Center "25 de Abril", in Portugal, (ii) followed the construction of a narrative to analyze the information obtained through the documents with a critical sense. Then, finally, (iii) conducting bibliographical research in secondary sources, in order to support the understanding of the primary sources.

According to Woods (1996), understanding a phenomenon involves investigating a particular event, delving into its history. From this history, a narrative that allows us to understand the phenomena can be constructed. History is, therefore, the instrument used to question the reality of the investigated processes. The aim is to understand the phenomena from their meaning, their historical context, and their connections with broader issues of power relations.

Colonization of Mozambique between the 19th and 20th centuries

For Henriques (2004), it is possible to define three central aspects of Portuguese colonization in Africa. The strategy consisted in (i) installing fortresses or trading posts in coastal regions to ensure the establishment of trade relations and using these facilities to gather information about the interior of the country. They also served the purpose of defending the territory, protecting traders, missionaries, and navigators. (ii) The use of European technology such as large ships, firearms and production techniques, agriculture, construction, and trade as advantages employed to ensure the maintenance of occupied territories. And (iii) changing the previously existing men-women social dynamics that organized the African territory, a significant operation of transformation of the social and cultural landscape by the Portuguese, which included the introduction of patriarchy.

Portuguese colonialism was based on its religious character, and can be understood as the establishment of "a population of European origin that would guarantee Portuguese sovereignty" in the territories that today bear the name of Mozambique. In fact, this was not a peaceful phenomenon (Capela 2010, 118).

The focus of this section, however, is the passage between the 19th and 20th centuries in the Mozambican territory, politically organized under the conception of the *Prazos da Coroa* (large estates leased to colonists), one of the first models of the colonial state, in the region of the Zambezi Valley, a river that crosses Mozambique towards the Indian Ocean, where the Cahora Bassa hydroelectric plant, which provides energy for Mozambique and South Africa, is currently located. *Prazos* were lands inhabited by the Portuguese that belonged to the Crown, leased for a term of three generations, including rights to collect local taxes and exploit resources (Dinerman 2006).

According to Mondlane (1969, 32), the *prazos* system in Mozambique dates back to the 17th and 18th centuries. The *"prazeiros"* were Portuguese settlers and landowners and, in those areas, were the personification of the colonial authority. Later, the *prazos* system gave way to concession companies.

The *Prazos da Coroa* were the material and structural basis for the colonial formation of the territory and the construction of a patriarchal society. Along the way, a defined stratification was established, in which there were the *muzungos* (lords), the *donas* (when the landlord was a woman) and the slaves, who were distributed by several hierarchical orders (Capela 1996).

It is worth noting that Portuguese colonialism was financially dependent on England, especially in the plantation sector, in navigation, and in

railways. An example of the English presence in this region were the telegraph lines installed between Portugal and Mozambique, which began to be built in 1875 by an English company. The railroads which linked Lourenço Marques (former name of the capital Maputo) to Pretoria (in South Africa), built with English capital between 1886 and 1894, were the same as those which connected the city of Beira (capital of the province of Sofala) and Southern Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe). At the end of the 19th century, the two existing banks in Beira operated with English capital: the Standard Bank of South Africa and the Bank of Africa; and the press was reduced to the Beira Post, an English newspaper (Liesegang 1993).

For Machel (1974a), the emergence of Lourenço Marques as capital and center of the country would be linked to phenomena such as the growth of intensive elephant hunting. This increased the ivory exports around 1850, the export of labor to the British colony of Natal (now South Africa), and the beginning of capitalist agricultural projects, such as cotton and sugar plantations, as well as the construction of the port of Durban, in South Africa.

However, according to Serra (1996, 40), between 1870 and 1875 the capital was a "small colonial establishment", with a population of less than a thousand inhabitants and limited colonial authority. In the 19th century, the fundamental change for understanding the emergence of capitalism in Mozambique was the conjunction of two axes related to the economy of southern Africa in general and to the strengthening of economic ties between Mozambique and the British colonies in South Africa: (i) the opening of the Kimberly diamond mines, which increased labor migration, and (ii) gold exploration in Lydenburg, in the eastern Transvaal. These are processes associated with the growth of commercial enterprises in Lourenço Marques, such as warehouses and hotels, and the expansion of the commercial network within the Portuguese colony.

Between 1885 and 1900, new gold mines were opened in the southern and central Transvaal (present-day Witwatersrand) areas, railway lines were built, and other industries emerged. Thus, southern Mozambique became the largest supplier of labor to the South African mining industry, and the capital became one of the main destinations for South Africa's goods revenue (Cabaço 2009).

It is worth mentioning that, from the European point of view, colonial policies were strengthened from 1884, when Germany's representative in England requested an audience with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lord Granville, requesting a meeting with the participation of France and Portugal, among other countries, to discuss the issues and the course of colonial occupation in Africa, on behalf of Bismarck. The Berlin Conference, held between November 15, 1884 and February 26, 1885, institutionalized the right to occupy and possess African territories (Uzoigwe 2010).

In broad strokes, according to Atmore and Oliver (2005), the Berlin Conference, or partition of Africa, changed the physiognomy of the continent. In particular, the Portuguese Empire used the techniques available in order to "effectively occupy" the African colonies: trade was used as an instrument of war, white settlers enslaved the population, missionaries acted as "peacemakers" and military forces occupied the coast; later, they integrated the "indigenous peoples" into colonial society, but with an inferior status (Mondlane 1969).

In fact, the exploitation of the Portuguese colonies was carried out with the patronage of international capital, and was reproduced through a game of concessions and alliances with other colonial powers. In this sense, at the end of the 19th century, with the purpose of accomplishing the occupation and exploitation of the country, the Mozambican territory was divided into four zones of concessions: (i) the Northern region, under the concession of the Niassa Company; (ii) a strip extending south of the Zambezi River, acquired by the Mozambique Company and the Zambezia Company; (iii) the Central region, operated by the Mozambique Company and (iv) the District of Mozambique, directly administered by the Portuguese government (Cabaço 2009).

The occupation of Mozambique advanced in the 20th century at the pace of changes in the colony's institutional and territorial organization. In 1907, Ayres de Ornelas, Minister of the Navy and Overseas Territories, launched the Administrative Reform of Mozambique, which modernized the institutional organization under the aegis of a Governor-General and the division of the territory into districts, each with its own Governor. The districts were grouped into circumscriptions that formed Councils, headed by an administrator. These regions were the "main unit of the administrative structure" (Albuquerque and Pimenta 2021), in which traditional chiefs were incorporated into the local level of colonial authority.

Before the *Estado Novo* (1933-1974) was constitutionally implemented, Salazar drew up a decree that reorganized the political and administrative design of the colonies. The 1930 "Colonial Act" renewed Portugal's policy toward the colonies, and was characterized by an imperial aspect, the idea of the "indissolubility of empire", which determined colonization until the end of 1951. Thus, with the goal of centralizing power in Lisbon, the main result of this institutional reform was the redefinition of the relations between metropole and colonies, based on the supposed unity of the "Portuguese Nation", establishing the Ministry of Colonies as the center of decision-making (Pimenta 2014).

The "Colonial Act" was a legal instrument that reaffirmed Portugal's vocation and historical right to its possessions, establishing that the overseas domains would constitute the Portuguese Colonial Empire (Article 3); characterizing the Empire as "solidary" with its "parts" and "with the metropole"

(Article 5); imposing restrictions on the "alienation" of the territories (Article 7); reserving to the state the "administration" and "exploitation" of the colonies (Article 11); instituting the labor of the "indigenous in service to the state" (Article 19); and, finally, Article 15 assigned the "defense" and "protection of the indigenous" to the state (Portugal 1930).

Furthermore, the Indigenous Labor Code of 1928 (Portugal 1928), which introduced compulsory labor for public purposes as a replacement for slave labor, and the Constitution of 1933 (Portugal 1933b) were the instruments that formed the legal framework of the new policy for the colonial territories in the most centralizing phase of the Portuguese Empire. In 1953, another colonial mechanism was established, the Statute of the Portuguese Indigenous of Guinea, Angola, and Mozambique, a law that aimed to assimilate the "natives" to Western culture without granting them citizenship.

For Castelo (1998, 30), this colonial policy breaks with the past in three ways: there is a process of centralization of the metropole's exercise of power, foreign capital gave way to nationalization, and the development of the colonies became in line with the "integration of the empire". The policy was designed by Armindo Monteiro, Minister of the Colonies between 1931 and 1935, who conceived the empire as a "timeless" and "indissoluble" entity, above all interests.

Another characteristic of this policy was the substitution of the term colony by the term "overseas provinces", which corresponds to an affirmation of national unity between the metropole and non-contiguous territories. However, the understanding of this unity was not new, because in 1663 official documents already used the expression "overseas provinces", as the "Portuguese Lands" overseas were called so in the Constitutional Charter of 1821. For example, "Title X" of the 1838 Constitution was entitled *"Das Províncias Ultramarinas"* ("On Overseas Provinces"). The idea of unity between the center and the "parts" in Portuguese colonial administration was therefore not new (Henriques 2004).

Later, the "Colonial Act" was replaced by the Organic Law of the Portuguese Overseas Territories of 1953. After the Second World War, Lisbon wanted to erase the vestiges of the imperialist conception that the overseas territories were colonies. From then on, the main legal instrument was the "Statute of the Indigenous of the Provinces of Guinea, Angola and Mozambique", approved in 1954. In particular, its chapter "On the extinction of the indigenous condition and the acquisition of citizenship" defines the legal conditions that allowed Africans to obtain Portuguese citizenship, namely: age over 18, ability to speak Portuguese and to work, ownership of property, having good behavior and "acquiring habits" to comply with "public and private law" (Portugal 1953).

It should be noted that 1961 was central to the liberation movements of the Portuguese territories in Africa, because the liberation war in Angola began and the Indian Union occupied Goa, Daman and Diu, the last Portuguese colonial territories in India. Internationally, Portugal's situation was one of growing isolation, and declarations condemning Portuguese colonialism multiplied at the UN (United Nations). Salazar's reaction was to adopt new measures in relation to the colonies, such as sending troops and military hardware to Angola, as well as changes in the legislation of the African populations, namely Decree-Law no. 43893 of September 6, 1961, revoking the Statute of the Indigenous (Portugal 1961).

The war of national liberation

In fact, for the metropole, the colonial war began in 1961 with the attack of the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA, in Portuguese) on the São Paulo prison in Luanda. That year also marked the independence of Dahomey, now Benin, a former French colony in the Gulf of Guinea, on the coast of West Africa, where Portuguese sailors had developed slave trade to Brazil.

In the case of Mozambique, the liberation struggle began in 1964, after a thousand FRELIMO soldiers returned from training in Algeria, with the objective of launching a military offensive in the north of the country. For Mondlane (1982), the first attack occurred on August 21, 1964 under the command of General Filipe Magaia, who attacked an area patrolled by the Portuguese armed battalion, followed by similar attacks in Chai and Xilama, in Cabo Delgado, both in the north, near the border with Tanganyika (now Tanzania).

In general, the war of national liberation can be understood in two phases: the first lasted six years and ended with changes in FRELIMO's leadership. The second began with a major Portuguese military campaign, Operation *Nó Górdio* (Gordian Knot, in English) in 1970, and lasted until 1974, with Mozambican victory (Telepneva 2021). In the late 1960s, FRELIMO operated in twelve regions united by a Military Command, which answered to a twelve-member War Council, formed after the death of General Filipe Magaia. The head of that Council, Samora Machel, became the first president of the People's Republic of Mozambique.

Taking into account the weak Portuguese presence in the North, FRELIMO quickly advanced over Niassa and Cabo Delgado provinces, and crossed Malawi as an entry point to reach Manica and Sofala provinces. However, according to Dhada (2016, 50), Portugal had begun to prepare for FRELIMO's

counterinsurgency since 1962, when it understood that it could be a "communist-inspired rebellion that threatened 500 years of work in bringing Western civilization to its colonies in Africa." Thus, Portugal had stationed 20,000 men to fight FRELIMO in defense of the territory's integrity.

At that moment, the participation of women combatants in FRELIMO began. In October 1966, at a meeting of the Central Committee, FRELIMO's highest decision-making body, it was decided that Mozambican women could play an active role in the national liberation struggle. Within that framework, a group of women received military training and just a few months later, in early 1967, the first group of women began their activities in the war. This first group became the founder of the Women's Detachment, and were deployed in the interior of the country with various goals (Machel 1969).

According to Josina Machel (1969), women's military activities focused on defending liberated areas and participating in combat, while men were on the front lines of offensive actions. Women also participated in the Department of Defense, investigating "enemy infiltration". They acted in social support groups for families who lost relatives in the war and in the FRELIMO orphanage, in the education department, in literacy campaigns and in elementary schools. The fact was that "(...) work was carried out in a complex tangle of macho social fabrics, where women had no role in the public life of societies, where parents and husbands did not agree with the idea of education for women" (Machel 1969, n.p., our translation)[4].

From the point of view of international relations, it is worth noting that the bonds of solidarity and support for decolonization between Angola, Algeria, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Zambia, among others, were decisive for the beginning of the armed struggle in Mozambique. However, a problematic factor was *apartheid* South Africa and its relations with Portugal.

An important contact for FRELIMO was Egypt, which opened opportunities for cooperation with the Arab world and the Soviets. In the 1960s, according to Schneidman (1978, 59), China was the main partner for the revolution in Mozambique, while in the 1970s it was the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The USSR[5] could provide diplomatic support within the UN and donation of military equipment, unlike China, which until 1971 had not joined the UN Security Council, but still provided weapons and financial support.

4 In the original:"(...) *o trabalho era realizado em um complexo emaranhado de tecidos sociais machistas, em que a mulher não tinha um papel na vida pública das sociedades, em que os pais e os maridos não concordavam com a ideia de educação para as mulheres*".

5 For Simpson (1993) the initial concern of the Soviets was with the structure and composition of the leadership of the African revolutionary movements. The inspiration for FRELIMO's socialism was Marxist, but it sought roots in African experiences, such as the strategy used by the Tanganyika African National Union, known as *Ujamaa*.

According to Shubin (2008, 123), FRELIMO was the only armed organization in southern Africa that received Chinese, Soviet, and American aid, because these three countries projected interests over Mozambique at different times. There were also African collaborators, mainly from Algeria, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and Malawi, and the Nordic countries, which contributed with non-war materials. Sweden, especially after 1966, provided humanitarian resources to national liberation movements in southern Africa, especially Mozambique (Schneidman 1978).

The Lisbon government criticized the collaboration of Western governments with independence movements, perceived as "African terrorists". A report published by The Star newspaper ("Lisbon top Man Keen on Talks" 1974) stated that on a visit to South Africa, Rui Patrício, Portugal's Foreign Minister (1970-1974), criticized Northern and Eastern European governments that provided aid to "terrorists". The Minister argued that:

> (...) these same governments which defend the inviolability of their own orders, which fears subversion at their own gates and which condemn terrorism when their nationals are the victims, at the same time suppot subversive movements in Africa and finance terrorists who kill and fellow Africans who procalim that they will destroy the frontiers in Southern Africa by force of arms (our translation)[6].

According to Aquino de Bragança and Depelchin (1986, 32), in the historiography of Mozambican independence there was a tendency to narrate the process of the armed struggle without questioning it. The fact that the armed struggle initiated the independence process collaborated with this premise. The question posed by authors Bragança and Depelchin (1986) is that some achievements of the armed struggle, such as emancipation, and the narrative of "forming a new society", among others, could be undermined if the main reasons for victory against the metropole weren't critically evaluated subsequently, such as the creation of the idea of an "internal enemy".

6 In the original: *"(...) esses mesmos governos que defendem a inviolabilidade de suas próprias ordens, que temem a subversão em suas próprias portas e que condenam o terrorismo quando seus nacionais são vítimas, ao mesmo tempo apoiam movimentos subversivos na África e financiam terroristas que matam e compatriotas africanos que proclamam que destruirão as fronteiras da África Austral pela força das armas".*

FRELIMO and the armed struggle

It is important to underline that Lisbon did not allow a negotiated decolonization settlement in the case of Mozambique, ending the possibility of a peaceful resolution of the conflict, in which FRELIMO was supported by leftist movements of the white community, such as the Academic Association of Mozambique and the Mozambican Democrats. For the FRELIMO Executive Committee, the right to independence for the people of Mozambique was the only solution to the war (Mondlane 1969).

It is worth noting that the popular movements which promoted the struggle for the independence of Mozambique were created abroad, the most important ones being (i) the *União Democrática Nacional de Moçambique* (UDENAMO, in English: Mozambique National Democratic Union), formed in 1960 in Salisbury (now Harare, Zimbabwe), led by Holomulo Chitofo; (ii) the Mozambique African National Union (MANU), founded by Mateus Mhole in 1954, under the name *União Maconde de Moçambique* (Mozambique Maconde Union); and (iii) the *União Africana de Moçambique Independente* (UNAMI, in English: Independent Mozambique African National Union), formed in 1961 in Nyasaland (current Malawi) by José Baltazar Chagong'a (Opello 1975).

FRELIMO was born out of the union of these three organizations in June 1962, in Dar es Salaam, capital of Tanzania. According to Simango (1969), this event was a great milestone for the country's decolonization's history, because FRELIMO led the fight for independence against the metropole, using two premises: "fighting for Mozambique" and "through armed struggle".

According to Mustafah Dhada (2016), during the armed struggle, FRELIMO focused its energy on two diplomatic fronts: isolating Portugal internationally and seeking military aid from Algeria and Egypt, as well as training cadres for the guerrilla. Janet Mondlane sought help from the Ford Foundation to develop the *Instituto de Moçambique*, the country's first school designed to train fighters for the war and personnel to reconstruct liberated zones. According to her, the Foundation collaborated with the Institute for a year, but then the Portuguese government persuaded the American government to intervene in the war and to cancel the aid (Mondlane 1996).

The First Party Congress of FRELIMO was held in 1962 in Tanzania, and was focused on the discussion of the clandestine nature of its actions. At the time of the Second Party Congress, held in 1968 in Niassa, a province in the north of Mozambique, it was agreed that the national struggle would be part of a global struggle for the emancipation of the peoples under colonial rule. In order to achieve this goal, it became necessary to establish relations of solidarity with

other countries, especially with the countries of southern Africa, with which the coalition called "Front Line States" was created in 1976, a group of political-diplomatic coordination, composed of Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. This purpose would mark Mozambique's foreign policy in the first post-independence moment (Classen 2010).

In 1969, the assassination of leader Eduardo Mondlane represented a crisis for FRELIMO, followed by an attempt by the vice-president, Uria Simango, to take over with a non-socialist approach, aligned with Kavandame and others, who opposed the Marxist-Leninist ideology previously adopted by FRELIMO (Simango 1969). Mondlane's death led to the arrest of Silvério Nungu, the administrative secretary, whose name was linked to the assassination of the president (Opello 1975).

There were three suspects for the killing of FRELIMO's leader: Nungu, Lázaro Kavandame, and Portugal's International and State Defense Police (*Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado*, or PIDE, in Portuguese). With his death, a triumvirate composed of Uria Simango, Marcelino dos Santos, and Samora Machel was formed to assume the leadership of the liberation movement. This and other stories reveal tensions within FRELIMO, arising from the lack of participation of the urban working class in the liberation struggle, a fact that made the peasants the main characters of the revolution. The challenge was to build, prior to independence, an alliance between peasants and urban workers in Maputo, with an emphasis on developing an industry and an urban proletariat, while socializing agriculture through communal villages in liberated areas (Simpson 1993).

Against this background, in the early 1970s FRELIMO was subject to internal disputes. According to Simpson (1993), FRELIMO's Central Committee was polarized around a socialist faction and a petty-bourgeois faction. Tensions resulted from conflicting views on how to organize production in the liberated zones, or by disagreements over the direction of post-independence Mozambique.

The Portuguese general Kaúlza de Arriaga, Commander of the Terrestrial Forces from 1969-1970 and Chief of the Portuguese Armed Forces in Mozambique from 1970-1973, was part of the NATO network and was convinced that FRELIMO could be defeated by a war of attrition. When he arrived in the colony, he gathered 35,000 armed men for combat, this being one of the largest concentrations of force to fight FRELIMO in northern Mozambique (Dhada 2013).

According to Mustafah Dhada (2016), Arriaga was inspired by the British, who employed against the Malayan National Liberation Army tactics of scorched-earth and blockading supply and food chains, in addition to

hit-and-run attacks. This encouraged dissent from FRELIMO by feeding its rival organizations, such as RENAMO (*Resistência Nacional Moçambicana*, in Portuguese, or "Mozambican National Resistance"), which later entered into a conflict that plunged the country into civil war.

The Commander was responsible for launching, on June 10, 1970, Operation *Nó Górdio*, a coordinated offensive between paratroopers, naval command and special units, this being the largest Portuguese military campaign in that province. The objective was to eradicate FRELIMO guerrillas on the border with Tanzania. The Portuguese air force provided assistance and strategic bombing of medical and training bases and camps (Dhada 2016).

In this sense, the province of Tete, in the north, became strategic, as Portugal sought to prevent FRELIMO from reaching the districts of Manica and Sofala, both in the central region. It also prevented a threat to the security of Beira province, a gateway for the military from Ian Smith's Southern Rhodesia and Kamuzu Banda's Malawi, Portugal's allies in the fight against FRELIMO (Dhada 2013).

In an interview for the Sunday Times on April 2, 1972, Samora Machel noted that in the southern part of the Zambezi the struggle developed quickly, because in that area:

> Portuguese oppression was felt more strongly than in other places. And there are the people who live near the Rhodesian border - they suffered double oppression. They were recruited to work on the banana and sugar plantations in Mozambique, and when they were done, they were sold to Rhodesia to work on the tobacco plantations. Then, when they came back, they were recruited again by the Portuguese government ("Des pilotes sud-africains..." 1972, n/p, our translation)[7].

The war in Tete began in 1968, and it was necessary to engage in armed struggle in other regions in order to reach this province, such as Niassa and Cabo Delgado, where the decolonization process had already begun with the construction of hospitals and schools (Machel 1972). In the case of Tete there were significant economic interests at stake since the 1950s, such as the construction of the Cahora Bassa hydroelectric plant, inaugurated in 1974, a project in which great powers were involved. In addition, trucks transported goods from Tete to Southern Rhodesia and Malawi.

7 In the original: *"a opressão portuguesa se fez sentir mais forte do que em outros lugares. E tem as pessoas que moram perto da fronteira da Rodésia - eles sofreram uma opressão dupla. Foram recrutados para trabalhar nas plantações de banana e açúcar em Moçambique, e quando terminaram foram vendidos à Rodésia para trabalhar nas plantações de tabaco, quando voltaram foram recrutados de novo pelo governo português"*.

According to Isaacman (2021), the Cahora Bassa project also had an important aspect in financing Portugal's defense needs, and was key in its relations with South Africa. Fifteen years after the first studies, the project was inaugurated as the largest dam south of the Sahara. Feasibility studies were carried out in 1956 and the Zambezi Valley General Plan began to be created in 1957, the largest Portuguese colonial development in Mozambique's public works sector.

The Portuguese government was worn down and isolated and by 1971 was spending in the African colonies 40% of its national budget on military equipment (Roberts 2008). The Africans, who, on the other hand, had started the war in a situation of weakness and vulnerability, were increasing their field of operations and their victories, conquering territories called liberated zones.

To complement operations in the field, the *Grupo Unido de Moçambique* (GUMO, in Portuguese, or United Group of Mozambique) was created within the colonial army in the 1970s, and was at the service of Portuguese colonialism to neutralize FRELIMO. Marcello Caetano and Baltazar Rebelo de Sousa were the creators of GUMO, according to Machel (n.d.) in the text "*denunciemos e neutralizemos os fantoches*" (let's denounce and neutralize the puppets, in English). The group was intended to demobilize the Mozambican people and change international opinion about the liberation struggle, making it seem that Portugal recognized the rights of the Africans.

The fact that Portugal committed numerous atrocities in this theater of operations, such as crimes against the native population, including burning children and women alive, is not new. These allegations were made by two Roman Catholic priests, who were prosecuted for anti-government activities in the colony. Father Martins Hernandez Robles and Father Alfonso Valverde Leon were imprisoned for over a year on charges that they made anti-Portuguese speeches from the pulpit and demanded answers from the authorities about the killings (Dhada 2013).

Among the atrocities committed by the Portuguese, it is possible to list the massacres in Xinavane, Mueda, Mucumbura, Wiriyamu, Chawole, Inhaminga, among others. University of Coimbra's Documentation Center "25 de Abril" has a rich collection about what happened in Wiriyamu, with a hundred articles and newspaper clippings from the most diverse countries that participated in spreading information about the acts of the Portuguese in the region. On Saturday, December 16, 1972, Portuguese soldiers killed approximately 400 Mozambicans in Wiriyamu. Today, in the old village of Wiriyamu, there is a monument with the bones of the victims.

Furthermore, there is evidence published by *Le Monde Diplomatique* (1972) that two South African pilots were hired as mercenaries by Portugal, and carried out secret chemical warfare missions against nationalist fighters in northern Mozambique. The operation was aimed at destroying the crops that would feed FRELIMO guerrillas, using the substance 2,4-D, Dichlorophenoxyacetic Acid, which was among those used by the US in Vietnam and World War II.

Two years later, in 1974, Portugal's Armed Forces Movement was responsible for the end of the *Estado Novo*. A group of officers overthrew the regime in Lisbon under the slogan of "decolonization and democratization". The Carnation Revolution marks the end of the *Estado Novo*, the fall of Marcello Caetano on April 25, and the beginning of the democratic regime in Portugal, which came into effect with the new Constitution in 1976.

In the text "Declaration of the Executive Committee of FRELIMO on the events in Portugal", the opinion of FRELIMO on the events of April 25th is that the coincidence between the crisis of the Portuguese regime and the national liberation struggle in Mozambique was not random, but an "additional proof of the impact that our struggle has on the situation in Portugal" (FRELIMO n.d.). There was an understanding that the determining factor for this situation in the metropole was the war of independence in Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and Mozambique, and not the other way around. The independence of the colonies was not a product of the 25th of April, but instead, the 25th of April itself was the result of a long process of political and economic attrition of the authoritarian regime.

The press release sought to state FRELIMO's understanding that the Portuguese who engaged in the war were defending the Portuguese colonial system, and that the Mozambican struggle contributed to the fight against the fascist Portuguese regime; that they were not fighting to become "Portuguese with dark skin", but to affirm themselves as "Mozambicans". Furthermore, they emphasized that the "FRELIMO guerrillas are not professional soldiers, but Mozambicans who took up arms", and that the war would only end when "the Portuguese understand Mozambique's right to independence".

Finally, in 1974, an agreement was signed in Lusaka, Zambia, between FRELIMO and the post-*Estado Novo* Portuguese government, in which Portugal recognized Mozambique's rights to independence. It was agreed that Mozambique would become independent on June 25, 1975, and the legal regime would consist of a transitional government. It must be noted, however, that the end of the colonial war did not translate into a time of peace, as a civil war broke out between 1977 and the General Peace Accords of 1992.

The Lusaka Conference was the climax of three months of negotiations: it consecrated the independence of Mozambique, introduced a new administration, and ratified the understanding between Samora Machel and Mário Soares on how power would be transferred. The Agreement is composed of 19 paragraphs, and the first one states that the Portuguese state recognizes the right to independence and declares to accept the progressive transfer of the powers it holds over the territory of Mozambique (Portugal 1974).

But the 25th of April did not automatically mean the end of hostilities. The movement *Moçambique Livre*, between September 7 and 10, 1974, almost five months after April 25, tried to seize power and trigger a rejection of the Lusaka agreement. On September 8, a local radio station, *Rádio Clube de Moçambique,* was occupied by people who opposed FRELIMO and the Lusaka Accord, a movement known as *"Moçambique Livre"* ("Free Mozambique"). It was the last attempt by the settlers to prevent the independence of the country, and confrontations lasted for 92 hours, with casualties. According to José Luís Cabaço, interviewed by Lusa News Agency (Cabaço 2004), this mutiny was "an organized attempt and not something spontaneous, especially since on September 2 the main leaders of the revolt had met at Hotel Avenida to plan the operation"[8].

The *Moçambique Livre* Movement released imprisoned PIDE agents, occupied the post office and the Gago Coutinho airport. The Association of Portuguese in Johannesburg threatened independence, claiming that its members would invade "the border to come to the rescue" of the colonial regime. However, they were accused by the Lisbon government of being a "minority of reactionaries", and their action ended on September 10, when about 8,000 Portuguese fled to South Africa, leaving behind hundreds of people dead (Cabaço 2004).

As shown in an interview in the newspaper *Diário de Lisboa* in 1974, Samora Machel claimed that "it constituted the symbolic end of the war" when FRELIMO liberated "all the Portuguese soldiers it had in its power", referring to the liberation of 197 men in Nachingwea, Tanzania. According to the report, the soldiers received a "farewell gift, consisting of a plastic bag with toiletries and cigarettes". The prisoners were flown to Nangade, near the border. Most of the prisoners were captured in 1974, during FRELIMO's campaign in the north of the country (Machel 1974b).

The Mozambican transitional government took office in the morning of September 20, 1974, in a ceremony held at the Ponta Vermelha Palace. High Commissioner Admiral Victor Crespo, Prime Minister Joaquim Chissano, and President Samora Machel spoke. Several delegations from friendly countries

8 Our translation. In the original: *"uma tentativa organizada e não espontânea, tanto mais que no dia 02 de setembro os principais líderes da revolta reuniram-se no Hotel Avenida para planear a operação".*

attended, such as Cameroon, Somalia, Guinea Conakry, Tanzania and Zambia. There were delegations from the Organization of African Unity (OAU), composed by the Secretary-General William Etekl M'Boumona, Lieutenant Colonel Hashin Mbita, Executive Secretary of the Liberation Committee, Doctor Fernando Dias Van Dunem (Angola) and the chief of staff of the OAU, Major Nasibu. The UN was also represented by Under-Secretary-General Tang Ming-Chao. The Portuguese government was represented by a special mission headed by Major Melo Antunes, along with Major Canto e Castro and Captain Pinto Soares.

Mozambique inherited a complex political, economic, and social situation with independence on June 25, 1975. New problems emerged with the transformation of the overseas province/colony into a nation-state and FRELIMO's subsequent quest for national unity. FRELIMO took control of the state even before independence, with the transitional government.

Conclusion

This article, based on historical documentary research, pointed out the background of the Portuguese colonization in Mozambique. Focusing on the administrative processes between the end of the 19th and 20th century, and on the division of the territory into *Prazos da Coroa* and, later, into concession zones operated by colonial exploration companies, it described how the Portuguese colonization was guided by the search for economic profits and in the gradual occupation of part of the territory, highlighting the articulation between economic and political interests in this period.

Subsequently, the article presented a context of the period of the national liberation struggle, its origins, trajectory, and advance throughout the Mozambican territory. The international dimension of the national liberation struggle and the support of other African countries for the revolutionary process in Mozambique were highlighted.

The work contextualized, from primary sources of the University of Coimbra's Documentation Center "25 de Abril", previously unpublished in Brazil, the internal political process of FRELIMO and its performance in the national liberation struggle. Since its origins, FRELIMO was the armed movement that fought for the independence of the country, and later became the only party in power throughout the history of Mozambique.

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ABSTRACT

In the context of Mozambique, the narrative of the liberation war experience is central to the construction of national history in the post-independence period. During this conflict, the marxist-oriented Mozambique Liberation Front sought to define the idea of an independent country as opposed to the territory colonized for over four centuries by the Portuguese empire. Using primary sources from the April 25th Documentation Center, the objective of this article is to understand the context of Mozambique's national liberation war, which took place between 1964 and 1975, and to characterize FRELIMO's role in this conflict from a historical perspective. The paper is developed in three stages, besides the introduction and concluding remarks. First, the article narrates, in broad strokes, the colonial occupation of the Mozambican territory between the end of the nineteenth century and the twentieth century, and then approaches the national liberation struggle. The third part characterizes FRELIMO, its formation and role in the struggle for independence.

KEYWORDS:

Mozambique. Colonization. National Liberation War.

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