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International Solidarities and the Liberation of the Portuguese Colonies

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A luta continua, 40 anos depois: histórias entrelaçadas da África Austral

Caio Simões de Araújo (ed.)

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In *A luta continua, 40 anos depois: histórias entrelaçadas da África Austral* what is under debate is the intertwining of oppression and racism marking the independent history of the former colonies in Southern Africa.

Colonialism everywhere attended to a cruel underlying logic, inflicting on subjugated societies divisions that were as deep as they were camouflaged and denied, under the most diverse arguments and pretexts. The myth of racial democracy, for example, can be understood as an effect of the concealment of ideologies of racial superiority, whose atrocious results accumulated during history. Many countries in the Global South have inherited the legacy discrimination that was deeply rooted in the underground of their colonial history. The chapter written by Caio Simões de Araújo engages with this theme, demonstrating how far the project of multi-racial assimilation defended by Portugal was, with the backing of Gilberto Freyre's sociology in particular, capable of strengthening the masked racisms in the Portuguese colonies, remaining as an historical wound open in Brazil, Angola and Mozambique, with consequences to the present day. Needless to say, Southern Africa is a region to be rediscovered – in historical and analytical terms – considering the complexity of its social, political and cultural processes, which have been going on for the last forty years and are still under way.

The book *A Luta Continua*, carefully organized by Caio Simões de Araújo, offers the reader a rich opportunity to understand the political and sociocultural processes forming the historical web of this geopolitically relevant region. This is especially so if we take into account the broader context of the histories of colonization, decolonizations, racism and nationalism throughout the XX century. Surely, what we call Southern Africa is, in fact, a myriad of colors and cultures, whose diversity supersedes international geopolitical arrangements and boundaries. However, one of the points clearly exposed in this book are the excesses undertaken by colonial imperialism in this region, causing all sorts of violence – both physical and epistemological.

In this way, that the book helps us to understand the historical implications of the

so-called 'civil wars' taking place in countries like Mozambique and Angola; conflicts that cannot be properly assessed outside of their entanglement with the interests of the Western bloc, represented by NATO, and the Eastern bloc, symbolized by the Warsaw Pact during the Cold War. In fact, the chapter written by Maria Paula Meneses addresses the nationalist mobilization towards independence, sometimes resulting in armed struggle, sometimes limited to diplomatic pressure. The author explores the military-economic alliance that had the purpose of maintaining the colonial *status quo* in Southern Africa, with the nationalist movements that represented, to the leaders of a white-ruled Africa, a danger in face of the mission of maintaining a 'western civilization' in a black continent.

Giorgio Miescher, through an historiographical perspective, with key concepts that clarify the complex universe of Namibian colonial history under South African rule. For example, the various segregationist practices embodied in the so-called 'Red line', whose materialization represents the 'imperial barbarian frontier' in the recent history of Namibia, with all its consequences in terms of the racial and colonial division of the population of that country.

In addition to this, Chris Saunders approaches the decolonization of Namibia in relation to other histories of independence, emphasizing the specific aspects of being a colony under the rule of a neighboring power, South Africa, unlike other countries, such as Mozambique, Algeria or Angola, which had European metropolises. The settlement of white South Africans in Namibia followed the establishment of a segregationist logic, transplanted from South Africa. The author stresses the importance of international pressures in decolonization, by showing how, in 1990, and after a long and difficult negotiation process, independence was achieved. South African power over 'independent' Namibia, however, remained strong even after 1990, both in symbolic and practical terms.

Another complex case of decolonization is presented by Sue Onslow, who shows the importance of oral history for the understanding of nationalisms and memories of war of the armed conflict between Southern Rhodesia's white minority regime and liberation movements. Departing from a key question – 'why did you fight?' – the author is able to grasp the complexity of the conflict, focusing on the construction of a Rhodesian identity based on white nationalism and politically motivated myths. The transnational characteristics of this war are also noted. In the ideological climate of the Cold War, a strong anti-communist sentiment was widespread among the white minority, and served the latter as a form of political justification. Thus, the local war was also consolidated on transnational foundations.

Pamila Gupta draws a parallel between decolonization and dispossession, through an ethnographic and historical lens, in an instigating analysis that captures the trajectory of settlers established in Angola and Mozambique after independence. For this purpose, the author analyzes documental sources, such as photographs and journalistic writing,

undertaken by observers who registered the unfolding of decolonization, especially the phenomenon of the 'retornados', i.e., the settlers who decided to return to the metropole by the thousands, in the aftermath of independence.

Catarina Simão offers an indispensable contribution to our understanding of the pedagogical system created by the Mozambican Liberation Front (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique - FRELIMO), whose conceptualization and materialization went as far as possible with the objective of training new Mozambican generations through a liberating, non-colonial, education. Inspired by Paulo Freire's pedagogy, Eduardo and Janet Mondlane led an initiative to create a school, the Mozambique Institute, capable of reflecting and speaking to the reality of Mozambicans in the Liberated Zones. This chapter empirically demonstrates the power that language plays in the very constitution of a social and political reality.

One of the strengths of the book is how effectively it addresses the 'unholy alliances' sustaining the intricate network of domination in different countries of Southern Africa. Aurora Almada e Santos, for example, articulates in her chapter the arguments about the role played by the UN with the aim of decolonizing Southern Africa under Portuguese rule. The association between white minority countries and Portuguese political and military forces to prevent the 'winds' of independence in Angola and Mozambique was sanctioned by the UN. This type of criticism gained momentum after the events of 25 April 1974 in Portugal, and the transfers of power that followed were favored by an international environment contrary to Portuguese rule in Africa.

The role played by the Eastern bloc in a bipolar world in the context of the Cold War is also a subject of great relevance, analyzed by Kelly Araújo. The author explores the ideology of the 'new man' and the strategies deployed by the USSR in its project of sustaining a 'revolutionary democratic state of socialist orientation' in Angola.

Albert Farré demonstrates the different perspectives of Brazilian observers in the face of liberation struggles in countries like Mozambique and Angola. The author departs from the reading of three books that reveal very different views on the same phenomenon and also interesting projections of what was happening internally in Brazil, in ideological and political terms. This study, thus, contributes to our understanding of the network of colonial legacies and thinking that still occupies the dominant imaginary of Brazilian society to the present day.

What was Cuba's role in the dismantling of apartheid? Adrien Delmas discusses this issue, revealing the decisive role of Cuban military presence in Africa, not only as an anti-imperialist strategy, but also as a mechanism of struggle against apartheid and racism, which was historically lived by the Cuban people itself, under Batista's regime. To conclude, this book fulfills clear and pressing purposes: it brings to light narratives that demonstrate the urgency of keeping alive the struggle for liberties and justice in a region of the world exploited by European colonialism; it explores the consequences of alliances and agreements between colonial powers and white minorities regimes,

whose legacies remains alive in the social fabric of post-colonies around the world; it clarifies the transnational entanglements connecting liberation struggles across Southern Africa, especially in the context of the Cold War. In addition, it is important to mention that the complexity of these topics is approached in a clear and fluid manner, thus inviting the reading of a broader audience, and not only experts. In short, there are many and strong reasons for reading *A luta continua*. After all, the importance of continuing to resist is a message that can benefit all, and not only those researchers particularly interested in Southern Africa. Racism and discrimination are transnational issues, as the book itself demonstrates, and remain alive. Our contemporary struggles for freedom and dignity in a world still marked by legacies of colonial injustice will need the same persistence and strength showed by the movements of the past, to which this book pays testimony.

Elizabete Sanches Rocha

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