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## The Referendum in the Portuguese Constitutional Experience

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## **Part III**

# **The Referendum on the Portuguese Colonial Problem**

## **Chapter 1**

### **The Last Phase of the Portuguese Colonial Rule**

#### **1. The Portuguese Colonial Problem**

Between the plebiscite regarding the 1933 Constitution and the fall of fascism in 1974, all proposals for referendums discussed possible ways of resolving the colonial problem. After World War II, the concepts of self-determination and independence reached the rest of the world, and were enshrined in the UN Charter of 1945. The development of anti-colonialist ideas in the international community soon led to concrete results, with the first decolonisation processes verified in Asia and among Near and Middle East Arab countries (Silveira, 1992, p. 73). Bandung's Conference, which took place in Indonesia in 1955, would constitute a decisive event for widening the anti-colonialist movement. The 29 Afro-Asian countries, which took part in the Conference and had recently become independent, reaffirmed their condemnation of colonialism as a social process against people's rights. They established a platform of active solidarity towards the struggles for independence by populations under colonial rule.

In Africa, the situation developed very quickly from then on. In 1956, Morocco, Tunisia and Sudan became independent. One year later, it was Ghana's turn. After the independence of Guinea-Conakry in 1958, which was decided by referendum, the liberation of French colonies accelerated. In 1960, 17 African countries achieved independence (14 former French colonies, two British and one Belgian).

Portuguese colonial rule therefore faced an increasingly unsympathetic international framework. The regime, still based on the Constitutional revision of 1951, which declared that colonies were overseas provinces, argued that Portugal did not have colonies, only provinces in several continents. This theory convinced nobody. Above all, after the approval of UN General Assembly Resolutions No. 1514 (XV) entitled 'Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples' and No. 1541 (XV) which considers the overseas

provinces as Non-Self Governing Territories, respectively in 14 and 15 December 1960, the isolation of Portugal in the United Nations became evident (Silveira, 1992, pp. 74-77; Nogueira, 2000b, pp. 170-173).

In the early fifties, Indian Union concerns regarding the territories of the 'Portuguese State of India' became clear. By early 1950, questions had been raised in the Indian Parliament about the future of Goa, which worried the Portuguese Government. On 6 February 1950, Vasco Garin, the Portuguese representative in Delhi, mentioned, in a communication to Lisbon, that the Prime Minister of India, in reply to a parliamentary question, said that his Government had no doubt that Goa would become Indian territory (Gaitonde, 1987, p. 58).

On 27 February 1950, the representative of India in Lisbon, Atchut Menon, having been given instructions to discuss the future of the Portuguese colonies in India formally with the Portuguese Government, was clearly told by the Foreign Minister Caeiro da Mata that the Portuguese Government would not discuss or negotiate questions related to the sovereignty of their territories with a foreign government (Gaitonde, 1987, p. 59). On that same day, the Government of Delhi sent a note to Lisbon, which Garin refused to accept, referring namely to the 'popular feeling in those territories for a union with the new and free Republic of India'. In June the Portuguese Government replied by refusing to discuss that question (Gaitonde, 1987, pp. 60-63).

In 1954, Indian pacifist volunteers formed the Satyagraha movement and occupied the enclaves of Dadra and Nagar-Haveli (Gaitonde, 1987, pp. 81-91). In 1955, they marched on Goa. The Portuguese authorities reacted by resorting to violence. The result was a massacre, with 22 protestors shot dead and 225 wounded (Gaitonde, 1987, pp. 92-109).

Portugal, which had been admitted into the UN, continued to challenge the Indian Union in the International Court of Justice, asking for recognition of the right of access to the occupied enclaves. On 12 April 1960, the International Court of Justice declared that **a)** Portugal had a right of passage between Daman and the Dadra and Nagar-Haveli enclaves; **b)** there was no right of passage for the Portuguese Armed Forces; **c)** India had not acted contrary to its obligations resulting from Portugal's right of passage in respect of private persons, civil officials and goods in general (Gaitonde, 1987, p. 126). Consequently, the decision had no practical effect (Rosas, 1994, p. 515).

Meanwhile, the other colonies began to stir. In 1951, the Portuguese authorities brutally repressed uprisings in the fields of Sao Tome and Principe. In 1956, protests by workers in the north of Angola, and the strike of the trimmers of *Lourenço Marques* (nowadays Maputo), resulted in the death of several dozen. In 1959, there was a massacre of strikers in the harbour of Bissau. In January 1961, cotton plantation workers from northern Angola went on strike. The armed forces killed hundreds in villages, which they razed as they went.

Also in the 1950s, separatist organisations started to appear in the Portuguese colonies (Silveira, 1992, p. 79; Moreira, 1992, p. 33): In 1954, there was the *MING* (Movement for the National Independence of Guinea), which later changed into the *PAIGC* (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde). In the same year, the *UPA* (Union of the Peoples of Angola), later known as the *FNLA* (National Front for the Liberation of Angola), was founded. In 1956, there was the *MPLA* (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola). In 1959, the *MANU* (African National Union of Mozambique) which, in 1962, joined with the *UNAMI* (African National Union for Independent Mozambique) and the *UDENAMO* (National Democratic Union of Mozambique) which gave place to the *FRELIMO* (Front of Liberation of Mozambique).

The armed struggle against Portuguese colonialism had its starting point on 4 February 1961, with the attempt to assault the jails of Luanda by the *MPLA*. On 15 March, the *UPA*, with strong supports in Congo and with North American complicity, massacred hundreds of settlers and their families in northern Angola, forcing a rapid dislocation of Portuguese military forces. On 14 April, after defeating General Botelho Moniz's attempt at a *coup d'état*, Salazar proceeded to a deep ministerial recast that, in his words, had a single reason: Angola (Silveira, 1992, pp. 86-87; Fernando, 2005, pp. 149-166).

A turning point came in 1961, when the colonial war began in Angola. On 17 December, the Indian Union invaded the territories of Goa, Daman and Diu, and the 'Portuguese State of India' came to an end. In the following years, the war spread to Guinea-Bissau (beginning of 1963) and Mozambique (September 1964). Until the regime's fall in 1974, the foreign and internal policies were dominated by a never-ending and desperate military and political struggle to continue and support the regime's colonial paradigm in the face of growing national and international opposition (Rosas, 1994, p. 516).

## **2. The Alleged Referendum on the ‘Portuguese State of India’**

### **2.1. The Events**

On 17 December 1961, the Indian Union attacked the territories of Goa, Daman and Diu. The small and badly armed Portuguese military forces stood there, had no realistic means of defence. This military invasion put Salazar’s tactics in ruins. However, he remained defiant in defence of the ‘Portuguese State of India’. He accepted no discussion of Portuguese sovereignty on those territories (Rosas, 1994, p. 514).<sup>64</sup>

For Salazar, discussing Portuguese sovereignty in the ‘State of India’ would mean creating a precedent for the other colonial territories. The Portuguese Government was realistic about the difficulties inherent in defending the territory militarily, but its tactics were to prevent Nehru from falling unless there was a military invasion (Rosas, 1994, pp. 512-513).

In April 1956, in an article published in *Foreign Affairs*, Salazar argued that, in the case of Goa, there were only three possible resolutions, one of them violent and the other two essentially peaceful. The violent decision would be for the Indian Union to undertake integration by force. Regarding the peaceful solutions, one would be for the Indian Union to ignore Goa. The third scenario, and the only genuine solution to the problem, would be to open negotiations regarding situations where proximity and neighbourhood seated risks or were likely to cause friction (Salazar, 1956, pp. 172-173).

Contrary to Salazar’s expectations, the Indian Union invaded the territories. Portuguese diplomats had tried to head off this development through diplomatic efforts in the United States and Great Britain. In Washington they asked the United States to maintain its previous opposition to the use of force by the Indian Union, and in London they appealed to the historical alliance between both countries (Nogueira, 2000b, p. 315).

The position from the Government of Lisbon did not allow the scarce Portuguese troops in India to leave the territory. In case of attack, they not surrender. Their resistance would give the Portuguese Government time to obtain diplomatic support, which set an example regarding of the fate of the remaining overseas territories. On 14

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<sup>64</sup> On the process that led to the fall of the ‘Portuguese State of India’, see Stocker (2005); Gaitonde (1987) and Morais (1995).

December 1961, a few days before the invasion, Salazar wrote to General Vassalo e Silva, commander of the Portuguese troops in India, saying that he foresaw neither the possibility of a truce nor Portuguese soldiers being taken prisoner. They would either be victorious or dead (Nogueira, 2000b, p. 238).

The invasion began on 17 December 1961. With only 3,500 men, Portuguese troops were clearly outnumbered. They had no Air Force and only one ship. The invaders had 45,000 men. Despite Salazar's orders, surrender was the only realistic option.

The Portuguese Government immediately appealed to the United Nations, hoping to obtain a Resolution from the Security Council that authorising a cease-fire and sending international observers to the territory. However, the proposal was defeated by a Soviet Union veto. In fact, only Brazil and Spain explicitly supported the Portuguese position. Despite indignant Portuguese diplomacy, neither the United States nor Great Britain went beyond a rhetorical condemnation of the events (Stocker, 2005, p. 238). The international environment was unfavourable to the Portuguese colonial pretensions, and that heavily influenced the position of the Kennedy Administration. As for Great Britain, it preferred not jeopardise its relationship with India, a former British colony which had become a member of the Commonwealth and was emerging as a power in the Asian continent.

## **2.2. The References to an Eventual Plebiscite**

After the annexation of Goa, Daman and Diu, some international press referred to the possibility of having a plebiscite to allow the people of the 'Portuguese State of India' to decide their destiny. Some of them even referred that as a suggestion from Portugal. Franco Nogueira (1979, p. 42) briefly referred to the idea of a plebiscite as a solution to the problem of the other Portuguese colonies. Although he did not support the idea of a plebiscite, he argued that the Goan people preferred to be ruled by Portugal rather than India. Some international press, writing in favour of the Portuguese Government's position, also mentioned that hypothesis, as we can see in a recollection of comments published then by the National Secretariat for Information (*SNI*, 1962). Two days before the invasion, on 15 December, the newspaper *Ya*, published in Madrid, referred to Portugal giving the population of Goa, some 600,000 people, the opportunity to decide on their future through a plebiscite. However, the Indian Union refused that proposal knowing that they wanted to remain as a part of Portugal (*SNI*, 1962, p. 262).

Soon after the invasion, other newspapers in a few countries, referred to the same idea, for example: in Spain (on 20 December, *El Correo Gallego* (SNI, 1962, p. 282) and on 30 December, *El Español* (SNI, 1962, p. 34)); and in the United States, on 18 December, the *New York World Telegram and Sun* (SNI; 1962, p. 147). Some newspapers mentioned the plebiscite in the abstract, without referring to any concrete proposal in that sense. On 13 December, *Gazette de Lausanne*, from Switzerland, considered that the best way to solve the problem would be, theoretically, through a supervised referendum. Nonetheless, this would not serve the purposes of either Salazar or Nehru, who could not allow it for Goa when he refused it for Kashmir (SNI, 1962, p. 98).

The *Sonntags-Illustrierte* of 17 December, also from Switzerland, found it interesting that Nehru never allowed the people of Goa to decide through a plebiscite about whether to continue linked to Portugal or to integrate India. This was due to the fact that he didn't trust the people of Goa and he could not continue to deny the right of self-determination to the inhabitants of Kashmir (SNI, 1962, pp. 204-205). Soon after the invasion, on 6 January 1962, the *Télégramme de Brest* speculated that Portugal would have accepted a referendum without any doubt, but Nehru, doubting the outcome of the result, did not want it (SNI, 1962, p. 373).

### **2.3. The Proposal that Never Existed**

It is important to establish whether any proposal was actually made to the population of Goa, Daman and Diu for a plebiscite so that they could decide on integration in the Indian Union, the maintenance of Portuguese sovereignty or, by chance, self-determination. We evidently referred to an eventual Portuguese proposal, which from India would be out of the question. The published references regarding the Indian Union always point out to the peremptory refusal of any negotiation concerning the future of the 'Portuguese State of India'. The newspaper *La Suisse*, from Geneva, wrote on 19 December 1961 that the Secretary General of the UN, Mr. U. Thant, offered his good offices for a negotiation. However, Nehru answered stating that it was impossible to have 'any negotiation with a country still based on the concepts of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and colonial conquest through force' (SNI, 1962, p. 99).

The press unanimously reported the Indian Union's peremptory refusal of the very idea of a plebiscite. Nevertheless, was there actually a proposal for a plebiscite? The already mentioned references, from some Spanish and North American press sources, are worth very little. It is



known that the Portuguese Government initiated a propaganda campaign to make its case at an international level, securing the services of a North American agency and making an enormous effort so that the press echoed its positions and condemned the Indian Union's action (Stocker, 2005, pp. 216-241). Some press referred to a Portuguese proposal without saying where, how and when such a proposal would be carried out. *El Correo Gallego* referred to 'information that we possess' as the source of the news; other newspapers referred to a 'suggestion'; others mentioned the abstract idea without referring to any proposal.

Ambassador Franco Nogueira, the future biographer of Salazar who was, at the time, Foreign Minister, mentions that the proposal was considered, without saying when, how and by whom. A significant fact as to the inexistence of a concrete proposal is that, among the dozens of news pieces collected in the *SNI* publication, few of them referred to that hypothesis. However, the cited press spoke, in full detail, about the diligences made by Portugal at the United Nations and with other States, including the Portuguese proposal for a ceasefire and the sending of international observers to the territories. Still more significant is the absolute inexistence of references to any proposal of a plebiscite in the Portuguese press at that time.

Luís Nuno Rodrigues (2002, pp. 141-142) refers to more concrete evidence that Portuguese 'support' for a plebiscite was part of a public relations campaign, rather than a true suggestion. During the early years of Kennedy's Administration, the North American positions in the United Nations tended towards the defence of the principle of self-determination. It was a difficult moment for the diplomatic relations between Portugal and the United States. At that time, Franco Nogueira met with the Secretary of State Dean Rusk in Washington, hoping to obtain a public Statement from the US Government that opposing the eventual attack from the Indian Union in Goa. Nogueira did not obtain that Statement, and was asked by Rusk if Portugal would be willing to 'test' the question of self-determination in Goa if the Indian Government raised the subject. He answered negatively and asked if the modality was an 'international plebiscite' or if it was made under the auspices of the United Nations.

It is true that the United States saw a referendum on the statute of the Portuguese territories in India as a possible solution. P. D. Gaitonde (1987, pp. 61-62) refers to two interesting facts. When, in a note to Lisbon dated 27 February 1950, the Government of India said that the 'popular feeling in those territories is for union with the new and free Republic of

India', part of the Indian press believed that the meaning of the Indian note was a proposal for a plebiscite in Goa. The newspaper *Hindustan Times* of 20 March even claimed that diplomatic sources in Lisbon believed that the Indian note had been largely dedicated to the discussion of a proposal for a plebiscite in Goa. This was quickly denied by the Government of India. The second fact is that, on 23 March, a letter from Ambassador Garin to Lisbon refers to the Ambassadors of Brazil and the US in Delhi, even though the mere suggestion of a plebiscite on Portugal's part would scare away the Indians. Henderson, the US Ambassador, suggested that the plebiscite should take place within six months, be conducted by the UN, and that neither India nor Portugal should carry out any propaganda. Garin's reaction was that any plebiscite would be contrary to the Portuguese Constitution (Gaitonde, 1987, p. 61).

Actually, the Portuguese Government never introduced any proposal of a plebiscite to the populations of Goa, Daman and Diu. In 1954, when the Indian Union occupied the enclaves of Dadra and Nagar-Haveli, the proposal from the Portuguese diplomacy on 8 August of that year was to send impartial observers to the territory. These would be chosen among representatives from countries that maintained diplomatic relations with both countries [*MNE*, 1967 (II) pp. 66-68].

Even with the invasion of Goa by the Indian Union imminent, the only proposal given by the Portuguese diplomacy was on 8 December 1961. It recommended the sending of international observers, but was refused by the Indian Government [*MNE*, 1967 (IV) pp. 79-80]. A telegram sent by Salazar to the interim Secretary General of the United Nations on 15 December 1961 referred to that exact proposal [*MNE*, 1967 (IV) p. 181]. Even after the invasion, on 18 December, when the Portuguese Government asked for a summons at the United Nations Security Council, it only requested the condemnation of the aggression committed by the Indian Union troops, a ceasefire, and their immediate withdrawal from the territories of Goa, Daman and Diu [*MNE*, 1967 (IV) p. 230]. Moreover, the proposal introduced to the UN Security Council by the US Ambassador Adlai Stevenson, on behalf of the United States, Great Britain, France and Turkey, and vetoed by the Soviet Union, did not refer to any other demands.

It is clear that neither the Portuguese Government, nor any of its allied States, presented any proposal for a plebiscite to the population of Goa, Daman and Diu. The references by some of the press in a few countries seemed to come only from the international press campaign launched by the Portuguese Government after the occupation.

Nevertheless, even without any concrete proposal for a plebiscite, it is important to establish whether the Portuguese Government ever pondered on the hypothesis of the plebiscite as a solution to maintain the 'Portuguese State of India'.

#### **2.4. The Referendum as Hypothesis Excluded**

It is true that the idea of a referendum was considered in Portugal. General Humberto Delgado admitted to it on 5 October 1960 in Brazil, when he introduced a Colonial Plan for the Portuguese opposition. Delgado proposed to submit to a plebiscite the Constitution of a Federal Republic of the United States of Portugal as well as the Constitution of each the States that would integrate it. The 'Portuguese State of India' would be among them (Delgado, 1974).

However, the most concrete testimony comes from Francisco da Costa Gomes. At the end of 1950s, by which time the Indian Union's use of force had been anticipated, the Under-Secretary of State of the Army, Costa Gomes, future President after the 1974 Revolution, visited the territories. He realised that an invasion was inevitable in the near future, and expressed that conviction to Salazar, proposing a plebiscite as a solution, without any illusions as to the result. As Costa Gomes himself later explained (Cruzeiro, 1998, p. 65), he returned from India with two proposals: to reduce the military forces and to move forward with a plebiscite for the Indian populations.

Costa Gomes had verified the null hypotheses of military defence of the territories in the case of an invasion by the Indian Union, as well as the scarce hypotheses of maintaining Portuguese sovereignty in the case of consultation by the populace. He understood, therefore, that the transfer of those territories' sovereignty to the Indian Union would be unavoidable within a very short period. The question was how to avoid an invasion, and to engineer an honourable political exit. Either way, it would be an exit. Salazar refused the proposal peremptorily, explaining that a plebiscite in India would set a precedent for every other colony, which would be entirely unacceptable (Cruzeiro, 1998, p. 81); [Santos, 2006 (I) pp.128-131].

Salazar's position is not surprising. It was the Portuguese Government's consistent position. On 9 January 1954, a Brazilian journalist asked the Portuguese Foreign Minister Paulo Cunha, in a press conference in Rio de Janeiro, if Portugal would accept a plebiscite in Goa. He answered smilingly with a question: 'What answer would Brazil give if anybody proposed a plebiscite in Rio de Janeiro so that the population

decided on whether they wanted to continue or not being Brazilian?' [MNE, 1967 (II) p. 236].

Salazar clearly expressed his position in a speech uttered on 30 November 1960 before the National Assembly. He stated that the unity between Portugal and its overseas provinces was not a political or juridical fiction, but a social and historical reality, which did not hold alienations or abandonment. As for the juridical figures of plebiscite, referendum, and self-determination, these did not fit within its structure either (DSAN, 179, 2 December 1960, p. 87). After the invasion of Goa, Daman and Diu, Salazar addressed a long speech to the National Assembly on 3 January 1962.<sup>65</sup> He referred to the positions taken by the Portuguese Government from the beginning of the debates with the Indian Union, the diplomatic measures taken at the United Nations and other States, and the positions taken by each of the States with whom Portugal maintained closer diplomatic relations. However, Salazar never referred to any proposal, intention or hypothesis of ever holding a plebiscite (Salazar, 1962).

We know therefore that the Portuguese Government never intended to submit its sovereignty over the 'Portuguese State of India' to any plebiscite, and never introduced any proposal or suggestion in that sense. So, how can we understand the references made to it? The references by some of the press, given their scarce credibility, seem to result from the information war that usually follows political and military conflicts. The news that Portugal would have suggested a referendum or that that hypothesis would have been plausible, would have the purpose of making the Indian Union responsible for having refused to listen to the population. The Indian Union would have appeared in the eyes of international public opinion as contradicting the self-determination principle, i.e. denying the people's right to choose its own destiny through a democratic means.

Franco Nogueira's references were also explicable. In his book *Diálogos Interditos* (Forbidden Dialogues), he refers to the hypothesis of a plebiscite for the African territories. Nogueira (1979, p. XLII) also wrote that when Goa was faced with this hypothesis, the Indian Prime Minister, Nehru, declared that he would not tolerate the Portuguese in Goa although the people of Goa wanted that.

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<sup>65</sup> In all truth, the Speaker of the Assembly read the speech, given that Salazar was aphonic due to the commotion that the events in India had caused him.

On this point, Nogueira merely reStates what he had affirmed before the General Assembly of the UN on 18 October 1962. On that occasion, Nogueira accused the Prime Minister of India of refusing any negotiation, and of having declared any plebiscite as unacceptable, probably – Nogueira said – because he knew that the result would be unfavourable to him, and (alluding to Kashmir) also because he would not want a plebiscite in any other place of the Indian subcontinent [*MNE*, 1967 (IV) p. 437].

It is true that the Indian Union peremptorily refused Portuguese sovereignty on Indian territories and did not accept any discussion of the matter, much less consideration of a plebiscite. It is also true that the Indian Union maintained the same position regarding its disagreement with Pakistan regarding Kashmir. It is still true that, on 6 September 1955, Nehru affirmed before the High Chamber of the Indian Parliament (*Rajya Sabha*) that he was not willing to tolerate the presence of the Portuguese in Goa, even though he acknowledged that the people of Goa would welcome a continued presence. According to the Indian Prime Minister, the people of Goa should resolve the integration of Goa in the Indian Union, but the presence of a foreign colonial potency in Goa was unacceptable.<sup>66</sup>

Although Portuguese diplomats seized on Nehru's comments, the truth is that Nehru was being accused of refusing something that nobody proposed and nobody wanted. The Portuguese Government did not want a referendum because of the precedent it would set, and the Indian Union did not want or need a plebiscite to achieve their aims.

### **3. The Positions Regarding the Colonial War**

#### **3.1. The American Position and Its Internal Effects**

The Portuguese Government's difficulties at the international level began in earnest in the early 1960s. On 15 December 1960, the General Assembly of the UN began a historical turn with the Declaration that Granted Independence to the Colonial Countries and its Peoples. It also specified that the Portuguese colonies were among those territories considered as Non-Self Governing. In that same year, Prime Minister MacMillan also initiated a change in direction in British politics. Newly elected presidents in Brazil and the United States, Jânio Quadros and John F Kennedy, began to keep their distance from the colonial policies

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<sup>66</sup> The Portuguese diplomacy profusely used these declarations reproduced in the *Times* to prove the Indian refusal of any negotiation [*MNE*, 1967 (II) p. 493].

practiced by Salazar's Government (Rosas, 1994, pp. 517-518; Pinto, 2001, p. 16).

This new situation even had repercussions inside the regime and gave rise to an attempted *coup d'état*, led by the National Defence Minister, Botelho Moniz, with the support, if not under the inspiration, of the United States Embassy in Lisbon. On 17 February 1961, Botelho Moniz met the ambassador of the United States in Lisbon, Charles Burke Elbrick, and told him that he, and other key actors in the regime, had decided to compel Salazar to liberalise his policies, both in the mainland and overseas (Nogueira, 1979, p. 208). On 6 March, Botelho Moniz and Elbrick lunched together and the Ambassador told the Minister that he had received instructions from Washington to conduct a steady diligence in order to force Salazar to change his African policy (Antunes, 1991).

That diligence took place on 7 March. The Ambassador met with Salazar and informed him of the new position of the United States. President Kennedy considered that the self-determination and independence of the African countries would be the most effective way to obstruct the road of the USSR. He also affirmed that decolonisation was unavoidable, and corresponded with the ideals of freedom and the defence of human rights. The situation in Angola could create a very embarrassing situation in the UN, and the United States could not support the Portuguese position. The US Administration thought that the Portuguese Government should make a public and formal Statement announcing reforms and accepting the self-determination and independence of Angola. The USA would guarantee Portugal the financial support needed to reward the consequences of that independence (Nogueira, 1979, p. 210; Rosas, 1994, pp. 533-534).

Salazar refused to comment, sending only his regards to President Kennedy (Nogueira, 1979, p. 211). On 13 March, the United States voted against Portugal for the first time in the United Nations Security Council. On 15 March, the *UPA*, supported by US services, carried out deadly attacks in the north of Angola (Rosas, 1994, p. 534).

The events in Angola, and the loss of the United States' support, caused consternation in some sectors of the regime. Botelho Moniz wrote a harsh letter to Salazar, and had two long meetings with him on 28 and 29 March. Moniz proposed political changes 'in the continuity' and considered that the situation of the Armed Forces was grievous and on the verge of becoming unsustainable. Afterwards, he shared the letter with the Higher Military Council and met with the commanders of military

regions, having openly proposed Salazar's dismissal as head of government (Rosas, 1994, pp. 534-535). On 5 April, Moniz met with the President of the Republic, having repeated the same arguments and proposals. Salazar therefore had ample time to consider how best to resassert his authority, and on 13 April, with President Thomaz' support, he dismissed Botelho Moniz from the post of Defence Minister. The attempt had failed (Rosas, 1994, p. 536).

The American position towards Portugal during the Kennedy Administration softened over time. This reflected internal disagreements between those who supported the right to self-determination in the African territories, and those who prioritised Portugal's role as an ally in the cold war, particularly with regard to use of the Portuguese military base in The Azores (Pinto, 2001, p. 18; Rodrigues, 2002, pp. 171-181). It is clear that the initial position of the Kennedy Administration against the Portuguese position in the United Nations changed gradually in 1962. This change was due, above all, to the strategic importance of the American Base in The Azores. The Portuguese Government used negotiations on the Agreement that allowed the Americans to use the military base, which ended in 1962, to compel the United States to moderate its position towards Lisbon's colonial policy (Rodrigues, 2006a).

From 1961 to 1965, Washington made several proposals on the Portuguese colonial politics, which were systematically refused by Salazar. All of them raised the potential use of a referendum. At the start of 1962, Paul Sakwa, Deputy Director of the CIA, made the 'Commonwealth Plan'. Based on the idea that Portugal could never win the colonial war, the United States should force a non-communist decolonisation. Angola and Mozambique should become independent within eight years. The plan foresaw the creation of political parties in 1965, elections and referendums in 1967, and full independence in 1970.

According to these American plans, Portugal should receive economic help, which would double its per capita income in five years (Fernando, 2005, p. 230). If Salazar refused, the author of the report proposed that he be overthrown by a group of military officials close to the USA. In March 1962, the National Security Council approved the plan, excluding the overthrow of Salazar. However, the need to renew the agreement for the use of the base in The Azores, where 75% of the military air traffic from the USA to Europe and the Middle East passed, led the Kennedy Administration to change its position in a favour of the Portuguese Government (Pinto, 2001, pp. 18-19).

## **3.2. Salazar's Supposed Admission of a Plebiscite Regarding the Overseas**

### **3.2.1. A 'Solemn and Public Act'**

On 31 July 1963, the Security Council of the United Nations passed Resolution S/5380, regarding the territories under Portuguese Administration, with abstentions from the United States, Great Britain and France. The resolution affirmed that Portugal's policies were contrary to the principles of the Charter and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council; deplored the attitude of the Portuguese Government; and determined that the situation in the territories under Portuguese Administration was seriously disturbing peace and security in Africa (Nogueira, 2000b, p. 502).<sup>67</sup>

On 12 August 1963, Salazar (1967, pp. 287-335) gave a long radio and television speech about the overseas policy. In general, it was a speech without great or substantial news (Nogueira, 2000b, p. 421; Almeida, 1999, pp. 700-707). However, Salazar uttered an enigmatic Statement at the end. Without ever doubting the feelings the Portuguese had concerning the defence of the Nation's integrity, he saw an advantage in pronouncing a 'solemn and public act' on the Government's overseas policy (Salazar, 1967, p. 335). That Statement gave rise to speculation about this solemn and public act. It could be a referendum, a demonstration, or a special session of the Parliament. Many other scenarios were possible. No explanation was forthcoming from official sources (Nogueira, 2000b, p. 509).

Franco Nogueira, Foreign Minister at that time, has since revealed that he suggested the announcement of a plebiscite or referendum, which would involve the whole Nation, to Salazar. There would be no doubt about the results given the electoral weight of the mainland, and it would be difficult for other western States to deny the political and legal value of a plebiscite. Inferences from the UN would need to be rejected, since they would insist on opposing their own terms. However, it would be possible for the Portuguese to offer governments and independent journalists the chance to send unofficial observers. According to Nogueira, Salazar welcomed the idea in the initial version of his speech, but developed reservations at the last minute, thus changing

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<sup>67</sup> See full text of the UN Resolution at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/200/53/IMG/NR020053.pdf?OpenElement> [accessed on 28 April 2011].



the word 'plebiscite' to 'solemn and public act', without defining it (Nogueira, 2000b, p. 509). On 27 August 1963, the regime promoted a demonstration in Lisbon that supported the Government's colonial policy.

### **3.2.2. George Ball's Initiative**

On 29 August, George Ball, Under Secretary of the Department of State, arrived in Lisbon as an emissary from President Kennedy. His purpose was to discuss the overseas issue with the government in Lisbon. This visit happened after a meeting in the White House between Kennedy and Franco Nogueira, in which the North American President admitted to a possible agreement on the overseas based on the self-determination principle (Amaral, 1994, pp. 30-32). In meeting with Franco Nogueira, Ball proposed that Portugal accept self-determination. According to the USA, this principle involved the consent of people through a valid political process. Freitas do Amaral (1994, p. 30) understands this as meaning that the people in the colonies had the right to declare if they wanted to remain linked to Portugal or become independent countries through an individual and secret vote. Ball was convinced that the self-determination process of the colonies was inevitable, and that Portugal would not have window of ten years to try to find a solution that safeguarded their interests.

Franco Nogueira did not accept to fix any term, but suggested a plebiscite in which the entire population would participate. On 30 August, Salazar received George Ball. According to Freitas do Amaral (1994, pp. 31-32) he restrained Franco Nogueira's impulses avoiding discussion of self-determination or a plebiscite, and refusing to yield on anything substantive.

A few days later, George Ball returned to Portugal and received a memorandum on the Portuguese position from Franco Nogueira on 6 September (Amaral, 1994, pp. 61-67). In that document, the Portuguese Government rejected the concept of self-determination as understood by the United Nations. It was only admitted as a multiform concept expressed through successive acts, which proved the adhesion and consent of the governed peoples to the State and government structures. Moreover, the memorandum excluded any idea of dates or terms, and affirmed that the Government could consider a plebiscite or referendum, in a short term. However, that plebiscite should have a national scope and it should be held under Portuguese Constitutional conditions (Amaral, 1994, p. 37; Rodrigues, 2002, p. 298, Nogueira, 2000b, pp. 514-519). In other words, the plebiscite would be a fraud, as were all other electoral acts held in

Portugal during the dictatorship. Freitas do Amaral (1994, p. 39) considers this position as ‘a huge retreat’ in the talks. Everything that had been admitted as possible – self-determination, plebiscite, process with phases or sequences that could lead to a purpose – was expressly subordinated to an essential condition: that nothing questioned the territorial integrity of the Portuguese State as unitary and multi-continental.

### **3.2.3. The Expectation of a Plebiscite**

Meanwhile, during that month of September 1963, anticipation grew in Portugal about the meaning of the ‘solemn and public act’ mentioned by Salazar. Some sectors from the opposition understood it as a plebiscite. Cunha Leal and other personalities from the liberal opposition even sent a letter to Salazar mentioning his speech dated 12 August and pleading for an urgent referendum. This would give the Portuguese people the opportunity to be consulted on the overseas policy as a free people (Nogueira, 2000b, p. 523).

The extreme right of the regime tried to respond immediately. The director of the newspaper *Diário de Notícias*, Augusto de Castro, wrote an article under the title ‘A Plebiscite?’ saying that a plebiscite would be indispensable to give up, revoking inalienable rights, but would never maintain unquestionable rights: ‘We can submit doubts to a plebiscite and turn them into certainties, but we cannot submit certainties to a plebiscite and turn them into doubts. We cannot submit God to a plebiscite. We cannot submit Honour to a plebiscite. We cannot submit the Motherland to a plebiscite’ (Nogueira, 2000b, p. 523). However, Salazar refused to authorise publication of the article, explaining his reasons in a letter sent to the author on 24 September 1963. Although he agreed with the doctrine defended in the article, he thought that the timing was inappropriate (Nogueira, 2000b, p. 524). He preferred to maintain ambiguity.

14 October 1963 marked the beginning of talks between Portugal and the African States, which were chaired by the UN Secretary-General, U Thant, in New York. In a memo about those conversations, the Portuguese Government affirmed the possibility of holding a plebiscite, which would consult the whole Portuguese Nation on overseas policy. The results would be considered definitive and beyond further debate. (Nogueira, 2000b, p. 534).

The conversations in New York were inconclusive. The Portuguese Government did not really want a plebiscite, and no African countries would accept the terms suggested by the Portuguese. However,

in Portugal, the press omitted any allusion to a plebiscite or to that position from Portuguese diplomacy. In either case, the expectation had reached its end. Salazar had made his decision, if indeed there ever was a time where he had been undecided.

On 21 October, the US Department of State sent a memo to Lisbon to follow up the talks with George Ball in the previous month. This document warned that military strength could not stop the African nationalist forces, and that it would not be possible to have another ten years to prepare for a self-determination process that attracted the moderate African leaders' support (Amaral, 1994, pp. 69-83). Salazar answered on 29 February 1964, expressing his total disagreement (Amaral, 1994, pp. 85-98).

### **3.2.4. Real Hypothesis or Mere Simulation?**

The question that comes to mind is whether this was a real hypothesis or mere simulation. The truth is that the possibility for a referendum on the colonial policy stirred some Portuguese political sectors between August and the beginning of October 1963. It is important to fully State the several positions in that respect.

Inside the regime, Franco Nogueira affirms to have defended the plebiscite with a pledge. That act should include the whole Nation, and should not put to sub-units or be used to undermine the unitary State. Salazar did not accept even that idea, but fed the ambiguity, allowing Nogueira, as Foreign Minister, to discuss the terms of a possible plebiscite for some time in the UN. However, even Franco Nogueira would come to consider that possibility as unrealistic. According to him, further developments in the UN and Afro-Asian surroundings demonstrated that the United Nations and the African Governments would consider any plebiscite, irrelevant since they were not held under conditions that were compatible with their ideals or procedures. (2000b, p. 509). As for the support from western nations, Nogueira (1979, p. XLII) concluded that it would be just provisional and would be rejected as soon as the UN's unavoidable rejection was verified.

The regime's extreme right wing was strongly opposed to the idea that Salazar's speech could mean the acceptance of a plebiscite, as was revealed in the article by Augusto de Castro. Although it was never published, it had certainly been written with the intention of interpreting the dictator's thought and echoing a doctrine that had his approval.

In the opposition field, some non-communists defended the plebiscite. These included Cunha Leal, who wanted the speech of 12 August 1963 to admit the possibility of a referendum, and also the socialist Mário Soares (1969, pp. 61-62), who would even reaffirm the idea in a text written in 1966 concerning the 40 years of the dictatorship.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, knowing, as everybody did, Salazar's thought and political practice, nobody in the opposition would have had illusions about the likelihood of the plebiscite taking place, even under the corrupted rules of the false elections of that time.

In his text, Mário Soares (1969, p. 71) suggests that, at the beginning of the colonial war the Government considered the referendum as a hypothetical idea, but the idea ran its course. According to Soares (1974, p. 452), Salazar moved away from the idea because he knew perfectly well what the result of a popular consultation would be if done with seriousness. In spite of demanding unanimous support from the Nation, he was not confident that such support existed. Therefore, he substituted the referendum with a 'spontaneous demonstration' of support for his policy. This interpretation is shared by Almeida Santos [2006 (I) pp. 216-217], who writes that the 'plebiscite' was made with a demonstration of support officially organised by the regime. Unlike Freitas do Amaral, Almeida Santos considers that there was no retreat in Salazar's position, and that any appearance of a change in position was merely a result of his usual rhetorical abilities.

The communist leader, Álvaro Cunhal, had the same opinion. In his book *Rumo à Vitória* (Road to Victory), written in 1964, he expressed the idea that, when Salazar spoke of the possibility of a national consultation on the overseas policy, some people thought he was suggesting a 'plebiscite' of the same type of his 'elections'. Not so. In Cunhal's view, it was only a fascist demonstration (Cunhal, 1974, p. 127).

For the purposes of this research, it is irrelevant whether Salazar left the question of a referendum hanging because he was genuinely undecided, or if he played along with the idea for tactical reasons. The second scenario is more likely. In the explanation given to Augusto de Castro about the prohibition of the article, Salazar affirmed his agreement with the doctrine espoused in the article, which excluded the plebiscite for reasons of principle. Therefore, there was no room for indecision. Simply, the article would not be opportune at that moment for tactical reasons.

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<sup>68</sup> According to Mário Soares (1969, p. 37) this was a text that was nothing more than a draft written in May 1966 when the Government was preparing the celebrations for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the regime, and which was confiscated by the political police.

It does not seem plausible that Salazar could truly want a plebiscite, even the results would be innocuous. It is true that the colonial problem divided the opposition. It is also true that the regime could have manipulated the process, perpetrating an electoral fraud in the usual manner, or prohibiting and repressing the action of the opposition, as always, or even falsifying the results as had been done in the presidential elections of 1958. However, Salazar also knew that the national and international political situation in the early 1960s was not the same as that of the 1930s. The regime had not fully recovered from the deep disturbances of 1958 to 1962. The opening of a plebiscitary process in those circumstances would give the most coherent opposition forces the opportunity to make their case. The dictatorship would win the plebiscite, without any doubt, but the results would be contested, both in Portugal and abroad. Therefore, it does not seem likely that Salazar would seriously consider running such serious risks for such an uncertain political reward.

As for the reasons behind the prohibition in Augusto de Castro's article, it seems clear that the publication of that article at that moment did not suit Salazar for tactical reasons. In the internal level, it was suggested that the idea of a plebiscite on the colonial policy would be enough to create division in the opposition between those that sustained such an idea and those that had no illusions about Salazar's intentions. At the international level, it is important to remember that the Portuguese diplomacy led by Franco Nogueira continued to be open to the idea of a plebiscite during the ongoing talks with the US Department of State. Salazar did not want any plebiscite, but he wanted control the timing of when his position became clear.

### **3.3. The Last US Attempt: the Anderson Plan**

In the spring of 1965, during Lyndon Johnson's presidency, Admiral George Anderson, Ambassador in Lisbon, introduced the last American initiative to solve the Portuguese colonial problem.<sup>69</sup> In spite of the previous refusals, the United States remained interested in persuading the Portuguese Government to accept a programmed and controlled plan for the decolonisation of Portuguese overseas territories. With that in mind, the US Administration made a final attempt, introducing a proposal to the Government of Lisbon, known as the 'Anderson plan' (Rodrigues, 2006b, p. 101).

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<sup>69</sup> On the Anderson Plan, see Samuels & Haykin (1979); Pinto (2001); Rodrigues (2004); Rodrigues (2006).

The plan was introduced to Franco Nogueira on 2 September 1965. According to the report from the Portuguese Foreign Minister, mentioned by Luís Nuno Rodrigues (2004, pp. 106-107), Portugal would have to set an exact date for a large-scale plebiscite that would be entirely free, open, and under international observation. At the same time, the Portuguese Government committed itself to increase its efforts in the social, economic and political levels of the overseas populations in order to better understand their situation. The African countries would commit themselves to not allowing the use of their territories as base of terrorism or attacks against Portuguese territories. The United States and other NATO countries would agree to use their influence over the moderate African countries so that they respected that commitment, with the USA guaranteeing the open condemnation of any violation of such an agreement or commitment.

When Anderson introduced this plan, Franco Nogueira immediately stated his objections to the plebiscite, given the conditions needed for its recognition by the African countries. It would be necessary to remove all the armed and police forces from the Portuguese territories, whose presence would be considered as an obstacle to the freedom of the voters. Portugal would also be required to authorise access to the territories to the UN and to recognise leaders of the liberation movements in individual African colonies, which would require an amnesty. Finally, since the UN would certainly demand a democratic process, it would be necessary that the Portuguese Government granted total freedom to the political parties inspired by any foreign government (Rodrigues, 2004, p. 107).

These objections pointed, from the very beginning, to a refusal by the Portuguese Government, who would never accept those conditions. An acceptable plebiscite to the United Nations and the African countries would be inherently unacceptable to the Portuguese Government. On the other hand, it would not be realistic to think that the US diplomacy could impose a plebiscite under different conditions. Still, Franco Nogueira promised to introduce the plan to Salazar.

In his memoirs, Franco Nogueira (1986, p. 142) makes a brief reference to the Anderson plan, which clearly showed how little importance he attributed to it:

‘Lisbon, 3 September - (...) Anderson came, with his eternal plan to solve our overseas problem. What does it consist of? In holding a plebiscite (in the terms demanded by the UN, it is

clear); in an agreement with the Africans to end the ‘guerrilla’ (that supposes our declaration of intentions for independence); in international help to develop the territories. Doing this or giving the overseas their independence is the same. I don't know if Anderson is ingenuous, or if he takes me for being ingenuous. I did not exalt myself with the plan: I told him without blinking that I would study it.’

On 22 October 1965, George Anderson had the opportunity to introduce his own plan to Oliveira Salazar. He did not reject it immediately, but left his objections clear (Rodrigues, 2004, p. 108). In the official answer, given in March 1966, Franco Nogueira explained to George Anderson that it would be unthinkable for Portugal to make any public declaration admitting that the last objective of its policy in Africa was self-determination.

Actually, neither the Portuguese nor the Americans gave great importance to the Anderson plan. The Secretary of State Dean Rusk did not even refer to it when he met Franco Nogueira in October 1965 (Pinto, 2001, p. 26). Moreover, after the formal rejection of the plan, George Anderson concluded himself that in the immediate future, there little possibility that the Portuguese Government would change its attitude regarding the African provinces. He even considered that there was no advantage in precipitating any trouble, unnecessarily, in the relations between the United States and Portugal (Rodrigues, 2004, p. 108).

In fact, the beginning of the Vietnam War and the support the Portuguese Government gave to the US position in that conflict ended any hesitation from the United States regarding their support of Portuguese colonialism. Actually, the only hesitation was at the very beginning of Kennedy's presidency, between 1961 and 1962 (Guimarães, 2006; Maxwell, 1995, pp. 50-55).

### **3.4. The Divisions Inside the Opposition**

#### **3.4.1. The Situation Up To the 1950's**

When the colonial war emerged, only the Portuguese Communist Party recognised the colonised people's right for independence. In *PCP's* 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress, the first illegal one, which was held secretly between 10 and 13 November 1943, the future leader Álvaro Cunhal (2007, pp. 145-235), drew a report that contributed to the exact communist definition of the national-colonial problem. According to Cunhal (2007, p. 185), the communists recognised the colonial people's

right to constitute their independent States, although the people from the Portuguese colonies, which were undeveloped under all aspects, were not, under the present circumstances, able to assert independence on their own.

In 1957, when *PCP* held its 5<sup>th</sup> Congress, the situation had substantially changed. There had been widespread decolonisation since the end of the World War II, and the UN had passed resolutions on the right of self-determination for the people of colonised territories. In Portuguese colonies, liberation movements were building momentum with communist support. The Declaration was approved, which proposed that the necessary conditions should be created in the Portuguese colonies to allow them to obtain their freedom and independence, notwithstanding any the changes in the political situation in Portugal (*PCP*, 1981, p. 142).

At that time, the other opposition groups did not question the legitimacy of the Portuguese presence in Africa. Cunha Leal (1957, p. 39), in articles published in the daily newspaper *Diário de Lisboa*, in June 1954 and on 23 October 1957, defended the application of a confederation to the State of India and to extend it progressively to other colonies (Correia, 1994, p. 45).

In Humberto Delgado's electoral campaign in 1958, the question was not mentioned. However, Delgado, later in exile in *São Paulo*, recognised the right of the colonised people to self-determination. He also sought a Federal Republic of the United States of Portugal and proposed plebiscites to approve the Constitution of the federal State and each of the States that would integrate it.

### **3.4.2. Humberto Delgado's Plan**

Humberto Delgado (1974, pp. 331-337) introduced this plan on 5 October 1960, pointing to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Republic, on behalf of the Independent National Movement (*MNI*) that he had founded on 18 June 1958. What Delgado defended after all, in spite of proclaiming the recognition of the right to self-determination, was a federalist solution that would create the Federal Republic of the United States of Portugal. The federation would include the federal State, composed by continental Portugal, adjacent islands and territories too small to have the same statute of other colonies, and five other States: Guinea (including Cape Verde), Angola (including Sao Tome and Principe), Mozambique, India and East Timor.



More than a plebiscitary proposal to solve the colonial problem, this plan corresponded to Delgado's aspirations for the Constitutional future of the country once the dictatorship had been overthrown by a coup of force. The solution for the colonial issue was the federalist way. The situation in Africa in the early sixties allowed him to believe that the struggle for independence could soon come to the Portuguese colonies. Delgado's plan was very far from being anti-colonialist. Except for the plebiscite, this plan had much in common with the federalist theories that had echoed inside the regime.<sup>70</sup> In fact, the concreteness of the right to self-determination did not prioritised over the creation of sederative States, and there was no idea of independence.

This plan expressed a conception not far from Delgado's idea that the regime would have to fall by a coup of force. The overthrowing of the dictatorship would occur through a military attack made by small groups of men armed with imported weapons, along with a lightning raid against other neighbouring corps, and finally with a mass insurrection (Delgado, 1974, pp. 339-340).<sup>71</sup> After power had been taken, the Constitution of the federal State and the Constitutions of the federated States would be approved through plebiscites.

The plan was light on details. How would such plebiscites take place? Who would make the drafts of the Constitutions? Who would have the right to vote? The plan said nothing. It was, after all, a proposal that was as inconsistent as the projects of military coups that would supposedly make it possible.

### **3.4.3. The Programme for the Democratisation of the Republic**

On January 1961, the liberal opposition worked out the Programme for the Democratisation of the Republic (1961). In matters concerning the colonies it only included unambitious proposals of administrative decentralisation, without daring to refer to independence, self-determination or even autonomy (Correia, 1994, p. 49).

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<sup>70</sup> The federalist theories were defended inside the regime namely by Manuel José Homem de Melo (1962) in a book published in 1962, *Portugal, Ultramar e o Futuro* (Portugal, the Overseas and the Future) and by Marcello Caetano, who supported the existence of a federation of three States: the Mainland, Angola and Mozambique, in a consultation concerning the revision of the overseas provinces' governmental system (Nogueira, 2000b, p. 395).

<sup>71</sup> The illusions as to the possibility of overthrowing the dictatorship by a coup of force led the General to fall into a trap perpetrated by agents of the political police. The police attracted him to Spain, near the Portuguese border and murdered him on 13 February 1965.

However, events in Angola at the start of 1961, between the Programme's inception and its publication in May, forced the inclusion of a final addition on the overseas policy. Reaffirming the principles proclaimed before, the Programme expressed disapproval of the internationally condemned processes, considering the problem to be essentially political. It concluded the need to meet in peace, and never at war, along with a dialogue among the population and a guarantee of all rights. The Communist Party criticised that position (Cunhal, 1975, p. 88) and its Secretary-General Álvaro Cunhal (1976, p. 50) later recognised that the colonial question created a real problem for the ability of the anti-fascist forces to unify, given that, unlike the *PCP*, the republican, liberal and socialists defended colonial or neo-colonialist positions.

For the legislative elections of November 1961, the Programme for the Democratisation of the Republic reappeared with a small addendum. It cautiously advanced the idea of a referendum for the self-determination of the colonial peoples. This idea would collide with the traditional ideas from some oppositionists coming from the First Republic, mainly supporters of colonialist ideals, who began to leave the movement (Moreira, 1992, pp. 26-27).

Nevertheless, during the 1961 legislative elections, the opposition candidates introduced the colonial problem in electoral debates for the first time. They blamed the Government for the colonial war, which, they argued, had resulted from overly rigid colonial policies. They claimed that the recognition of the colonies' right to self-determination as a way to peacefully solve the conflict in Africa. However, they proposed that the Government submit its African policy to a democratic referendum so that the Portuguese people could pronounce themselves on the subject (Silveira, 1992, p. 96).

#### **3.4.4. The Idea of the Referendum**

In the book *Portugal Amordaçado* (Portugal Gagged) Mário Soares claimed that the opposition consistently agitated for a referendum on the African policy since 1961. This was preceded by a period of public discussion, when all political forces could debate the problem freely and bring their respective solutions to public appreciation (Soares, 1974, p. 452).

That was the position of Mário Soares. In 1966, in the draft of a Statement concerning the 40 years of the New State, he deplored that the regime had never allowed a wide debate on the colonial problem and that the country had never had the possibility to give its opinion on it (Soares,

1969, pp. 61-62). Consequently, he proposed a referendum on the overseas policy within the time limit of six months, preceded by a wide and explanatory national debate (Soares, 1969, p. 71).

This proposal for a referendum never had the support from the opposition as a whole. The Communist Party defended the right of the colonised people to self-determination and independence at that time. Thus, it would not make sense to decide on the future of those people through a referendum that ignored them, and gave the decisive weight to the mainland. Furthermore, the referendum, as proposed, would presuppose the existence of political freedom which did not exist. Therefore, the proposal had two fundamental goals: to embarrass the regime, making its refusal of any democratic consultation of the people evident; and to take advantage of the opportunity to demand it once again. On the other hand, that proposal was aimed at concealing a fudged position on the resolution of the colonial problem.

#### **4. The Colonial Issue under Marcello Caetano's Government**

##### **4.1. Caetano's Strategy and the Opposition**

Marcello Caetano's choice for the Government's leadership in September 1968 took place with some expectation on the colonial policy, given his support for federalist theories in the early 1960's. However, the integrationist wing, which prevailed in the regime, did not allow any velleity in that respect. In his first speech before the National Assembly on the colonial policy as Chief of Government, on 27 November 1968, Marcello Caetano (1974, p. 50) affirmed to having considered all the aspects of overseas defence, having concluded that the position followed by Portugal 'could not have been any other'.

In the 1969 elections, the colonial issue divided the opposition. According to Cunhal (1976, p. 50), Mário Soares and his friends were opposed to the approach of a colonial war through the democratic movement. They supported the formula 'no to abandonment, no to war' and 'progressive autonomy'. They also refused to sign documents that recognised the right to complete and immediate independence of the people from the Portuguese colonies at international conferences. Lino de Carvalho (2000, p. 38) refers to the effort made at the National Meeting of Electoral Democratic Commissions on 15 June 1969, with the opposition still united in attempts to find a common formula. Thus, the Common Action Platform adopted a moderate formula that only proposed the peaceful and political resolution of overseas wars, based on the

recognition of the right to self-determination, and preceded by a wide national debate.

In three electoral constituencies, (Lisbon, Oporto and *Braga*), the Portuguese Socialist Action (*ASP*), led by Mário Soares, decided to take part in the elections out of the Electoral Democratic Commissions (*CDE*), creating the *CEUD*. The division among the opposition due to the emergence of the *CEUD* meant different visions on the colonial problem. For the *CDE*, in spite of different visions within it, the end of the war would inevitably have to pass through the recognition of the right to self-determination and independence (Ferreira, 1970, pp. 363-369). The *CEUD*, in its manifesto on the overseas problem, assumed positions that are more ambiguous. It refused to abandon the colonies and referred only to the will to find peace through dialogue (Ferreira, 1970, pp. 431-435). It is important to remember that, a few months before, Mário Soares had introduced a thesis supporting the idea of a referendum on the overseas policies at the Republican Congress in *Aveiro*. According to him, this would precede the Constitutional revision that the National Assembly should carry out.

In the elections of 1969, Marcello Caetano promised a policy of progressive autonomy to the colonies that could lead to a federal type solution in the future (Silveira, 1992, p. 99). Pizarat Correia (1991, pp. 44-46) separates Caetano's position from the federalist thesis, considering it an intermediate solution that accepted a progressive autonomy associated to a central State. However, the truth is that Caetano gave up in the face of opposition from the regime's radical wing. The Constitutional revision of 1971 was part of that strategy, transforming the colonies into 'States', without any substantial change of their statute (Silveira, 1992, p. 101).

After the 1969 elections, the youth radicalised their attitude towards the Colonial War. The opinion movement against the war became a focal point in the struggle against the dictatorship. The immediate and complete independence of the territories submitted to Portuguese colonialism became the central aim of this political action. The opposition also converged around this viewpoint. In a meeting in Paris the Communist and the Socialist Parties signed a joint Statement proclaiming the end of the colonial war as a common objective. They also had negotiations in mind which would give complete and immediate independence to Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique (Cunhal, 1976, pp. 50-51). From July 1969 to May 1973, the UN Security Council adopted 16 Resolutions condemning the Portuguese Government's

colonial policy (MacQueen, 2006, p. 103). In the Democratic Opposition Congress from 4 to 8 April 1973, the end of the colonial war appeared in the Final Declaration (1973, p. 149) as the first of immediate objectives to follow through with the united action of democratic forces. Moreover, in the elections of 1973, with the opposition united around the *CDE*, the contestation of the colonial war was a central political aim.

#### **4.2 *Portugal e o Futuro*: António de Spínola's Proposal**

A few months before the fall of fascism, from within the regime and still concerning the resolution of the colonial problem, General António de Spínola, Deputy Chief of the General High Staff of the Armed Forces and former military commander in Guinea-Bissau, published a book entitled *Portugal e o Futuro* (Portugal and the Future). This book, published on 22 February 1974, had significant public impact and proposed the referendum as a solution to the colonial issue.

António de Spínola had supported a federalist solution to the colonial problem since the early 1960s. In the beginning of the 1970s, as he had direct knowledge about the military situation in Guinea-Bissau, he concluded that there was no military solution for that problem. Thus, on 18 May 1972, as Governor-General of Guinea, he opened direct talks with the President of Senegal, Leopold Senghor. Senghor's proposal, which Spínola transmitted to Lisbon, involved starting an immediate phase of internal autonomy. This would last at least ten years, followed by a popular consultation, which would probably lead to independence in the frame of a Portuguese-Afro, or a Portuguese-Afro-Brazilian community (Spínola, 1978, pp. 26-27).

On 26 May, Marcello Caetano prohibited the talks, arguing that there was no legal basis for questioning the unity of the State. Then, Spínola (1978, pp. 28-40) sent a last appeal to the Chief of Government on 28 May. He was sure that wasting this opportunity would result in an endless war or a disastrous end. Spínola proposed the pursuit of talks based on the following points: **1)** the guarantee of an administrative autonomy in the frame of preparing African staff; **2)** the progressive participation of the people of Guinea in the administration of their interests; **3)** The acceptance of the principle of free option for the Guinean people regarding their political statute through the usual form of public consultation, after a minimum ten year term (Spínola, 1978, p. 38).

On 30 May, Marcello Caetano definitively rejected the continuation of the talks. According to the Chief of Government, the talks ceased due to the refusal of any direct contact with *PAIGC* as they would

create a precedent that would be followed in other colonies, thus jeopardizing the overseas defence. Caetano (1974, p. 191), preferred military defeat in Guinea to an agreement with the 'terrorists', which would open the way to other negotiations in other territories.<sup>72</sup>

On the same day he entered into office as Deputy Chief of the General High Staff of the Armed Forces, Spínola informed Caetano of the publication of his book within a few days. The Head of Government demonstrated his displeasure and reminded him that a military in exercise of functions could not emit political opinions without superior permission. However, General Costa Gomes had given the superior permission, as Chief of the General High Staff of the Armed Forces. In Spínola's foreword, he considered that the colonial war had become the first national problem, and criticised the overseas issue as having been reduced to extreme positions which introduced the dilemma of eternising the war or betraying the past.

Spínola's proposal (1974, p. 56) did not consider popular consultation as something untouchable. He considered that the pure and simple rejection of public consultation, under certain pretexts, is the absolute denial of the Constitutional concept of sovereignty that the Nation is based on. To reject the popular referendum with the pretext of the people's lack of preparation would be the same as recognising the people's lack of preparation for citizenship.

The author referred to possible objections to his proposal: as the war was motivated by odd interests, the referendum would always be questioned, no matter how honest it had been; and there would be no advantage in it being held. For him, the referendum is not only made when there is an advantage in that, but it was fundamentally the answer to an imperative. Secondly, he did not fear consulting the will of the people who lived under the Portuguese flag, because the indestructible strength of the Portuguese understanding would have to be based on the respect of that will. He was convinced that the free world would militantly be on the Portuguese side when, after a period of appropriate preparation, the referendum for the Portuguese Africans revealed their unequivocal will to remain Portuguese under a statute of their free choice (Spínola, 1974, pp. 57-58).

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<sup>72</sup> However, the Portuguese newspaper *Expresso* revealed that on 26 and 27 March 1974, there was a secret meeting in London between a Portuguese Government emissary and a PAIGC delegation in order to achieve a cease-fire and begin the formal talks for independence [Castanheira (1994) cited by Garcia (2003, p. 77)].

It is clear that Spínola's purpose was to avoid the colonies' independence. According to his own words, the problem resides in promoting the self-determination of overseas populations and integrating them in the Portuguese Republic, which would be easy in a framework, other than the current one (Spínola, 1974, p. 148).

To reach that purpose, Spínola (1974, pp. 206-207) proposed a programme with three points: **1)** clarify the situation of Portugal as a multicontinental country, with autonomous States in Europe, Africa and Asia; **2)** accelerate the autonomy and administrative decentralisation processes, with the effective transfer of responsibilities to local institutions; **3)** introduce the results of the referendum to the world which would be done after the time fixed for the widening of autonomy.

Spínola's position was not identical to the most reactionary sectors of the regime, but it was equally different in the ideas of self-determination and independence that the opposition defended. Spínola's position was close to the federalists, extolling an autonomy solution of a federal type.

Besides the military problem, another subject that was difficult to overcome was the international isolation of the Portuguese authorities. The referendum proposal sought to appease world public opinion, and especially that of its traditional allies. The Government should control the whole referendum process, defining how and when it would be held and taking the necessary measures to win.

Spínola did not ignore that a fair referendum would demand democratic conditions that existed neither in the mainland nor in the colonies. The seriousness of a referendum would demand a democratisation of the regime, which Spínola did not propose. After all, he intended to obtain with the referendum, the same that Marcello Caetano had thought to obtain with the Constitutional revision of 1971: the acceptance of a regional autonomy that would be a false solution to maintaining the colonial domain intact.

Spínola's proposal was actually far from representing a rupture with the regime. He simply did not ignore the difficulties, acknowledging that the regime was facing an inevitable defeat. However, the regime's ranks found themselves in a hard situation because the recognition of imminent defeat came from the Deputy Chief of the General High Staff of the Armed Forces, thus opening a breach that was difficult to hide.

The impact of Spínola's book was not due to the concrete proposal for a referendum. Norrie MacQueen (1997, p. 101) remembers that the fundamental concept of the book was peculiarly similar to the ideas of the 'Anderson plan', introduced to Salazar by the US Ambassador in the mid 1960's. However, what gave the book its true political charge was the author's identity and the moment of publication.

Most significantly, for the first time, a high military commander publicly recognised that there was no military solution for the colonial war. *Portugal e o Futuro* added more fuel to the flames that had already been burning. It fed the popular and democratic protest against the colonial war and the captains' movement that was then in an advanced phase of preparation for the revolutionary military coup that would quickly take place. The worries of the book ran separately, but paralleled the growing professional discontentment of the Armed Forces officers (MacQueen, 1997, p. 103).

### **4.3. Marcello Caetano's Reaction**

Caetano reacted with a speech uttered in the National Assembly, by his request, on 5 March 1974 (*DSAN*, 34, 6 March 1974, pp. 705-710). It led to a debate on the colonial policy, which ended with the approval, unsurprisingly, of a motion supporting the Government's position. In that speech, Marcello Caetano referred to the plebiscite proposal on the colonial policy in contusing terms, refusing it, obviously.

His first argument was the delay of the African people to accept the principles of European democracy. In other words, for people that in their majority did not go beyond the tribal organisation stage, democracy did not make sense. Moreover, the popular consultation according to the individualistic formula - one man (or one woman), one vote - would be a parody of direct democracy. The application of this argument to the colonised people was at least curious given that not even the Portuguese residents in Europe could aspire to the principles of European democracy. Would they be, like the Africans, in a tribal organisation stage?

His second argument was that, under the conditions demanded by the United Nations, the referendum would result in certain loss. A referendum, held under Portuguese initiative and authority, would be worth nothing for the enemies of Portugal, and the United Nations, it would only recognise the legitimacy of the results according to their desires. For Caetano, the referendum, just as Spínola extolled, would be unviable, for the simple reason that the United Nations would never accept it. Neither the liberation movements, nor the United Nations,



would recognise a referendum controlled by the Portuguese authorities that was able to prejudice the self-determination and independence principles that were internationally recognised. That conclusion seems realistic. Nobody would accept the referendum proposed by Spínola. Meanwhile, the regime was deeply isolated, internally and externally. To conclude this debate, the Overseas Committee presented a motion supporting the Government's policy 'on overseas defence and valorisation', which was passed on 8 March.

Having the support from the President and the National Assembly, Caetano needed to guarantee the military support, which had been shaken by the positions of Spínola and Costa Gomes. That would be the next step. On 14 March 1974, a Military Chiefs delegation, jokingly known later on as the 'rheumatic brigade', declared their support for the Government's overseas policy. Costa Gomes and Spínola were absent, and consequently, dismissed. Two days later, and inspired by Spínola, there was the first military attempt to overthrow the regime, which was unsuccessful. The revolution would come the following month, by the hand of the Captains' Movement, which would be successful this time around.

On 25 April 1974, António de Spínola received power directly from Caetano's hands, and became leader of the National Salvation Junta (*Junta de Salvação Nacional*). A few days later, he became the provisional President of the Republic. He then attempted to direct an overseas policy based on the conceptions exposed in the *Portugal e o Futuro*. However, the dynamics of the revolution and the unstoppable decolonisation process quickly span out of his control.

