THE DECOLONIZATION OF
PORTUGUESE AFRICA

Metropolitan Revolution and the Dissolution of Empire

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For Betsy and Triona

Preface

This book aims to provide an overview of one of the most far-reaching events in post-Second World War history: the end of Portugal's 500-year empire in Africa. The structure of its analysis of the decolonization process is essentially triangular. It explores the three dimensions of African nationalism, European revolution and the politics of the international system both individually and in their interconnections.

Within this general scheme, however, the book places a stress on the metropolitan environment and in particular on the events surrounding the Lisbon coup of April 1974. This emphasis implies no devaluation of the African and international perspectives. The aim is simply to redress an imbalance in the published work which has been available in English up to the present. Since the 1960s a considerable body of material has emerged on the liberation struggles in Portuguese Africa and, later, on the development of the new states which emerged from decolonization. The focus of these studies has generally been an African one, offering little systematic analysis of the interconnections between revolutionary nationalism in lusophone Africa and the 'revolutionary process' in the metropole.

Similarly, the 1970s was a period of significant change in the management of relations between the superpowers. The decade began with the flowering of *détente* and ended with its collapse. International relations specialists, therefore, have tended to offer interpretations of developments on the African 'periphery' of the central balance at this time in systemic rather than local terms. There have been few attempts to tie these great shifts in superpower relationships to the unfolding of revolutionary politics and the process of decolonization in Lisbon during 1974 and 1975. My intention therefore has been twofold: to point up the metropolitan bases of imperial dissolution and to attempt to integrate these with the other causal factors to be found in Africa and in the broad international system.

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Portugal enforces a 'thirty-year rule' on access to foreign affairs and colonial ministry documents (and offers no guarantee that the most important material will be released even after that period). This has not, though, been as great a disability in the preparation of this book as might be expected. The explosion of political expression which followed the collapse of the old regime in Portugal in 1974 created a climate in which considerations of state secrecy hardly constrained public revelation. The publication of instant memoirs and collections of personal papers – often including state documents – became a growth industry in Lisbon in the mid and later 1970s. At the same time, a recently free press was pushing its new liberties to their limit and was unintimidated by official disapproval. More recently, the twentieth anniversary of the revolution brought a second wave of public disclosure and reinterpretation from participants in the revolution. Many of the central actors of 1974 and 1975 have been remarkably frank in published reminiscences and interviews.

In this respect I must express my own gratitude for the time and patience of a number of figures involved in the decolonization process who made themselves available for interview in 1995. I owe a great debt to: Dr António de Almeida Santos who was minister for interterritorial coordination (effectively 'decolonization minister') in the first to fourth provisional governments in Portugal from May 1974 to August 1975; Rear Admiral Vítor Crespo who was high commissioner in Mozambique during the transitional government there in 1974 and 1975, and later Portuguese minister for cooperation (in succession to Almeida Santos) in the fifth and sixth provisional governments in 1975 and 1976; and Brigadier Pedro Pezarat Correia who led the Armed Forces Movement in Angola during the transition and later served on the Portuguese Council of the Revolution. All were extremely accommodating, frank in their expression of views and forbearing in the face of my far from elegant Portuguese.

These meetings took place in the course of a series of visits to Portugal in 1994 and 1995 which was made possible by a research grant from the British Academy and by generous leave from my former institution, the University of Sunderland. Among the many debts incurred in these trips one of the more significant was to Dr Natércia Coimbra, archivist at the 25 April Documentation Centre of the University of Coimbra, who was of enormous help both in Coimbra and in subsequent correspondence. Staff at the Portuguese national library and at the newspaper library of the Lisbon

municipality were also unfailingly helpful. Beyond these conventional and formal sources, a multitude of influences have come to bear on the book from conversations and disputations held under a variety of circumstances in Mozambique, Portugal and here in Britain over the past twenty-odd years.

Finally, the book would never have been completed without the (almost) limitless good humour of my wife Betsy and daughter Catriona and their toleration of absences abroad and mounting irrationality of behaviour at home.

Norrie MacQueen
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List of Abbreviations

AC	Civic Association (Associação Cívica) [São Tomé & Príncipe]
ANP	Popular National Action (Acção Nacional Popular) [Portugal and the colonies]
CDS	Social Democratic Centre (Centro Democrático Social) [Portugal]
CND	National Decolonization Commission (Comissão Nacional de Descolonização)
CONCP	Conference of Nationalist Organizations of the Portuguese Colonies (Conferência das Organizações Nacionalistas das Colónias Portuguesas)
Copcon	Continental Operational Command (Comando Operacional do Continente) [Portugal]
Coremo	Revolutionary Committee of Mozambique (Comité Revolucionária de Moçambique)
CUF	Manufacturing Combine Co. (Companhia União Fabril)
DGS	Directorate-General of Security (Direcção-Geral de Segurança)
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
FAPLA	Popular Forces for the Liberation of Angola (Forças Armadas Populares de Libertação de Angola)
FARN	Broad Front of National Resistance (Frente Ampla de Resistência Nacional) [Cabo Verde]
FICO	('I stay') Front for Western Continuity (Frente para a Continuação Ocidental) [Mozambique]
FLEC	Front for the Liberation of the Cabinda Enclave (Frente de Libertação do Enclave de Cabinda)
FLING	Front for the Liberation and Independence of Guiné (Frente de Libertação e Independência da Guiné)
FNLA	Angolan National Liberation Front (Frente Nacional para a Libertação de Angola)
FPL	Free Popular Front (Frente Popular Livre) [São Tomé & Príncipe]

FRA	Angolan Resistance Front (Frente de Resistência Angolana)
FRAIN	African Front for National Independence (Frente Africana de Independência Nacional)
Frecomo	Mozambique Common Front (Frente Comum de Moçambique)
Frelimo	Mozambique Liberation Front (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique)
FUR	Angolan United Front (Frente Unida Angolana)
GE	Special (Operations) Groups (Grupos Especiais)
GEP	Special Paratroop Groups (Grupos Especiais Paraquedistas)
GRAE	Revolutionary Government of Angola in Exile (Governo Revolucionário de Angola no Exílio)
Gumo	Mozambique United Group (Grupo Unido de Moçambique)
JSN	Junta of National Salvation (Junta de Salvação Nacional)
MAC	Anti-Colonialist Movement (Movimento Anti-Colonialista)
Manu	Makonde National Union [Mozambique]
MDG	Guiné Democratic Movement (Movimento Democrático da Guiné)
MFA	Armed Forces Movement (Movimento das Forças Armadas)
MLG	Liberation Movement of Guiné (Movimento de Libertação da Guiné)
MLSTP	Movement for the Liberation of São Tomé & Príncipe (Movimento para a Libertação de São Tomé e Príncipe)
MNR	National Resistance Movement (Movimento Nacional de Resistência) [Mozambique]
MPD	Movement for Democracy (Movimento para Democracia) [Cabo Verde]
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola)
MPP	Movement for Peace (Movimento para a Paz) [Guiné]
MUD	United Democratic Movement (Movimento Unido Democrático) [Portugal]
OAU	Organization of African Unity
PAICV	African Party for the Independence of Cabo Verde (Partido Africano para a Independência de Cabo Verde)
PAIGC	African Party for the Independence of Guiné and Cabo Verde (Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde)

PCA	Angolan Communist Party (Partido Comunista Angolano)
PCD	Democratic Convergence Party (Partido de Convergência Democrática) [São Tomé & Príncipe]
PCDA	Angolan Christian Democratic Party (Partido Cristão Democrático Angolano)
PCN	National Coalition Party (Partido Coligação Nacional) [Mozambique]
PCP	Portuguese Communist Party (Partido Comunista Português)
PIDE	International and State Defence Police (Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado)
PPD	Popular Democratic Party (Partido Popular Democrática) – see PSD [Portugal]
PS	Socialist Party (Partido Socialista) [Portugal]
PSD	Social Democratic Party (Partido Social Democrática) – renamed from PPD [Portugal]
PSP	Public Security Police (Polícia de Segurança Pública)
Renamo	Mozambican National Resistance (Resistência Nacional Moçambicana)
SADF	South African Defence Force
SWAPO	South West Africa Peoples Organization
UDCV	Democratic Union of Cabo Verde (União Democrática de Cabo Verde)
Udenamo	National Democratic Union of Mozambique (União Democrática Nacional de Moçambique)
Unami	National African Union of Independent Mozambique (União Nacional Africana de Moçambique Independente)
Unipomo	Union for Peace among the Peoples of Mozambique (União para a Paz do Povo de Moçambique)
UN	National Union (União Nacional) [Portugal and Colonies]
UNAVEM	United Nations Angola Verification Mission
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola)
UNOMOZ	United Nations Operation in Mozambique
UPA	Union of the Peoples of Angola (União dos Povos de Angola)
UPICV	People's Union of the Cabo Verde Islands (União do Povo das Ilhas de Cabo Verde)
UPNA	Union of the Peoples of Northern Angola (União dos Povos do Norte de Angola)

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Portugal and the 'Scramble'

Two related assumptions have frequently been made about the position of Portugal and its African territories from the time of the European imperial 'scramble'. Both are significant in the perspectives they have imposed on the nature of Portugal's collapse in Africa. Both are essentially mistaken. The first is that Portugal's fragmentary presence in Africa was haplessly and helplessly buffeted by the intervention of the major European actors in the 1870s and 1880s and survived, barely, by good luck and the indulgence of others rather than by any political skill on the part of Lisbon. The second is that, having survived the partition of Africa in this way, Portugal maintained its empire as an anachronism, untouched by the broader political and economic objectives and methods pursued by 'modern' imperial powers like Britain, Germany and France. In this view, the wilful disregard of Portugal for the realities of the international system and the way it developed in the twentieth century ended inevitably with bitter and protracted colonial wars. In short, these wars were fought against not only the nationalists of Portuguese Africa but against history itself.[1]

The foundations of Portugal's 'third empire' in the late nineteenth century were certainly weak. Its origins lay in the role of coastal possessions in supporting the previous empires: the 'first' in east Asia in the sixteenth century, and the 'second' based on Brazil in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The original function of the African territories had been as supply points on the sea routes to Asia. This role had been performed by the Atlantic archipelagos of Cabo Verde and São Tomé & Príncipe, by the mainland ports of

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Bissau and Luanda and by Ilha de Moçambique, off the northern coast of what was to become the mainland territory of Mozambique. With the decline of Portugal's east Asian empire – which by the nineteenth century consisted only of the enclaves of Goa and Damião in India, part of the island of Timor within the Dutch East Indies archipelago and the port of Macão in southern China – the African mainland and its interior became more significant. Now Portugal's African presence was put to the service of the second empire. West Africa, particularly Angola and the Congo hinterland, provided slaves for the plantations of Brazil while São Tomé & Príncipe and Cabo Verde served as entrepôts in the trade.

With the independence of Brazil in 1822, however, and the increasing international pressure against the slave trade, Portugal's presence in Africa lacked any obvious purpose. Effective administration was maintained only in the Atlantic archipelagos. In Guiné the Portuguese presence was scant in the extreme and in Angola it extended little beyond the ports of Luanda and Lobito. In Mozambique, apart from the virtually autonomous *prazos* (agricultural estates developed from the seventeenth century along the Zambezi basin) Lisbon's authority was exercised only on Ilha de Moçambique, at a few points on the Indian Ocean coastline and in isolated riverine strongholds. In 1877, on the eve of partition, the governor-general of Angola, Almeida e Albuquerque, had acknowledged that 'it is sadly necessary to confess that our empire in the interior is imaginary'.[2] Such administration and commerce as Portugal's limited holdings did enjoy was supervised for the most part not by metropolitan colonialists but by a heterogeneous Creole population which was 'Portuguese' only to the degree that it had emerged from earlier imperial undertakings. In Cabo Verde and São Tomé & Príncipe the population as a whole was Creole. In Angola Creoles developed and maintained the slave trade. In Mozambique the Creole elite was involved in trade with India and eventually succeeded in taking control of the Zambezi *prazos*. Generally speaking, metropolitan merchant-adventurers, even in the mid-nineteenth century, continued to view the remnants of the second, South American, empire rather than Africa as their natural area of operations and accordingly devoted their energies and resources to Brazil. As the European partition began, therefore, the concept of 'Portuguese Africa' was questionable in terms both of territory and population.

Yet this unpromising position at the starting blocks of the 'new imperialism', far from bringing Portuguese Africa to the verge of