

PORTUGUESE MIGRATION TO WESTERN EUROPE: REASONS, EVOLUTION AND IMPLICATIONS

Candidate: Bertucci Francesco

If one were to think of Portuguese migration throughout history, the first thought would probably go to the early voyages across the Atlantic in the mid XVth century, the sparsely constructed trading outposts along the African coastline, or rather to the king that started the Portuguese colonial history, *Dom Henrique O Navegador*. While Portugal, along with Spain, made possible the discovery of a new continent, the country itself didn't experience *de facto* a boom in emigration towards its colonies; the only exception being Brazil, the richest and largest of Portuguese colonies, considered to be the sole that allowed long-term settlement of colonists – even though Portuguese demographic did not yet allow a massive emigration.

Portuguese mass emigration began in the mid-years of the XIXth century, although its premises started at the beginning of the century; in a span of 30 years Portugal (not dissimilar to Spain) suffered heavily from the outcomes of the French revolution: not only by the spread of “anti-colonial” thought (that is, the idea that former Portuguese and Spanish colonies in America should be given the right of auto-determination), but the practical invasion of the country during the Peninsular Campaign had taken a heavy toll on Portuguese finances and material resources. Moreover, from 1828 to 1834 Portugal was caught in a civil war between Absolutists and Constitutionalists. It should not come as a surprise thus that after the loss of Brazil and various political and economic crises, Portugal lost, between 1886 and 1974, an estimated 4 million people to emigration, in proportion more than any West European country – except Ireland. Most strikingly, of those 4 million, around 1.4 emigrated in a narrow time space of just 15 years (that is, from 1959 to 1974). To understand how emigration became such an important part of Portuguese history it's paramount to analyse the regime that ruled Portugal for more than 40 years, the *Estado Novo*. Only by thorough research on Salazar's and Caetano's governments can we understand Portuguese emigration – and mobility – throughout the years, how it changed, not only in composition but also in destination, and how ultimately overlapped with the most significant moments in Portuguese History.

The most characteristic features to analyse about the Portuguese regime in connection to mass emigration were its relationship with the armed forces, its economy and its foreign policy. To begin with, the Portuguese army in the XIX century was not alien to politics: after the liberal revolution in Portugal, a large number of prime ministers were from the army; this politicization continued until 1910, year in which the army helped to depose the king and establish the first Portuguese republic. The republic was politically unstable (with 45 different governments in a span of 16 years) and soon alienated large parts of the army, by purging members sympathetic to the monarchist cause and by creating the GNR (*Guardia Nacional Republicana*, essentially a branch of the army directly controlled by the government). In the years soon after the establishment of the republic there were some cases of military revolts and attempted coups, a sign that the uneasy relationship between the civilian government and the armed forces was beginning to worsen. Portugal also participated actively in the First World War: some skirmishes along the Südwestafrika border in Angola and the persistent guerrilla in Deutsch-Ostafrika's Mozambican border showed how the Portuguese army, lagging in equipment and tactics, could not engage actively in any conflict. This marked an important point in the history of Portuguese armed forces, mostly because from these little engagements the army began to see itself more as a tool for keeping public order at home rather than waging war in other countries. Finally, it should be noted how a division in the French theatre was

from Portugal (in retaliation to German provocation at the Angolan borders) and how, after suffering tremendous losses in one of the last German offensives in 1918, many of its former soldiers, wounded or crippled, decide to settle into France after the conflict, forming thus a first nucleus of Portuguese emigrants in Western Europe. Portugal received little for its participation in the war, its economy experienced hyperinflation and the republic lost its credibility: the armed forces, fed up with the incompetence of republican governments, ended the first republic in 1926 with a Coup. After a few years of relatively ineffective military rule, António de Oliveira Salazar, an Economics professor, was made minister of finances, marking the beginning of his political career. Salazar, adamant on the idea of balanced budget, restabilized Portuguese economy, and after the Wall Street Crash, introduced corporatist elements in the new constitution in the mould of Fascist Italy, establishing formally in 1933 the *Estado Novo*. Despite being highly critical of western democracy, especially English parliamentarism, Portugal still held up to the alliance of 1373 with England, and by 1943 increased its logistical support to the Allies against the Axis leasing the strategic islands of the Azores. This benevolent neutrality, as well as its Atlantic importance and fervent anti-communism, made Portugal not only one of the beneficiaries of the Marshall Plan but also one of the founding members of NATO. This is one of the most salient moments in Portuguese history, especially from the civilian-military relations perspective during the *Estado Novo*, as many young cadres, mostly young officers, were sent as *attachés* in various western capitals, making them sympathetic of democracy and liberalism, essentially creating a “NATO generation” which sought to distance itself from the authoritarian and monolithic regime. Of course, Salazar and the old guard in the armed forces watched distrustfully this turn of event and soon tried to distance Portugal from NATO, but the foundations of the regime’s end were already laid in what Olivas and Osuna called a *Revolução Serena* (Quiet Revolution) in the armed forces.

Soon after the end of the Second World War Portuguese economy, after a moderate boom thanks to the increasing prices of raw materials, started to slow down once again, due to its large reserve of unskilled labour that was unable to find work in the cities nor in the countryside. According to Article 31 of the 1933 Constitution, the state had three main objectives: populating the national territories, protecting emigrants, and disciplining emigration. The *Estado Novo* tried to attain three key goals by restricting labour movement (a maximum of thirty thousand legal departures a year), in order to meet the country’s own labour needs, to satisfy its interests in Africa, and to benefit from emigrant remittances with a supervised export of labour. In 1947, after a temporary total ban on emigration, a special government agency was created to regulate and supervise emigration, the *Junta da Emigração* – implementing a quota system that defined the maximum number of departures by region and occupation, after taking into account regional labour needs and the structure of the active population. In order to revitalize the economy Salazar also began to adopt a friendlier approach to the West, in accordance to the large number of technocrats who began to work for the regime. Portugal was shifting from being “Proudly Alone” into acknowledging both its Atlantic and European identity; it’s only with this shift in foreign policy that we can better understand the restructuration, in 1951, of the Portuguese empire: at the beginning of the process of Decolonization Portugal formally ended its colonial rule by giving to Angola, Mozambique and Guinea the status of Ultramarine provinces. Not only that, the regime also tried to make internal use of the concept of *Lusotropicalismo* – until then shunned by the regime because it advocated miscegenation with the African natives. Of course, this did not change the hierarchical structure that endured until that point between the colonies and metropolitan Portugal, but from the 50’s onward the regime tried to increasingly encourage migration to its overseas territories (who were left mostly underdeveloped), by beginning to draw more and more ambitious plans for the development of those areas (concentrated mostly in the capitals of Angola and Mozambique). In the end Portuguese migration to its colonies was only a tiny fraction of

the total, sign that the regime never really managed to encourage a massive colonial migration, but still the numbers are not unimportant: it is estimated that around 800.000 to 1.000.000 *Retornados* came to mainland Portugal after the loss of the overseas provinces. During the first two economic development plans (1958-68) Portugal also became a founding member of the EFTA, thus being able to sustain years of intense economic growth.

This was also the decade in which Portuguese migration shifted dramatically from South America to Europe: with the establishment of the Military Dictatorship in Brazil many Portuguese started to look to Europe in search for a better life; the pattern of migration in these years was not dissimilar to previous flows: migrants were almost exclusively unskilled males (though the number employed in the secondary sector grew towards the 70's) who left their families at home to sustain them with remittances. Massive emigration thus began legally – and illegally – in those countries that needed unskilled labour the most: France, West Germany, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, were the first countries to sign bilateral accords with Portugal to receive workers. Portuguese migrants did not only have to face miserable living conditions, as symbolized by the *Bairros de lata* (dilapidated neighbourhood) constructed mainly in France – the most famous one in Champigny, where in 1967 circa 14.000 Portuguese lived – but there were also cases in which the PIDE (Portuguese secret police, that had supervision on the migratory flows) frequently supervised migrants or tried to bribe some of them to gain information about possible left-wing militants who expatriated. This also made the living conditions of Portuguese migrants worse, due to the fact that they were forbidden to join any unions in fear of having their families at home harassed by the secret police. These flows helped Portugal to alleviate the demographic pressure on the economy. Migration also meant that Portuguese foreign workers, at first taken from underdeveloped provinces such as Cape Verde, were unable to join the revolutionaries after the outbreak of the Independence wars in most Portuguese colonies from 1961 onwards. The *Guerra do Ultramar* will be a thorn in the side of the *Estado Novo* for thirteen years, and ultimately the reason for its end. While still a large taboo, in order to better analyse Portuguese migration during the *Estado Novo* it's paramount to reflect on those soldiers (or those people deemed fit to be conscripted) who evaded the war. During those 13 years of Ultramarine War, it is certain that Portugal suffered 8.369 desertions only in the regular army (notwithstanding numerous failed attempts, nor counting the numbers for the Navy or Airforce). Along with deserters Portuguese armed forces faced high numbers of defaulters (those who failed to appear for the military medical inspection), draft evaders (those who had been deemed fit but failed to report to the conscription district) and compelled (those who, under the age of 45, failed to present themselves for reinspection). These forms of non-compliance also can be divided in three main paths for emigration: on one hand we have the deserters and draft dodgers from Metropolitan Portugal who escaped to Europe to live there as emigrants; the second and more restricted group was made by Portuguese troops who escaped from Africa, surrendering voluntarily to the independentists movements or fleeing into neighbouring African countries. Most of them ended up in Algeria, that from 1962 onwards, under the leadership of Ben Bella, hosted the Portuguese National Liberation Front. Lastly the third group was made by deserters from local recruitment who formed part of the Portuguese armed forces, while some of them returned to their villages, others joined the ranks of the liberation movements instead. It is not surprising thus that in the years from 1961 and 1974 illegal emigration soared, reaching 70% of the total in the last three years of the war; this was in part thanks to figures known as *Passadores*, smugglers who escorted Portuguese families out of the country. However, it's very difficult to separate legal with illegal migration in Portugal, as many defaulters were ordinary people who would have emigrated to other European countries in absence of war.

Ultimately, the *Estado Novo* did not end due to military defeats: in 1973, the year prior the end of the regime, the situation was stable, due to the fact that the Portuguese controlled all the major cities in the colonies and did not suffer too many casualties (even though morale was all time low due to the seemingly infinite protraction of the war, with military expenses equal to roughly 40% of the budget expenditures). The *Estado Novo* ended by the same actor that gave it life: the armed forces. Marcelo Caetano, Salazar's successor from 1968, tried to reform the regime without essentially renouncing its authoritarian nature, but his unwavering support for the colonial wars, already very unpopular within Portuguese society, marked his downfall in 1973. Caetano essentially proposed a law in which every officer who completed a brief training program and had served in the overseas territories' defensive campaigns could be commissioned at the same rank as military academy graduates. The armed forces, irritated by this law, began plotting. On 25th of April 1974 the MFA (*Movimento das Forças Armadas*) completely occupied Lisbon, forcing Caetano and the Government officials to flee. While this meant the end the regime, emigration flows partially continued: the end of the Ultramarine war, while sparking the *Retornados* question who did not enjoyed the status of refugees, also prompted the flight of many people who for various reasons weren't eager to the change of the regime. Some feared living in a left-wing dictatorship, others, mostly PIDE agents or former regime collaborators, feared persecutions. There were also ordinary people who just felt compelled to reach their families abroad, as in the 70's various European countries adopted laws to facilitate migrant's family reconnection. Although these post-coup flows were much smaller in size compared with those during the Ultramarine war, they are not to be ignored. At the end, it was only in the mid '80s that Portuguese migration began to shrink, thanks to the country entrance in the EC in 1986, and Portugal finally became an immigration country as well.