

AUTHOR'S FINAL DRAFT

**The Missing Pictures: Southern European Catholic Missionaries,
Humanitarian Photography and the Fall of the Portuguese Empire in
Mozambique**

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This article contributes to two sets of growing historiographies: one on the role of religious actors in the fall of European Empires; and another one on humanitarian photography. The article's focus is on the visual campaign organised by a network of Southern European catholic missionaries to denounce colonial massacres during the war of independence in Mozambique. Whereas the written reports made by the missionaries have been the object of lengthy research, the paper reveals the very specific use the missionaries made of humanitarian photography in a context characterized by the Estado Novo's fierce censorship. Despite the missionaries' atrocity pictures failed to persuade the Church hierarchy to publicly condemn the Portuguese crimes, the paper demonstrates how the leap of their images into the public domain had a major rhetorical and symbolic role both in facilitating the fall of the Portuguese Empire and in legitimising FRELIMO's postcolonial authority. Moreover, given the concurrence of the denunciation campaign with the fall of fascism in Portugal and the global boom of the Human Rights movement in the 1970s, the paper also explores the particularities of the entangled history of decolonisation, humanitarianism and human rights when seen through the eyes of Southern European actors.

Keywords: Humanitarian Photography, Wiriya massacre, Mozambique, Catholic Missionaries, Atrocity Pictures

Introduction

This article reconstructs the story of a network of Southern European Catholic missionaries and the visual campaign they organised to denounce colonial violence in Mozambique. The

network consisted of an informal group of Spanish, Portuguese and Italian nuns and priests, and their images were part of a broader information campaign. The denunciation initiative was initially crafted with the help of other Mozambican informants, and later internationalised with the support of Catholic and secular human rights NGOs, liberation support groups and United Nations bodies, as well as other British and Dutch Catholic missionaries.

In July 1973, the collective effort of this transnational network of humanitarians gained unprecedented momentum when the British newspaper *The Times* published the missionaries' written reports of the killing of more than 400 civilians by Portuguese troops in Tete, north-west Mozambique.¹ Since dubbed the Wiriyamu Massacre, the story of this human carnage, which occurred in the villages of Chawola, Judau and Wiriyamu, was extensively reported in the world's major newspapers and TV broadcasts, to enormous impact. More crucially, it ultimately played an important role in mortally wounding both the para-fascist Estado Novo regime in Portugal and its dreams of colonial perpetuation overseas.

This is suggested by Mustafah Dhada, the main historian of the Wiriyamu massacre,² who acknowledges the influence that the release of this story had on the demoralising momentum that led Portuguese military officers to stage the famous Carnation Revolution only a couple of months after the missionaries' reports had made the headlines.³ As we know, this military coup in Lisbon, often described as peaceful and bloodless, put an end to more than 40 years of dictatorship in April 1974. What is less often remembered is that by then, the very same Portuguese soldiers who were rallying in Lisbon had been fighting, killing, and dying for more than 12 years in a three-front colonial war.⁴ This armed conflict had started in Angola in 1961, and quickly expanded into Guinea Bissau (in 1963) and Mozambique (in 1964), where the Wiriyamu Massacre took place.

After the Carnation Revolution, and following the course set out by the United Nations General Assembly,⁵ the new revolutionary government of Portugal unilaterally negotiated the

independence and transfer of power to the main liberation movements in each colony. In the case of Mozambique, this was the Liberation Front of Mozambique (FRELIMO), a highly authoritarian and militarised party which had also been responsible for the assassination of numerous African civilians and guerrilla fighters during and after the armed struggle.⁶

However, at the time of publication, the story of the massacres carried out by the Portuguese and related by the network of Southern European missionaries contributed to the presentation of Portugal as the only perpetrator of violence in Mozambique, and FRELIMO as the true defender of the people. Today, 50 years after publication of the story, FRELIMO remains the party in uninterrupted power, and the story of Wiriyamu is still one of the crucial passages of what has been labelled the ‘liberation script.’⁷ This is a highly partial version of the armed conflict, aimed at rendering FRELIMO’s authority unquestionable in postcolonial Mozambique.⁸

Based on extensive archival research, this paper investigates the major rhetorical and symbolic role the humanitarian information campaign led by the network of Mediterranean religious actors played both in facilitating the fall of the Portuguese Empire and in legitimising FRELIMO’s postcolonial authority. Moreover, given the concurrence of the denunciation campaign with the fall of fascism in Portugal and the global boom of the Human Rights movement in the 1970s,⁹ the paper also explores the particularities of the entangled history of decolonisation, humanitarianism and human rights when seen through the eyes of Southern European actors. Although research into these entanglements has already begun in case studies relating to the earlier French and British decolonisation processes,¹⁰ they have been largely overlooked with regard to the fall of the Portuguese Empire.¹¹

At a more concrete level of analysis, the paper explores the role played by the missionaries’ visual strategies in the war of images fought between FRELIMO and Estado Novo in parallel to their war of bullets. The prize for this visual contest was international and

national recognition as the only legitimate representatives of the people of Mozambique in the post-1945 world order.¹² It was therefore played out before a world audience which, after the horrors of Nazi Germany, strongly linked political legitimacy with an authority that treated its people *humanely*.

While Dhada carried out extensive research into documents written by the missionaries for his historical account of the Portuguese massacres, as yet no academic work has focused on the role played by photography in the missionaries' denunciation campaign. Who the missionaries involved were, and why, how and with what results they used photography to document Portuguese crimes in Mozambique, are therefore the main questions addressed in this paper.

In my view, the blindness shown towards these missionaries as the authors of some of the very few atrocity pictures taken during Mozambique's war of decolonisation is closely linked to the fact that - as scholars of late Portuguese colonialism know well - the most famous atrocity reported by the missionaries, that of Wiriyamu, has gone down in history as the massacre that was never pictured.¹³

What we did not know, and what this paper will demonstrate, is that the missionaries did attempt to go to Wiriyamu to photograph the African victims of colonial crimes, just as they had been systematically doing since the middle of 1971. However, Mozambique's Catholic hierarchy banned them from taking such pictures, seriously fearing the impact they could have on the future of Estado Novo's presence overseas, and also of Catholicism.¹⁴

Therefore, instead of perpetuating the idea of Wiriyamu as the most noticeable "missing picture" of the war of Mozambican decolonisation, this paper explores the visual politics of its absence,¹⁵ as well as the story of many other pictures that the missionaries actually took but have not yet come to light. These photographs were planned but forbidden, taken but confiscated, circulated but discarded, and archived but unnoticed. And yet, despite their

constant failures and disappearances, in the eyes of the missionaries such images were crucial humanitarian artefacts; indispensable tools for putting an end to the horrors of war and colonialism.

Moreover, by reconstructing the story of these missionaries and their photographs, I aim to shed new light on two recurring “missing pictures” in the related literature. These research gaps are, firstly, the logics and peculiarities of humanitarian photography when deployed in a context of strong censorship and control, represented in this story by Estado Novo, the Catholic Church hierarchy, FRELIMO’s rule in Mozambique and Franco’s Spain. In fact, existing literature on the use of photography to support humanitarian agendas has mostly studied the visual politics of extremely iconic photographs. These have been especially successful in mobilising solidarity and material aid to humanitarian crises through mass circulation in a free press.¹⁶ This was not the case with the images taken by the missionaries in Mozambique. Their aesthetics, goals and means of dissemination were radically different from those described in the existing literature.

The second recurrent “missing picture” relates to the study of anti-colonial humanitarian activism arising at the very heart of the imperial structure. Sent to the colonies as spiritual leaders and material assistants to the human development of the “uncivilised,” Christian missionaries have frequently been portrayed as benevolent actors of Empire. Their humanitarian work has, moreover, been described as helping to reform or humanise colonial rule.¹⁷ Again, this was not the case with this network of missionaries in Mozambique. Similarly to solidarity groups supporting liberation movements,¹⁸ they increasingly envisioned the end of the Empire as their ultimate humanitarian goal.

To cover these various issues, the paper is structured in five parts. Firstly, it traces the Southern European missionaries’ various roles in Mozambique, from agents of the Portuguese “humanitarian arm” to anti-colonial activists. It then addresses the factors that made some of

them consider the organisation of an information campaign as a crucial humanitarian tool. Thirdly, it covers the missionaries' incorporation of photography in the information campaign. This was initially organised for internal use, to force the Catholic hierarchy to publicly condemn colonial violence. To conclude, the last two sections of the paper reconstruct the leap of the missionaries' information campaign into the public domain, and the crucial impact the disclosure of their stories and images of the atrocities ultimately had on the rhetorical battle for decolonisation.

Missionaries in Central Mozambique: From Agents of Lisbon to Supporters of FRELIMO's Struggle

In 1940, the signature of a Concordat made the Catholic Church party to Estado Novo's Lusotropicalism project. This promised the peaceful construction of a pluri-continental and multiracial Portuguese nation, within the borders of what remained of the Empire.¹⁹ At its heart was the "Portugalisation" of native populations. Alongside the conversation about Catholicism, a pillar of Estado Novo's national identity, it also consisted of teaching indigenous people the Portuguese language and traditions. And for this task, foreign Catholic missionaries were required. There were simply not enough Portuguese-born priests and nuns to meet the "Portugalisation needs" of the more populous colonies.²⁰

Seizing the opportunity to expand its influence into traditionally Muslim East Africa, the Vatican agreed to recruit qualified foreign missionaries to support the Estado Novo ideology. They were to spend several months learning the language and culture in metropolitan Portugal before being sent overseas. All the missionaries who took part in the denunciation campaign in Mozambique were posted to the dioceses of Beira and Tete, in central Mozambique.²¹

Among the most active members of this network were Italian and Dutch priests from the White Fathers congregation; Italian and Portuguese Comboni missionaries; Italian and Spanish nuns, mostly from Hijas del Calvario and Filhas de São Paulo; Italian Consolata Fathers; and Spanish Burgos fathers. And, as one of these Spanish priests later pointed out, their shared Southern European and Mediterranean origins were not arbitrary. On the one hand, their Latin-speaking origins facilitated their introduction to the Portuguese language and culture. On the other, Portugal and Spain, as well as Italy (I would add), shared a predominantly Catholic national identity and an enduring fascist past and present.²² They were therefore seen by Estado Novo as natural allies.

In fact, most of the Southern European Catholic missionaries, as well as the majority of the Portuguese-born bishops appointed by Estado Novo to fill the vacancies in the Catholic hierarchy in Mozambique, always remained loyal to Lisbon. They saw “Portugalisation” as a way of furthering the progress and development of the native peoples, as well as their integration into a “civilised” society.²³ Indeed, mastering the Portuguese language and culture was a prerequisite for Estado Novo’s recognition of Africans as “assimilados”, or assimilated citizens.²⁴ It was seen as their gateway to achieving better standards of life, including access to higher education and jobs.

In the case of a different group of Southern European missionaries, their animosity to Estado Novo and its policies predated their missionary work. They were anti-fascists who had opposed their own authoritarian regimes at home. For them, missionary life presented a unique opportunity not only to escape their own oppressive lives, but also to help build what they understood to be better worlds elsewhere.²⁵ These should be based on what they assumed were the truly universal values enshrined in the Bible for the benefit of humanity. And, in their still-romanticised vision of Africa as seen from European capitals, the untouched rural and remote

areas of the Portuguese colonies looked like suitable settings for the construction of these Catholic utopias.

Once in the Portuguese colonies, their firsthand experience at the missions brought these more idealistic missionaries back to reality. Very soon, some started to see the “Portugalisation” they were supposed to assist as an instrument of cultural oppression.²⁶ It sought the “acculturation” of the native people away from their rich African heritage at a time when the exaltation of this African ethos was central to the rising proto-nationalist movement in Mozambique. By 1960, when the winds of change at last seemed to have put Africa on a sure path to independence, only 3% per cent of Africans had been recognised by Estado Novo as “assimilados.” Missionaries witnessed how Portuguese settlers systematically discriminated against, exploited and humiliated the other 97% of the population.²⁷

It was, in fact, their first-hand witnessing of colonial oppression in Mozambique that led some priests and nuns to redefine their missionary work in anti-colonial terms. As they identified colonialism as the cause of the human suffering they were witnessing, decolonisation soon became a humanitarian goal in itself. The acquisition of political independence was increasingly seen as the necessary prerequisite to the spiritual and material development that “Portugalisation” could not guarantee.²⁸

Two events that occurred in parallel in 1962 consolidated this anti-colonial shift. One was the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican (Vatican II), which closed in 1965 with the adoption of a less overtly religious and more humanitarian definition of the role of the missions. Specifically, from saving souls to primarily defending the furtherance of human dignity and the development of people in a free and just society.²⁹

The second event was, of course, the birth of FRELIMO. It was founded in exile in neighbouring Tanzania, as a conglomeration of three other nationalist parties previously banned and persecuted by Estado Novo in Mozambique. In 1964, Salazar’s unambiguous

refusal to negotiate independence was followed by FRELIMO's launch of its armed struggle from southern Tanzania into the northern regions of Mozambique.³⁰ Soon afterwards, it declared it had taken over the administration of civilian populations in the so-called liberated zones.³¹

Fearing that humanitarian relief could be used to add to the violence, many Western NGOs and governments initially remained reluctant to channel aid to liberation movements.³² This fear was not shared by some anti-colonial missionaries in central Mozambique. They not only saw FRELIMO as the legitimate representative of the Mozambican people; they also understood FRELIMO's resort to violence as a legitimate act of defence after centuries of colonial exploitation.³³ In this way, this group of Southern European missionaries began describing the struggle for liberation in similar terms to what has been called at different points of history a "humanitarian [military] intervention".³⁴ It aimed to restore peace and safeguard the human dignity of the Mozambican people, so badly treated under colonial rule.

The missionaries' ideas were endorsed by several United Nations resolutions in the 1960s and 1970s.³⁵ These recognised the right of liberation movements to fight for independence. They also called on international organisations and the UN's own agencies to channel humanitarian aid directly to the African people through liberation movements that had been recognised by the Organization of African Unity (OAU). FRELIMO was one of these.

In line with the UN's initiatives, the missionaries started to defend FRELIMO's struggle on the basis of Mozambique's right to independence. Moreover, missionaries frequently used Catholic principles and vocabulary in their private correspondence and internal reports. In these, Jesus Christ's example showed the Catholic Church's obligation to stand firmly on the side of the oppressed.³⁶ This argument was central to Liberation Theology, a Christian doctrine that had recently emerged in Latin America, where the Spanish Burgos fathers were also present.

In their eyes, the Marxist-Leninist vocabulary used by FRELIMO to describe its struggle closely resonated with the socio-economic and anti-capitalist analyses frequently used in Liberation Theology. This helped to further consolidate their support. ‘For me, (...) [FRELIMO’s] revolution and the Evangel pursued the same goals’, a Burgos father who saw the liberation movement as a legitimate humanitarian partner told me in a recent interview.³⁷ Indeed, unlike the humanitarian work of other Christian missionaries during the Cold War, the work of these missionaries in Mozambique was never about combatting communism.³⁸ On the contrary, many of them considered assisting a Marxist-Leninist movement to achieve state power as the best way to ensure universal fulfilment of the Human Rights agenda.

Shaking the Consciousness of the Church Hierarchy: The Missionaries Turn to an Information Campaign

The missionaries’ early support of FRELIMO’s cause mainly consisted of providing their students with some basic information about the kind of political fight they believed the movement was leading in their names. Based on FRELIMO’s propaganda materials, they generally used Catholic parables to explain the relevance of the struggle during lessons and church services.³⁹

The most mobilised of the priests went further in their support. They provided food, shelter and clothing to FRELIMO recruiters, who were often former students of the missions.⁴⁰ Some of them even travelled the dioceses, offering spiritual and material assistance to FRELIMO’s clandestine cells. Finally, some priests, and especially nuns, who already worked within the colonial healthcare system, secretly began using this privileged position to provide medical assistance to guerrilla fighters as they began steadily to penetrate central Mozambique, since 1968.⁴¹

The infiltration of FRELIMO guerrillas in the region came hand in hand with growing harassment from Portugal. This fell heavily on the shoulders of the Catholic missions. Portuguese troops and secret police captured, imprisoned, tortured and even murdered their parishioners, accusing them of having supported FRELIMO.⁴² Many African catechists, seminarists and teachers suffered the same fate.⁴³ Even missionaries were interrogated, some of their visas were not renewed, and they were violently attacked by settlers.⁴⁴ When the missionaries turned to the Portuguese bishops for protection, they usually found more sympathy for the security forces and colonists than for them and their black community.

It was in this context that a kind of internal lobby activism arose. It initially sought to mobilise the Church hierarchy's protection of the missionaries, their African peers, and their parishioners. The missionaries and the nuns met informally and wrote private letters and reports to the bishops of Tete and Beira, to the Episcopal Conference, and even to the Vatican. They asked for the renewal of the hierarchy in line with Vatican II.⁴⁵ They exerted pressure to end the Concordat.⁴⁶ Finally, they started denouncing the abuses committed by Portuguese forces against African civilian populations.

Deploying similar humanitarian and human rights vocabulary previously used by other famous Christian priests, for example to denounce apartheid violence in South Africa,⁴⁷ missionaries in Mozambique described Portuguese colonial violence as crimes against humanity and human rights abuses, committed also against innocent civilians, 'women' and 'children.'⁴⁸ And, in view of the Vatican's alliance with Estado Novo, they asked the Episcopal Conference to intervene and publicly condemn the crimes.

The Catholic hierarchy's lack of response to their pleas was the final trigger for the missionaries to begin more systematically collecting data which reported colonial violence occurring in the vicinity of their missions. This became a new moral imperative based on the Catholic concept of the "prophetic truth," the evangelical principle defending the constant

pursuit of truth as the only possible path to liberate man.⁴⁹ In their view, the ‘silence of the church’ about Portuguese ‘censorship’, ‘persecution’, ‘torture’ and ‘genocide’ was making all of them complicit with the ‘violation of fundamental human rights in Mozambique.’⁵⁰ To free themselves and the church from this guilt, and the Mozambicans from the suffering experienced under colonial rule, the missionaries turned to the creation of a denunciation campaign.⁵¹

While other protestant and evangelical missionaries working in different imperial contexts had made their denunciations of colonial abuse public,⁵² the Catholic missionaries in Mozambique initially sought only to inform the hierarchy with their reports. This was linked to the impossibility of escaping the strict Portuguese censorship regime.⁵³ They also wished to respect the highly centralised structure of the Catholic Church, which strongly condemned individual action, as it was believed this could damage the unity of the community.⁵⁴

For the most pro-FRELIMO missionaries, putting internal pressure on the hierarchy to publicly condemn the colonial crimes was also in line with their political goals. ⁵⁵ It could expose the weakening of the Catholic Church’s diplomatic support of Estado Novo, raising the prospect of prompt independence negotiations with the liberation movement. Yet most of the missionaries and some of the bishops who gradually joined the denunciation campaign repeatedly defended the neutrality of their actions. While they considered the hierarchy’s blindness to the Portuguese crimes to be a clear demonstration of its political backing of Estado Novo, they did not see their information campaign as political activism; it was its antidote.⁵⁶

Missionaries in Mozambique believed that opening the eyes of the hierarchy to colonial abuses by means of factual data was the only resource they had to bring about the Catholic Church’s neutrality in Portuguese Africa, and thus to regain its ability to mediate between the parties and promote lasting peace.⁵⁷

A Failed Mission? Missionaries' First Attempts to Bear Visual Witness to Colonial Violence

The first missionary who used photography to report a case of Portuguese violence to the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Mozambique was Father Luís Afonso da Costa. He was a 30-year-old Portuguese Comboni missionary who had recently arrived at the colony. In April 1971, the wife of Xavier Tomás, an African catechist imprisoned in the Portuguese jail in Marara, asked the missionaries for assistance. Costa threatened the police with a demonstration in defence of human rights if they did not liberate Tomás.⁵⁸ Once freed, Costa brought him to the missionary hospital of Marara, where he photographed the catechist 'from all possible angles to highlight the injuries left by the tortures inflicted on him [during his detention]: on his hands by "palmatória" [a wooden stick] and on his shoulders by flagellation with a hippo skin whip known as "cavalo marinho".'⁵⁹

The description of the bad or good conditions in which prisoners of war are held and treated is a very typical humanitarian trope. It is normally used to "de-humanise" or "humanise" the parties involved in the conflict in public and internal communications.⁶⁰ On this occasion, Costa's main goal was to inform the bishops of the pain suffered by African members of the Catholic missions. A close friend of Costa since his arrival, the Italian Father Cesare Bertulli, head of the White Fathers in Mozambique, suggested the Portuguese priests gather further written information on Tomás' case before sending the photographs to the hierarchy. Costa handed his images and two transcripts of interviews he conducted with Tomás and Tomás' wife to the president of the Episcopal Conference in Lourenço Marques (today Maputo) in mid-1971.⁶¹

Despite the hierarchy's lack of response to Costa's file, his pioneering use of photography was soon copied by other missionaries who were already very active in

documenting and denouncing colonial violence in central Mozambique. This was the case with the Burgos fathers. ‘Given the impossibility of being free in a declared and public denunciation’, the Spanish congregation had been the first to ‘opt for clandestine methods (...) to denounce and inform our ordinary bodies of any case that harms the dignity of the human person.’⁶²

In April 1971, FRELIMO guerrillas murdered a traditional leader sympathetic to the Portuguese near one of the Burgos fathers’ missions in Mukumbura. His assassination was followed by the murder by Portuguese troops of tens of civilians suspected of collaboration with FRELIMO. Women, men, and children of all ages were shot, burned alive in their huts, and fatally tortured.⁶³ To document these killings, the Burgos fathers started to experiment with a new *modus operandi*, which was later adopted by all the missionaries involved in the denunciation campaign. It very much reminds us of the procedure used by criminologists and what has been called ‘forensic humanitarianism.’⁶⁴

Guided in secrecy by their parishioners, missionaries travelled on their own motorcycles and bikes to the places of murder. They investigated the scene, gathered evidence and interviewed the victims’ relatives and eyewitnesses.⁶⁵ After identifying the victims and their cause of death, the missionaries helped their parishioners to give them a “humane” burial: wrapping bodies, digging graves, and leading short masses when the relatives requested it.

Back at the missions, the missionaries compiled very detailed written reports. These included accurate descriptions of the most impactful stories of human suffering they had heard. Moreover, these reports also included exhaustive lists of victims, including their names, ages, names of their relatives, and the date, place and cause of death.⁶⁶ The Portuguese authorities, who were officially responsible for the administration of these territories and peoples, had never made any such systematic attempt to document the deaths of African civilians.⁶⁷

In June 1971, members of all the Catholic orders in Beira and Tete met to discuss the ongoing denunciation campaign. They also exchanged further methods of reporting colonial violence. For example, Costa circulated his photos of Tomás. He also received a copy of the Burgos fathers' pioneering list of victims in Mukumbura. At the end of this meeting, the missionaries chose Costa to tour the diocesan territory.⁶⁸ He was to circulate these and other materials among members of the Church, seeking to broaden their support for the campaign. Furthermore, Costa was to inform the missionaries of the new deadline they had set the Episcopal Conference through private correspondence. If the bishops did not publicly condemn the atrocities, the missionaries would make them public themselves by August 1971.⁶⁹

Authorised by the bishop of Tete to travel the diocese, a land at that time strictly controlled by Portuguese censorship, Costa took the opportunity to continue interviewing and reporting on other Church members and African civilians who were victims of Portuguese harassment.⁷⁰ Moreover, with the help of unidentified African collaborators, he fashioned an imagery that aimed to illustrate to the bishops the role the missionaries believed the Church should have in Mozambique: that of standing at the victims' side, rather than hiding behind the culprits of the crimes.

We see Costa embodying this role in a photograph in which he appears, together with the sister of a victim, staring at the blood on the floor where her brother had been killed [Fig. 1].⁷¹ And we also see it in the photo of an Italian Comboni missionary, an unidentified nun and three unidentified African informants, looking hopelessly at what they described as the dismembered remains of a guerrilla fighter [Fig. 2].⁷² After the meeting in June 1971, many other missionaries started following Costa's example and taking this kind of photographs. In them, the focus was usually on the missionaries, rather than the victims.

In contrast, images putting the focus on the human remains seen by the missionaries are few and, in a sense, ineffective. These were taken as part of investigative activities at

murder scenes. For example, the Burgos fathers and some sisters took their first atrocity pictures in July 1971. They described these as depicting the scorched remains of women and children burnt alive in the village of Singa [Fig. 3].⁷³ In March 1972, an Italian Comboni missionary photographed the remains of Antonio Neti, the 10-year-old fatal victim of a stray bullet fired by a Portuguese soldier. When Neti's relatives found his body, they rolled it in a floor mat, as people used to do with victims of leprosy. They placed the wrapped body high in a tree, so that the child's spirit could take revenge [Fig. 4].⁷⁴

The surviving photographs reporting the atrocities of Singa and the murder of Neti are examples that explain why the pictures taken by the missionaries in Mozambique would never make it to the world's headlines, unlike more iconic humanitarian photographs in the same period, such as the extensively researched images of the starving children of Biafra.⁷⁵ Apart from a large bone, there is nothing identifiable from the poorly framed, over-exposed photographs of a pile of burnt detritus in Singa that can effectively bear visual witness to the story of human carnage that was described far more successfully in the missionaries' written reports. The same goes for the series of photographs reporting Neti's death. The distant image of a cylindrical object in the branches of a tree, where not a single part of the child's body can be seen, failed to convey the story of violence, injustice, and impunity that was more effectively communicated in the missionaries' texts.⁷⁶

Two different types of censorship hindered missionaries in Mozambique from more explicit portrayals of Portuguese atrocities. First, missionaries imposed unprecedented restrictions on themselves when choosing how to depict the suffering of people who were not "others",⁷⁷ but members of their own communities. In fact, the very distant and non-explicit approach taken by missionaries in Mozambique when photographing the dead bodies of their

parishioners seems to speak more of the kind of respect with which they believed the desecrated remains should be presented to the hierarchy, than of the human suffering reported.

Secondly, the fierce harassment and intense censorship of missionaries by the Portuguese authorities dramatically shaped their framing of the atrocities. Indeed, unlike other more staged and premeditated iconic photographs such as those taken by embedded professional photojournalists in war settings, the images taken clandestinely by this network of missionaries and amateur war photographers were the results of a much more hurried action. They probably had just a few minutes of preparation and one or two shots, before they had to hide their cameras and continue digging graves.

Similarly, the printing process also affected the framing. Missionaries depended on the service provided by Portuguese settlers and Goan “assimilados”, who owned the only photography shops. To avoid being denounced to the Portuguese police, they needed to take ambiguous pictures that could be presented as something else. As when Father Costa presented to the police the pictures he had taken to document the destruction of a rural village by the Portuguese troops as depictions of a “pagan sacrifice” of animals.⁷⁸ He had been denounced by a photo shop owner and later interrogated.

Despite the missionaries’ strenuous efforts to evade Portuguese censorship, most of the pictures they took to inform the hierarchy of the violence ended up captured by the Portuguese police. The same happened to a roll of film sent by the Burgos fathers to the Episcopal Conference, reporting the massacres in Mukumbura.⁷⁹ The Portuguese authorities seized it and two of the five Spanish priests and nuns who had signed the accompanying reports were imprisoned. Their story demonstrates how the authors of pictures and texts documenting colonial violence in Mozambique could rapidly become the victims of Portuguese persecution. To protect their African peers and informants, missionaries usually avoided mentioning their names on the back of the photographs and reports.

First Signs of Success: The Leap of the Missionaries' Information Campaign into the Public Realm

In view of the hierarchy's indifference to pressure from the missionaries, some of them decided to take a step further and bring their images and reports into the public domain. Father Costa took Tomás' photographs to a FRELIMO guerrilla. One of them was published in FRELIMO's magazine, the *Mozambique Revolution*, in September 1971.⁸⁰ Additionally, the expulsion of the White Fathers from Mozambique allowed Bertulli to become the missionaries' public spokesman in Rome.⁸¹ By bringing to Italy reports and photographs taken secretly in central Mozambique, the nuns also played a crucial part. Sometimes they hid the documents in their clothes and luggage while travelling.⁸² Other times, they gave them to the chaplains of international ships.⁸³

In the Italian capital, Bertulli circulated the missionaries' photographs and documents among a very extended network of collaborators who published the materials in their own magazines and forwarded them to the press. Indeed, Bertulli's personal address book demonstrates the extremely central role he played in extending the reach of the missionaries' information campaign once it arrived in the public realm. It included contact details for the managers of European human rights NGOs such as Amnesty International; international religious organisations like the World Council of Churches; local and international groups supporting liberation movements, like the British Committee for Freedom in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea (CFMAG), as well as local and international press.⁸⁴ Furthermore, Bertulli regularly exchanged information with FRELIMO through its representative in Italy, Óscar Monteiro. In an unpublished image, we see them swapping photographs, books, and pamphlets at the *Paesi Nuovi* bookshop in Rome.⁸⁵

In the 1970s, this bookshop became an important meeting place for the many Christian democrats and other Catholic activists supporting the struggle for liberation in the Italian capital. Some of these had attended the first Conference of Solidarity with the Peoples of the Portuguese Colonies, which took place in Rome in June 1970.⁸⁶ Marcella Glisenti, another frequent visitor to the bookshop, had arranged the meeting between three liberation movement leaders and Pope Paul VI at the conclusion of that conference.⁸⁷ Although the symbolic importance of the meeting was rapidly downplayed following complaints by the Portuguese, the encounter let many missionaries in Mozambique think that there was a friendly ear to their pleas at the Vatican City.

Subsequently, Bertulli and his Dutch superior, Théo van Asten, started to make regular visits to the archbishop Agostino Casaroli, a high and influential authority in the Vatican. They frequently brought photographs and reports by the missionaries. On one occasion, Bertulli gave him an article published by a Burgos father in a Spanish religious magazine.⁸⁸ Unusually, it had been illustrated with two much more impactful images than those taken by the missionaries, very explicitly showing a group of four white soldiers beheading a black man. The photos had allegedly been taken by unidentified Portuguese soldiers as a kind of photographic trophy at the start of the war in Mozambique.⁸⁹ Published in the German journal *Der Spiegel*, these images acquired worldwide publicity in mid-1970.⁹⁰

According to Casaroli, these far more explicit pictures of violence, borrowed by international journalists to illustrate the missionaries' texts, initially shocked the Pope. However, his worries were assuaged when he was told by Portuguese diplomats that they had not been taken by the missionaries. The Pope did not want 'the break of diplomatic relationships [with Estado Novo]', Casaroli explained to Bertulli.⁹¹ Indeed, the Pope never authorised the missionaries to report on the massacres they were witnessing without the permission of the pro-Portuguese bishops in Mozambique.⁹² Moreover, none of the materials

Bertulli and van Asten brought to the Vatican ever resulted in the Pope's public condemnation of the Portuguese crimes.

The missionaries' information campaign acquired greater success when Father Costa joined Bertulli in Rome. He had been interrogated and threatened by the Portuguese authorities several times before fleeing the colony in 1972.⁹³ His arrival in Europe was viewed with antipathy by the religious and secular authorities, who had questioned the veracity of the missionaries' reports and photographs on the basis of Bertulli's and the Burgos fathers' foreign origins and "pro-terrorist" activism.

Financed by *Justitia et Pax*, a pontifical committee set up to foster justice, peace and human rights, Bertulli and Costa organised a European tour of press conferences in which Costa's nationality was presented as proof of credibility to his firsthand testimony of colonial atrocities.⁹⁴ Photographs and reports were more widely circulated.

In November, Costa was delighted to receive an invitation by the president of the United Nations Human Rights Commission to a hearing in Geneva.⁹⁵ Since the beginning of their information campaign, they had sought to frame the Portuguese violence as a punishable human rights abuse. The UN invitation legitimised this argument.

Moreover, the leap of the missionaries' information campaign into the public domain ended up successfully impacting the ongoing war of images between FRELIMO and Estado Novo. To persuade local and international audiences of their legitimacy, both parties in the struggle had been mobilising typical tropes from humanitarian imagery. For example, in the case of FRELIMO, guerrilla fighters were typically presented as the main providers of agricultural training, healthcare, education and social progress for Mozambicans in the liberated zones.⁹⁶ In the case of Estado Novo, information about the war in Mozambique was mostly downplayed or silenced.⁹⁷ Instead, it focused on the construction of the famous Cabora

Bassa dam as proof of its commitment to the economic and industrial development of the country and its people.⁹⁸

Unlike other wars of decolonisation - such as Algeria or Angola, where images of atrocities committed by liberation movements and colonial powers were massively circulated by both parties in their efforts to delegitimise their rivals in the eyes of the world⁹⁹ - the image of the “African civilian victim” had been the major “missing picture” of the war in Mozambique. Public circulation of the missionaries’ atrocity images and reports pushed the visual competition between FRELIMO and Estado Novo into a new phase, in which they raced to incorporate the missionaries’ new trope of the “African civilian victim” to the benefit of their own visual propaganda strategies.

This is what happened when FRELIMO started to publish some very carefully selected images of civilians injured by the Portuguese, shortly after its Department of Information and Propaganda (DIP) had published Costa’s picture of Tomás.¹⁰⁰ To avoid contradiction with FRELIMO’s own visual strategies, in which the focus was always on the movement as the victorious defender of the Mozambican people, the DIP only allowed its photographers to show human suffering inflicted by the Portuguese on individual victims. These were usually photographed while receiving medical treatment from FRELIMO doctors and nurses.¹⁰¹

On the other side, soon after Costa circulated his images and list of victims at the Human Rights Commission in Geneva, Portuguese diplomats distributed another list of victims at the UN General Assembly. Presented in very similar style to the missionary’s, it reported on African people allegedly suffering amputations due to FRELIMO mines. The Portuguese diplomats also sent photos of these victims of FRELIMO violence receiving medical assistance at the Portuguese Hospital in Tete, to UN delegations.¹⁰²

Finally, the missionaries’ new trope of the “African civilian victim” also led Portuguese soldiers to display similar images of civilians injured by FRELIMO mines in pamphlets

circulated among local populations.¹⁰³ Interestingly, the Portuguese-made pamphlets likely took inspiration from a very iconic poster depicting African forced labourers similarly injured by the Belgian authorities in Congo at the beginning of the 20th century.¹⁰⁴ While at that time, the Protestant missionaries who took those notorious pictures in Congo sought to reform colonial rule,¹⁰⁵ it was now the colonial power that depicted injured African civilians, and its aim was two-fold.

Firstly, it blamed FRELIMO for the human suffering in Mozambique. Secondly, Estado Novo sought to present the Portuguese settlers and troops as the true caregivers to the people. Ultimately, the missionaries' release of the story of the brutal Wiriyamu Massacre dramatically proved this "benevolent image" of Estado Novo in Africa to be false. This also facilitated FRELIMO's path to state power.

The Missing Pictures of Wiriyamu and the End of the War

On 16 December 1972, Portuguese troops flew to the villages of Chawola, Wiriyamu and Judau. A few days earlier, FRELIMO had attacked a Portuguese military position considered strategic for the construction of the Cabora Bassa dam. Accused of supporting FRELIMO's infiltration of the region, the entire populations of the three villages were the target. One of the many African soldiers who were serving Portugal received orders to 'clean them up.'¹⁰⁶ In the following hours, Portuguese troops brutally killed over four hundred civilians they found there.

The few survivors of the massacre informed Father Domingos Gonalo Ferro, an African priest working with the Burgos fathers, and a former student at the mission.¹⁰⁷ Subsequently, the same network of Southern European Catholic missionaries that had been reporting Portuguese atrocities since mid-1971 joined their African peers in compiling, writing and signing two lists. One reported on the victims of Chawola,¹⁰⁸ and the other the victims of Wiriyamu and Judau.¹⁰⁹

The missionaries' off-site interviewing process with the survivors has been comprehensively reconstructed in Dhada's works.¹¹⁰ What the missionary archives show us are the attempts they also made to visit Wiriyamu, the largest of the destroyed villages, to collect further on-site data and bear visual witness to the human carnage. This fact is important, as it demonstrates how, by this point, the missionaries were convinced of something that researchers later confirmed: the centrality of photographic evidence to our view of what constitutes atrocity.¹¹¹

Before travelling to the site of the massacre, the missionaries requested permission from the bishops. In June that year, an African Presbyterian pastor had been hanged at the Portuguese prison of Machava. They feared any travel undertaken without the approval of the hierarchy could have fatal consequences for the two Spanish missionaries and many other African members of the Church still in Mozambican jails. Moreover, for one of the Burgos fathers, the hierarchy's consent was seen as a form of protection from FRELIMO's revenge. He feared guerrillas would mistake the missionaries for perpetrators when they travelled to Wiriyamu.

To reassure his peers, Father José Antonio Sangalo, one of the Burgos fathers lobbying for the hierarchy's approval, made a secret agreement with Domingos Araújo, the FRELIMO commander in Tete. The latter approved the missionaries' visit and agreed to provide an armed escort. The hierarchy's eventual disapproval ended up dissuading the missionaries from attending this secret meeting with FRELIMO. While the bishops appreciated the missionaries' gesture of "charity" in their intention to assist the victims with burials, they also feared they would use the opportunity to secretly take 'photographs and then carry [ing] out a propaganda campaign abroad against the Portuguese and even against the Hierarchy of the Church.'¹¹²

As a result, the missionaries lost their only chance to picture the victims of Wiriyamu. However, they continued their efforts to publicise the story of the massacre, the largest number of human killings ever documented in Mozambique.

Following the same procedure used since Bertulli's arrival in Rome, it seems to have been an Italian nun who secretly sent him a copy of the list of victims of Chawola, which he received in May 1973.¹¹³ Four months after the missionaries had completed their lists, its arrival demonstrates the enormous difficulties routinely encountered by such documents and photographs in evading Portuguese censorship.

The 53 victims reported in the list of Chawola - the only document that successfully reached Bertulli - were far fewer than the hundreds named in the list of Wiriyamu victims. Bertulli's extensive circulation of the Chawola list among his contacts, and its publication in the Italian press, failed to achieve any noteworthy response.

The Burgos fathers were luckier; they succeeded in bringing the second list, reporting the victims of Wiriyamu, to Madrid. They carried the list hidden in their clothes when they were expelled from Mozambique a few months after the massacres. Seeking to avoid further criticism by international human rights organisations,¹¹⁴ the Franco regime allowed the Burgos fathers some freedom of speech. However, on this occasion the Spanish missionaries decided not to use their limited-circulation religious magazine to leak this highly important document. Instead, they wanted to wait until contact had been established with a prestigious international newspaper; this would guarantee an impact that none of their previous reports had yet achieved.¹¹⁵

In June 1973, the British Catholic missionary Father Adrian Hastings arrived in Madrid. The following month, the Conservative government of the United Kingdom was to celebrate the sixth centenary of the Anglo-Portuguese diplomatic alliance in London. Marcelo Caetano, Portugal's new Prime Minister, was due to attend.¹¹⁶ Father Hastings had been invited to deliver a speech on the Catholic Church's role in Portuguese Africa during the celebrations. Interested in their missionary work, Hastings contacted the Burgos fathers. The Spanish

missionaries showed him the Wiriyamu document. Impressed by its very detailed information, Hastings took an English translation of the document to Louis Heren, editor of *The Times*.¹¹⁷

As the missionaries had predicted, publication by a respected international newspaper of the story of the massacre of hundreds of civilians in a single day finally managed to direct the world's attention to Mozambique's 'forgotten war'.¹¹⁸ The concurrence of the story with the celebration of the UK's diplomatic alliance with Portugal multiplied the impact of the missionaries' atrocity reports, including among the domestic audiences of other Western countries allied to Portugal.¹¹⁹ Told with enormous rigour, the story of Wiriyamu made these audiences see the fatal consequences that their governments' ongoing support of Estado Novo could have for civilian populations living under Portuguese rule.

Moreover, the recent withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam also contributed to the impact of the Wiriyamu story in the summer of 1973. As Óscar Monteiro, FRELIMO's representative in Rome, explained to me, it made the end of the Vietnam War foreseeable. This opened a gap in the international flow of news, allowing the world's press to turn its attention to other armed conflicts in the Third World, until then very much eclipsed by the highly media-covered war in Southeast Asia.¹²⁰

Additionally, the massively circulated photographs of the American massacre of My Lai in Vietnam had given the world audience a very clear picture of what a rural village destroyed by a NATO military force looked like. Even though the missionaries never pictured the victims of Wiriyamu, they used the atrocity pictures of Vietnam as a visual reference point when trying to explain to world audiences what had also occurred in Mozambique.¹²¹

According to Monteiro's timeframe, the 'happy moment' during which the Wiriyamu Massacre caught the world's attention would not last long: only until September 1973. Pinochet's coup d'état in Chile shifted the eyes of the world from Southern Africa to South America.¹²² But by the time that window of opportunity for Mozambique closed, the

missionaries' story of Wiriyamu had irreversibly affected the ongoing rhetorical struggle for decolonisation.

First, the publication of the Wiriyamu story greatly contributed to a shift in the connotations of the "Portuguese soldier" trope among metropolitan and colonial audiences. Many people had initially backed the intervention in what were called the Portuguese Overseas Provinces because of the extremely impactful images used in Estado Novo propaganda documenting the atrocities committed by anti-colonialists against white settlers and African peasants during a much-publicised uprising that occurred in Angola in March 1961.¹²³

While in the early 1960s the intervention of Portuguese troops was seen as a humanitarian gesture, the missionaries' reports successfully proved this Portuguese-crafted imagery false. After Wiriyamu, Portuguese soldiers were unequivocally the murderers and not the saviours of the African people. This idea was also convincingly conveyed by three trophy images of white soldiers beheading black men in Mozambique, which by then had been leaked by Portuguese deserters to the press. International journalists chose these very shocking images to illustrate the news from Wiriyamu.¹²⁴ The less impactful pictures previously taken by the missionaries in Mozambique were discarded.

Secondly, the international press also illustrated the Wiriyamu story with photographs of the many Catholic missionaries who organised press conferences and gave interviews attesting to the credibility of the reports.¹²⁵ Alongside them, Antonio and Podista, two survivors of the Chawola massacre, were also frequently photographed, and their pictures used to illustrate the news. Their faces and personal stories became famous after British and Portuguese journalists visited Mozambique to bear witness to the massacres.¹²⁶

The portraits of all these eyewitnesses to colonial violence in Mozambique played a crucial role in the rhetorical battle for decolonisation. In them we find the tropes of the "Catholic missionary" and the "African peasant", both very typical of Portuguese Lusotropical

imagery,¹²⁷ now testifying against Estado Novo's very ability to build the peaceful, multiracial and pluri-continental nation it had promised to deliver.

Thirdly, the publication of the Wiriyamu story contributed greatly to increasing international support for FRELIMO. Instead of using their more typical anti-capitalist and ideological interpretations to explain the legitimacy of its struggle, European movements in solidarity with FRELIMO embraced the missionaries' humanitarian information campaign. Their impressive descriptions of the killings in Mozambique were completed with further historical evidence of colonial abuses.¹²⁸ As happened after the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa, the missionaries' descriptions of human slaughter in Mozambique also helped FRELIMO's international support to 'transcend the profane world of ideological conflict and political manoeuvre.'¹²⁹ After Wiriyamu, support for FRELIMO's success in Mozambique became a new moral imperative, geared to saving the lives of Africans living under Portuguese rule.

The fatal blow to Estado Novo's international image caused by the disclosure of the Wiriyamu story became clear when Portugal's more important alliances started to show signs of weakening. Just a week after its publication in *The Times*, the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonisation (C-24) called for a Commission of Inquiry to further investigate the massacres reported by the missionaries.¹³⁰ Soon more photographs, lists and eyewitness accounts of colonial crimes in Mozambique would reach the public eye. In an attempt to prevent further accusations of complicity, the Pope gave a speech publicly defending the veracity of the missionaries' reports.¹³¹ Even Franco's Spanish diplomats began reconsidering their support for Portugal at the UN.¹³²

Portugal's final attempt to present FRELIMO as the perpetrator of violence in Mozambique came with the preparation of a very effective pamphlet which reported on FRELIMO's murder of African civilians in the village of Nhacambo. Assisted by the country's

Red Cross, Portuguese journalists travelled to the site of the massacre, where they took very sensationalist and explicit images of the human remains. These unpublished pictures are very reminiscent of those previously taken by Portuguese photographers covering the massacres of anti-colonial actors in Angola in 1961.¹³³

The pamphlet was ready for distribution just as the Portuguese army, exhausted and demoralised, took Lisbon. Their coup started Portugal's transition to democracy; it also facilitated the start of independence negotiations between the new revolutionary government and the national liberation movements that had led the armed conflict in Portuguese Africa. FRELIMO took the lead in Mozambique's transitional government in September 1974.

Conclusions

This paper demonstrates how a humanitarian information campaign denouncing colonial violence against African civilians in Mozambique played a major role in fostering the decolonisation of Portuguese Africa. Spearheading this initiative was a transnational network of Southern European Catholic missionaries. Their first-hand experience of fascism at home and Estado Novo's persecution in the Portuguese colony made them strongly empathetic with the experience of most of the black populations living under Portuguese rule.

Rising anti-colonial sentiment led the missionaries to engage with FRELIMO's struggle. They provided material relief and medical assistance to guerrilla fighters, while secretly embarking on a well-coordinated information campaign. The aim of their denunciation was to provide the Catholic hierarchy with factual data about the crimes committed by Portuguese troops in the vicinity of their missions. Pro-FRELIMO missionaries believed this could put enough pressure on the Vatican to persuade it to force its diplomatic ally, Estado Novo, to end the war and promptly negotiate independence.

Whereas the written reports made by the missionaries have been the object of lengthy research, this paper reveals the very specific use the missionaries made of humanitarian photography during their information campaign. The paper has shown how, to escape Portuguese censorship, missionaries in Mozambique had to take a much more ambiguous approach when depicting the pain of others than the very explicit vocabulary used by professional journalists covering other ongoing armed conflicts in Africa, such as the Biafra war. Moreover, the paper demonstrates how the missionaries' role as religious leaders led them to choose a much more respectful and distant visual vocabulary to depict the suffering of their parishioners. In this way, their image-making in Mozambique advanced future ethical discussion of rejecting sensationalist representations of human suffering in developing countries.¹³⁴

The missionaries' more restrained images failed to persuade the Church hierarchy to publicly condemn the Portuguese crimes. Nonetheless, the leap of the missionaries' information campaign into the public domain had a major impact on the ongoing war of images between FRELIMO and Estado Novo. First, the missionaries' newly-coined trope of the "African civilian victim" forced both parties to also picture the human suffering that the war was provoking in African populations. This imagery had, until then, been neglected by both sides. Secondly, the disclosure of the highly impactful story of the Wiriyamu massacres helped to present Portugal as the only perpetrator of human suffering in Mozambique and therefore facilitated FRELIMO's rhetorical victory in the country.

Apart from demonstrating the important role played by the missionaries' pictures and accounts of the atrocities in this rhetorical struggle for decolonisation in Mozambique, the paper also gives evidence of the many peculiarities illuminated by this case study when exploring the entangled history of humanitarianism, human rights, and decolonisation through the combined lenses of Southern European actors and visual history.

Among these peculiarities is the missionaries' flexibility to play multiple roles in their humanitarian campaign. They acted simultaneously as colonial relief-givers and clandestine anti-colonial FRELIMO collaborators; as the heroic saviours of African victims of colonial violence, and as victims themselves of Estado Novo persecution; as the secret informants of human rights abuses, and as iconic eyewitnesses in the public realm. The flexibility with which the missionaries played all these roles also challenged more hierarchical and traditional relationships between aid donors and recipients. The missionaries here worked not only *on behalf* of aid recipients,¹³⁵ but *with* them. Missionaries and their African peers and informants worked together to report Portuguese crimes in Mozambique.

Another important peculiarity highlighted by this case study is the enormous fluidity with which Southern European missionaries in Mozambique mixed methods and practices that had been described in the literature as exclusively characteristic of humanitarian actions or human rights campaigning.¹³⁶ They mixed the traditional vocabulary of Catholic charity with the new emancipatory lexicon of human rights with complete naturalness. They led an internal lobby strategy within the core of the Catholic Church, at the same time as coordinating a public human rights information campaign. Moreover, their material assistance to African people in need never impeded them from also devoting a large part of their humanitarian efforts to carefully documenting the crimes committed by the Portuguese troops.

To understand this particular mixture of humanitarian and human rights strategies, the paper has pointed to the relevance of the later chronology of Portuguese decolonisation. In fact, the concurrence of the war in Portuguese Africa with what has been described as the Human Rights revolution in the 1970s might well explain the abundance of human rights vocabulary and strategies in the missionaries' campaign. Its ultimate goal was, however, a humanitarian one: to end human suffering.

Interestingly, the anti-colonial missionaries in Mozambique did not understand the human rights utopia of the 1970s in the way described in recent literature.¹³⁷ Their action was not born of frustration with the failed postcolonial state, which was not yet even in place in Portuguese Africa. Instead, their utopia was their firm belief that the construction of a strong nation-state, ruled by FRELIMO's Marxist-Leninist leadership, could guarantee fulfilment of the universal human rights agenda also in Mozambique.

Finally, the paper further demonstrates the relevance of religious principles and vocabulary, such as “prophetic truth” or “liberation of the oppressed”, in humanitarian engagement with decolonisation movements. The centrality of the redemption of guilt, in this case linked to the Catholic Church's complicity in Portuguese colonial crimes, has also been identified as a crucial trigger of the missionaries' humanitarian activism.

Today, as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Portuguese transition to democracy and the start of independence negotiations in Portuguese Africa, this paper also gives evidence about the key role played by Southern European actors and cities (such as Rome and Madrid) in these intertwined historical dynamics. In this regard, it opens the door to further exploration of these Southern European entanglements, including in relation to Spain's transition to democracy and the Spanish exit from West Sahara, which occurred only a couple of months after the Carnation Revolution in Lisbon.¹³⁸

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