



CRIMES COMMITTED IN TIMES OF WAR, RECALLED IN POST-MEMORY

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Abstract

Although war is a propitious context for different kinds of crime, criminology has underestimated its analysis. However, in recent years there has been a reversal of this trend, with a growing interest of criminologists in the phenomenon of war. This paper intends to make a modest contribution to broaden the debate regarding the criminological understanding of war through an exploratory analysis about how crimes, that have been committed in relation to the context of the Portuguese colonial war in Guinea-Bissau and the Algeria independence war from French rule, are remembered by the generations that did not live the conflicts directly, but who summon them in their narratives.

INTRODUCTION

Although war is a propitious context for different types of crime, criminology has underestimated its analysis. Many authors have already considered surprising the fact that criminology neglects the problematic of war.¹ However, in recent years there has been a reversal of this trend, with a growing interest of criminologists in the phenomenon of war.² In Portugal, for instance, a country that carried out a war for thirteen years (1961-1974), in three different African territories and involving more than one million Portuguese combatants, crimes that may have been committed in this context has not yet been the object of interest on the part of criminology.

This paper explores the relationship between crimes, resulting from colonial wars, and the ways they are recalled in post-colonial societies. The objective is to present an exploratory analysis about how crimes that have been committed in relation to the context of the Portuguese co-

¹ In order to know approaches that have questioned why criminology has generated so few studies see, for instance, Ruggiero (2018), Carrabine (2016), McGarry & Walklate (2017), Jamieson (1998).

² Through several investigations that seek to place criminology, more clearly, in relation to crimes committed in the context of war, such as Kramer & Jr (2005), Yacoubian (2000) and Walklate, Sandra & McGarry, Ross (2017).

lonial war in Guinea-Bissau (1963-1974) and the Algeria independence war from French rule (1954-1962) are remembered by the generations that did not live the conflicts directly, but who summon them in their narratives. This paper draws on exploratory research which forms part of a larger project entitled MEMOIRS – Children of Empires and European Postmemories³ that studies contemporary Europe by analyzing the impact of colonial memories on the generation that came after the decolonization of Africa and the independence of the former colonies, held by Belgium, France and Portugal, of RDC, Algeria, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Vert and São Tomé and Príncipe. My article seeks, only, to understand how the narratives of the children and grandchildren of those involved in and affected by the colonial wars evoke crimes committed during the conflicts and to understand how those crimes work in the operations of remembrance of the wars. This exploratory analysis intends to make a modest contribution to broaden the debate regarding the criminological understanding of war in the scope of Narrative Criminology which understands narrative as an inescapable neglected field for understanding crime and justice⁴. This will be an approach in conjunction with memory studies that, since the end of the Second World War, have occupied a privileged place among the many approaches devoted to the analysis of crimes committed in, and after, war. This article is founded in the problematic of the post-memory, that is, according to Marianne Hirsch “the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right” (2008). This paper focuses on the post-memory of crimes allegedly committed in the contexts of the wars of independence in Algeria (1954-1962), Mozambique (1964-1974), Angola (1961-1974) and Guinea-Bissau (1963-1974).

In empirical terms, the work emerges from data collected in interviews with the children of subjects who lived, prior to independence, in the territories occupied by the French in Algeria and the Portuguese in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau. The paper analyzes how these children, who now live in France and Portugal, remember colonial crimes in their own narratives. Based on this study, which is still in an exploratory phase, the research more broadly aims to contribute to understanding the mechanisms through which these events are memorialized and how the forms in which they are remembered affect diverse aspects of social life in post-imperial societies.

To this end, this paper is organized into four parts:

- it begins by discussing crimes memorialized by the children of people who lived through the last phases of French colonialism in Algeria and Portuguese colonialism in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau;
- then it presents some data to contextualizes these crimes within the broader of post-memory;
- next it identifies and compares the post-memories of the children of veterans as they relate to the remembering of colonial crimes,

³ MEMOIRS is funded by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (no. 648624), hosted at the Centre for Social Studies (CES), University of Coimbra.

⁴ About narrative criminology see, for example, Presser & Sandberg(eds.) (2015). Sandberg & Ugelvik, (2016) and Presser (2016).

- before ending with an exploratory theoretical reflection on the problematic of post-memory as a framework for understanding the crimes committed in the post-war context.

SOME IMPORTANT HISTORICAL CLARIFICATIONS

To begin with, it is important to note that the majority of crimes the interviewees identified, whether in the Portuguese or the French context, are not crimes committed in the context of war. That is, they are neither war crimes *per se* or other crimes committed during conflict. The crimes that crop up most frequently in the interviews in fact took place after the end of the wars: the imprisonment, torture and execution of local fighters who were recruited into the colonial armies during the wars of independence and who, after those conflicts, continued to live in their homelands.

Before analyzing the narratives about these crimes it is important to clarify an important point: they do not constitute a structural category of the assembled narratives collected in the interviews that were made in the context of the memoirs project, no matter whether the crimes took place during or after the conflict. The narratives I discuss here represent a specific case: the children of the sub-Saharan and Algerian veterans of the Portuguese and French armed forces respectively. Except in these cases, which form the central focus of this paper, the interviewees do not emphasize crimes committed in the context of the wars. When they refer to such crimes, it is in a superficial and general manner. In the Portuguese case, for example, few speak of the well-known massacre of Wiriyamo, committed by the Portuguese forces in Mozambique, or of the massacres committed by the United Peoples of Angola (UPA) in Angola. More often than not interviewees speak of slavery, exploitation, inequality and racism – phenomena related to colonialism as such – rather than about crimes committed during the wars. There are very few cases in which interviewees discuss rape, communal violence, forced displacement or torture committed by the colonial armies or by the armies of independence fighters. The war itself is not an important subject in their narratives. Many testimonies scarcely refer to the war. This is in spite of the fact that all these wars were very long and constituted the last gasp of colonial dominance in Africa, involved more than a million Europeans and Africans, and had disastrous consequences for newly independent states and old colonial metropolises alike.

This immediately raises questions for the problematic of post-memory. Namely, trying to understand absences, and their causes, within the narratives of the generation who did not live through the conflicts, but whose parents experienced them either directly or indirectly.

However, these crimes are a major topic in the narratives of the children of veterans of Algerian heritage. In relation to the Portuguese colonial wars, only the children of veterans of Guinean heritage refer to them, while the children of veterans with Mozambican or Angolan backgrounds do not. As I have already noted, the crimes discussed are those committed in independent Algeria and Guinea against local veterans who had fought for the colonial armies.

In order to help us understand these narratives about those crimes, this second part of the paper presents some general data on the recruitment of local soldiers in the colonial armed forces and about what happened to them after the independence of the territories where they were born.

In the colonial and independence wars of the twentieth century, the colonial armies, for various strategic reasons, integrated soldiers from the territories which were struggling for independence. We can see this, for example, in the cases of the so-called *jaunissement* of the French forces in Indochina between 1946 and 1954, the 'vietnamization' of the US military in Vietnam between 1963 and 1973, and the theory of *same element* used by the British forces in Malaysia. All these cases register the application of one of the basic theories of counter-insurgent warfare: to involve local populations through integrating them into the defence against independence movement, (Coelho, 2003, p. 182; Cann, 2005, p. 123).⁵

In the Portuguese case, and in general terms in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau, the use of local fighters tended to increase as the war went on. Towards the end of the wars, local recruitment constituted around half of the troops in the three territories.⁶ In the Algerian war, it is not known exactly how many men were recruited locally into the French armed forces. This was because their contracts were often verbal so solid data does not exist to allow an accurate calculation. It is estimated, however, that during the war at least two hundred thousand (200,000) men of Algerian origin were recruited into the French army.⁷

With the independence of the former Portuguese African territories in 1974 and of Algeria in 1962, fighters of local origin became the subject of special attention. In their homelands these men were seen by the independence movements as collaborators with the colonial forces and traitors against independence. Therefore, in the treaties which transferred powers to the newly independent states, the former colonial states in a very limited way sought to guarantee the safety of these men after they departed.

Nevertheless, at the end of the wars many of these former fighters – whether in Algeria or Guinea Bissau – were persecuted, tortured and executed. It is worth noting that, for reasons I don't have time to fully explore, the same did not take place in either Mozambique or in Angola. Different contexts of conflict and post-conflict and very distinct⁸ independence processes in these different countries played an important part.

In Angola the demobilization and integration of these old fighters after the war was peaceful. Given the ensuing civil war between UNITA and the MPLA many were immediately incorporated into the armies of the two opposing independence movements. In Mozambique the situation was different. Some former fighters were detained in what were called "re-education camps" where they, and others considered dangerous to the independence project, were subjected to processes of purification, after which they were freed and reintegrated into Mozambican civic life. The civil war in Mozambique, which began in 1977, also may have contributed in the sense that the old fighters were also integrated into the RENAMO and FRELIMO forces. In Guinea Bissau, on the other hand, the demobilization of African soldiers produced significant problems. This was where, after independence, former fighters recruited by the

⁵ That through various strategies such as the involvement of local authorities, psychological warfare, the creation of conflicts between the population etc..

⁶ To know the evolution of the local troop recruitment see in Guinea but also in Mozambique and in Angola see Correia, (2000) and Portugal. Estado-Maior do Exército (1988).

⁷ For more information about this recruitment, consult Stora (2004).

⁸ The demobilization processes of African combatants depended on a combination of factors that varied across the three territories. To know these factors consult (Rodrigues, 2013).

Portuguese suffered most. Many of them fled to Senegal, particularly those who had belonged to the 'African Commandos.' Others were detained and, according to various witnesses, some were executed.⁹

The political strategy used in the negotiations ignored the colonial inheritance embodied in these men when the Portuguese state decided to leave its old African soldiers in their countries of origin after independence. As opposed to the Algerian case, the Portuguese state only brought a few dozens of their African soldiers who fought in the colonial army from Guinea to Portugal. They did so in the face of pressure from the Portuguese Commandos Association which denounced the persecution and shootings of the veterans. But for decades the topic has not been discussed. Only recently did the Portuguese Armed Forces (PAF) even recognise that these men died because of their association with the Portuguese African Commandos: in 2007 they put up two plaques dedicated to the dozens of old soldiers of the PAF who died in independent Guinea. And only in 2009 were their names added to the list of dead servicemen inscribed on the National Monument of Overseas Soldiers. But the Portuguese state, until this day, has not publicly addressed this history.

In the case of Algerian independence, those that suffered after the end of the war were the Harkis – a term that refers to the paramilitaries who fought in colonial Algeria. In the Algerian war the Harkis were a fragile and poorly funded pro-French military grouping. Their number increased greatly in the first part of the war and decreased rapidly as the end of French colonial dominance approached. At the end of the war in 1962, after the Front de Libération Nationale promised to pardon them, it was determined that these Algerian former fighters would stay in Algeria. However, shortly after the ceasefire in March 1962 the Harkis, by then already demobbed, began to be tortured and massacred. Faced with this situation some Harkis were offered the possibility of going to live in France under the auspices of the military.

However, the French policy was in fact to repatriate as few Harkis as possible. Only forty-two thousand and five hundred (42,500) Harkis and their families (a total of around eighty five thousand - 85,000 - people), were authorized to establish themselves in France. This was out of at least two hundred thousand (200,000). And unlike the 'Pieds-noirs' (French citizens born in Algeria) the Harkis were not considered as subjects of repatriation, but as refugees.¹⁰ The great majority of Harkis had to return to ordinary life in Algeria. In France, former Algerian soldiers and their families were placed in military camps before being transferred to assigned places of work. Such measures were taken by the French State to avoid retaliation against their former fighters were, however, insufficient to protect them after the transfer of powers. It is estimated that sixty to seventy thousand (60-70,000) Harkis were executed after the Evian accords. Many

⁹ The persecutions and arrests were intensified especially since March 1975, which is related to political events that happened in Portuguese territory, and many of these men flee to Senegal. For the details of this situation, consult Bernardo (2007) and Dâmaso & Gomes (1996), Antunes (1995, p.699, p.705, p. 870) and Aguiar (1977, p.467- 468).

¹⁰ It is estimated that some 85,000 people have arrived in France between themselves and their families. Upon arrival, considered Algerian citizens in France, they had to apply for French nationality. In 1962, it was already stated in France that more than 10,000 Algerians were killed, but the number of deaths did not reach a consensus, and some even pointed to the possibility that 150,000 people had been executed (Stora, 1998: 200-210; Stora, 2004: 80-82; Charbit, 2006: 48-89; Hamoumou, 2004: 474- 495).

others were detained and incarcerated (Stora, 1998, p. 200-210; Stora, 2004, p. 80-82; Charbit, 2006, p. 48-89; Hamoumou, 2004, p. 474-495).

The torture and execution of the Harkis in Algeria was only recognised by the French State thirty-nine years after the end of the Algerian War when, in 2001, President Jacques Chirac affirmed that “France failed to save its children from savagery”. In 2012 it was the turn of Nicolas Sarkozy to officially recognize the responsibility of the French government for the “abandonment” of the Harkis after the Algerian War. He declared “France should have protected the Harkis from history. It did not. France carries this responsibility in the face of history.” In 2016 François Hollande attributed responsibility for the massacres of the Harkis to France when he said: “the recognition of French responsibility is a symbolic act that takes a step towards soothing the memories – all the memories of the Algerian war – all the wounded memories.” Nowadays, under Emmanuel Macron, the debate continues along other lines: on the 23rd March 2018 the French government initiated a working group on the Harkis charged with proposing measures towards the “preservation of memory” and appropriate reparations for Harkis and their families.

In this way, while the French authorities’ recognition that they had abandoned their former fighters of Algerian origin was long in coming, the acknowledgement has now become more outspoken, and is brought up whenever the Algerian War is discussed. On the other hand, in 2018 the history of the former African fighters of the FAP is still entirely unknown to the majority of the Portuguese public, and the execution of fighters of Guinean origin is only a circumscribed communal memory, shared almost exclusively by former Portuguese veterans and their Guinean counterparts who fought, side-by-side, in the war.

POST-MEMORIES OF CRIMES IN POSTCOLONIAL TIMES

The lament of the Guinean former FAP fighters living in Portugal is precisely to do with an absence of recognition. In this third part of my paper I will begin to delineate the contours of this absence. This section is dedicated to the post-memory of crimes committed against these former fighters in the post-war period. The executions of fighters of Guinean origin are not just remembered by the children of those who died – they dominate their narratives about the war and the colonial era. Beyond this affected group, however, no-one else, of those interviewed on the Portuguese side by the MEMOIRS project, made any reference to these crimes. The way in which these executions are remembered takes particular and distinct forms which differ from the French case. Though they never witnessed the executions, the childrens’ post-memories of their parents’ executions can be detailed, memorializing times and places, the forces and people involved in detentions and executions and the people who interceded to protect their parents. The children of the executed are sure that what happened was an act of vengeance on the part of the independence movements. These are stories heard from grandparents, mothers and neighbours in Guinea and from veterans of their parents’ units in meetings remembering the war. They are family memories circulating in the private sphere; but they are shared, too, in a constrained public sphere, in veterans’ meetings. In this sense they have a communal quality, circumscribed by groups of former fighters and their families.

Yet this post-memory is not made up of pre-ordained certainties that solidify in relation to the death of their parents. There lie many doubts, too: doubts that lead to questions for the Portu-

guese state. They do not directly accuse the state of having abandoned their parents, and nor do they make concrete claims upon it. But they indirectly pose many questions for the state: why did they leave them in Guinea at the end of the war? Why did they not pay war pensions to the mothers and wives of men who were shot for having belonged to the PAF?

More than this, as opposed to what happened in France with the children of the Harkis, their questions are not vocalized in the public sphere. They are, rather, spoken in the private sphere, directed at the particular histories of their own parents.¹¹ Up until today they haven't been able to organize themselves or create an association of the children of these veterans as the Harkis did in France. Thus they have not demanded answers from the Portuguese State.

In Portugal, then, the children of former fighters of Guinean origin raise a set of concerns in relation to the details of their parents' death and to how historical crimes are ignored by the Portuguese State. Yet in their narratives these claims are not self-evident. They constitute a post-memory made, above all, within the bosom of the family, in the private sphere, and also in a limited public sphere of veterans during reunions or ceremonies remembering the war. It is through the questions that these children raise, rather than claims on the State as such, that this post-memory reveals a need for recognition of what happened. It reveals, too, a lingering incapacity to transfer post-memory into the social sphere.

On the other hand, in the French case, the children of the Harkis mobilize politically through organising, and the demands that emerge from their post-memory are much more direct.

They recognize that the State has taken the Harkis who came to France after the War into its charge. And, while they accuse independent Algeria of betraying the promises that were made to the Harkis, they demand too that France recognizes that it abandoned those Harkis left in Algeria. In this way, these claims are not reduced to the particular histories of their parents, as in the Portuguese case; rather, they take on the form of the tragic collective history of all the Harkis. Their post-memory does not raise any kind of doubts. It is very precise about what happened, and very clear about the claims that emerge as a consequence. They describe the torture that was inflicted on veterans and their families in public squares; they describe the executions in the presence of children and wives. They describe the many humiliations and persecutions to which they were subjected. They demand that the history of the Harkis is treated within the history taught in schools. They demand that museums are established in their name. They demand ownership of the land on which stood the now dismantled camps in which the Harkis lived after their repatriation. In this way, in contrast to the Portuguese case, the post-memory of the children of the Harkis demands a place in public memory and demands its inscription in the cultural memory of the Algerian War in France.

Comparing these two cases we can argue that the post-memory of similar crimes mobilize different dimensions of recognition. In France, the memory of crimes committed against the Harkis belongs to the public sphere: not only has it been recognised by the French State but it has been the subject of both academic and political debates, and both scientific and creative work. The recognition demanded is inseparable from a resentment directed at the French authorities; a feeling that their parents in particular, and the Harkis in general, were not treated with the respect that they deserved, and that was owed to them. In a cultural and political con-

¹¹ They try to know what has happened to them, how they died, who killed them, where they were buried, who has attended these executions, who interfered and who tried to protect them.

text conducive to securing recognition, such resentment is at the root of the Harkis' struggles. In Portugal the discourse of African former combatants is above all framed as a demand for equality, in particular equality before the law. Therefore they situate their aspirations in the context of legal relations, arguing that their parents and their families have not had access to the same rights as the Portuguese. In their narratives this elicits a whole range of questions. What is particularly noteworthy is an incessant quest to uncover what actually happened and a sadness and a resentment based in having been deprived of their parents' presence. This leads on to an apprehension that their own identities are incomplete as long as they don't know what happened to their parents, and as long as Portugal refuses to recognise it. But, as opposed to in the French case, the claims to recognition made by the children of executed African fighters did not reach the public sphere, in the sense of an organized struggle sustained by social movements.

What remains to be understood, and that my current research aims to establish, are the reasons why the post-memory of these crimes is held within private and community spheres in post-colonial Portugal.

CONCLUSION

Portugal, as opposed to France, seems to be confronted with a negation of these crimes¹². This negation – a phenomenon that Stanley Cohen (2001) has minutely analysed – could be related to how the post-memory of these crimes struggle to reach the public sphere.

Post-memory, according to Hirsh, “describes the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right” (Hirsch, 2008, p. 1).

The research we are undertaking enables us to pose questions about the conditions that enable the crystallization of the post-memory of these crimes, and how they emerge as different kinds of claims.

Post-memory is the outcome of a process of transmission and, as Imre Kertész (2014) suggests when he responds to the question “who owns Auschwitz?”, in the most traumatic situations, it follows the Duty of memory itself. Like Primo Levi, Kertész affirms that Auschwitz does not belong to anyone who lived through it, but to the generations that follow. But with one condition: that they stake a claim to its memory. For this memory to belong to subsequent generations they too must consider it their own, and stake their own claim to it (Kertész, 2014). Thus post-memory is not only a transmission, but it is a laying-claim, a conscious appropriation of the experience of those who went before. And it belongs to the generations that follow only if they lay claim to it. As Hirsh (2008) emphasises, post-memory involves a logic of apprehension, search, and decision. An attempt to understand what took place. It is not merely an inherited memory; it is a construction. There is a logic of decision; of searching within immaterial silences. Hirsh (2008) himself noted that, like memory, post-memory degrades in the present. It is less to do with the past as such than with its selective appropriation for the needs of the present.

¹² This research will have to explore this dimension which crosses inescapably with Cohen's work on denial (Cohen, 2001).

For a post-memory to survive and do the duty of memory, it must take on form. Or perhaps it must pass through what Aleida Assman (2006) and Jan Assman (2008) call communicative memory. A memory that is not produced or preserved institutionally but lives in the daily interaction and communication through everyday relations that accrete a form of cultural memory. Or, perhaps, post-memory can crystallize as a kind of memory bank through literature, film, public discourse, museums and more. Everything suggests that this process is underway in France in relation to the Harkis. The same does not appear to be happening in Portugal, where the sharing of the post-memory of crimes against former fighters is still limited to the family, and to small groups.

What we can conclude, therefore, from this ongoing research is that the post-memory of crimes, and their successful diffusion, or otherwise, into the public sphere, depends on mechanisms of transmission. It also depends on events, modes of recognition, and, in all likelihood, on relations established not only during the war itself, but in the period that followed. Finally, in order to understand the post-memory of crimes committed in the course of the colonial wars, it is not enough to know the facts, and the claims that emerge from them. We must also identify the processes, mechanisms, situations and conditions upon which these facts have been constructed, and their social and political consequences in post-imperial societies. It is in this sense that the current research is conducted with the conviction that, through the exploration of the suggestions that we have just presented, that are located within the scope of the narrative of crimes committed in (post)colonial times and in the transmission of the memories that remain on them, this work could contribute to broaden the approach of the narrative criminology.

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