

## **Being a Woman and a Member of the Resistance Throughout the Dictatorship of the Estado Novo (1926-1974)**

### **THEMES/PROBLEMATIC**

- The female question in the resistance to the authoritarian regime of the Estado Novo and the rupture with the values idealised by the regime.
- How did the conceived female image influence the attitude of the woman from the resistance within the anti-fascist opposition, towards her male comrades, or even in the face of the political police?
- Did the image and treatment of imprisoned women reveal differences in mentalities?
- Was there a pattern for how imprisoned women were treated, which was dependent on their social status?

### **THE IMAGE OF THE WOMAN IN SOCIETY AS A WHOLE**

"My father, of a fascist nature, admired Salazar, who "didn't do better because others wouldn't let him." As soon as someone entered the house, they would find a bust of Salazar made from an icteric material. Despite my mother's certain degree of rebelliousness, my father decided she would stop being a primary teacher to take on her natural function, "wife and mother".

Helena Neves, in *Mulheres de Abril* (April Women)

"Salazar made men slaves but gave them women as ornaments. Men could do what they wanted with women."

Julieta Rocha, in *Mulheres de Abril* (April Women)

"The fact that the woman was isolated in an existence that was limited to domestic chores, considering her role as wife and mother incompatible with full realization as a human being, did not contribute to her appreciation nor did it make her happy".

Maria Lamas, in *As Mulheres do meu País* (The Women from my Country)

### **FEMALE OPPOSITION**

"The policy of the Estado Novo - the maintenance of the colonial war - allowed women to take a huge step, to enter production, replacing the men who were on the battle fronts; and leaving

the house to work outside was obviously very important in terms of awareness of social problems."

Diana Andringa

"The policy I had at the time was that of myself. To fight for myself and others, without being a member of any organisation."

Julieta Rocha, in *Mulheres de Abril* (April Women)

"In February 1953, days after my 7th birthday, and months after starting school, my father resigned from the factory where he had worked since he was 17 years old, and we moved to Lisbon. We began our preparation for clandestinity. My parents had to sever all contact with their relatives."

Domicília Costa, in *Mulheres de Abril* (April Women)

"We had a meeting with Joaquim Pires Jorge, in Ericeira, in which he suggested that José Dias Coelho and I went underground. At that time, our eldest daughter, Teresa, was already born."

Margarida Tengarrinha, in *Mulheres de Abril* (April Women)

#### **DISCRIMINATION OR GENDER EQUALITY IN THE RESISTANCE?**

"Women continued to be seen in the opposition, first, as female "representatives" and only then, as individuals. And, in fact, even when they took on political responsibilities, the power they attained was very diminished."

Vanda Gorjão, in *Mulheres em Tempos Sombrios* (Women in Dark Times)

"Female associative leaders were rare. [...] The majority [of women] went to meetings, did the tasks – distribute announcements, paint posters, go to demonstrations – but spoke very little. And some of our colleagues made sexist comments about the (few) who took stands, who talked, etc... [...]"

Within the opposition, we had to spend our time demonstrating that we were as capable as men and that defending women's rights did not weaken the common struggle against fascism and colonialism."

Diana Andringa

"In general, when it comes to these gender things, the male population is quite sexist, no matter what they say, even the Communists [...] I know of course, because I know many comrades, that there are a lot of comrades who think that the woman, the female comrade, should do some things while the male comrade should do others."

Margarida Tengarrinha, in *Mulheres na Clandestinidade* (Women in Clandestinity)

### **THE ISSUE OF GENDER INEQUALITY IN RELATION TO THE PIDE**

"It was when the PIDE realised that women were beginning to perform tasks like men, that the women from Couço started being beaten, spending nights in the police station, being subjected to the statue – standing and sitting – all in all, being tortured."

Olímpia Brás, in *As Mulheres do Couço* (Women from Couço)

"For many years the PIDE did not mistreat women, the first women to be beaten were the peasant women from Couço, [...] until the war, there was this notion that politics was a thing of men [...] After the war, there were changes – they also started to be beaten and to endure sleep torture [...]"

Fernando Rosas, in *Viver e Resistir no tempo de Salazar* (Living and Resisting in the Salazar Period)

"In the Union of Antifascist Resistance, I had access to testimonies from many women who were imprisoned. And I'm still furious because they weren't just tortured like men, they were sexually humiliated. [...] We speak of the Germans, the French in Algeria, who tortured women by burning their breasts with cigarettes, but that also happened here. Here, many women were tortured through the humiliation of their female condition."

Luísa Irene Dias, in *Mulheres em Tempos Sombrios* (Women in Dark Times)

"There was, in fact, an intent to humiliate people. [...] They had to humiliate, they had to break, they had to degrade, they had to stay above that person. They even said: "This is war: sometimes we win, sometimes you win."

Aurora Rodrigues, in *No Limite da Dor (On the Edge of Pain)*

### **THE SOCIAL ISSUE IN REPRESSIVE TREATMENT**

"We, in any event, unlike the working women, the peasants, were not beaten up. They wouldn't dare. But when they got there, they were beaten, they were really beaten. It was a matter of social status. They had to have a lot of strength. They were much more abused than women from other social classes."

Maria Branca Lemos, in *Mulheres em Tempos Sombrios (Women in Dark Times)*

"That [beatings] they didn't have the courage. They wouldn't dare to do it to people like me. [...] In the PIDE, I'm sure the class issue was taken into account. They would physically humiliate – leaving them naked, for example – incarcerated women, in my case they only mocked me – and mockings from the PIDE couldn't reach my ears".

Diana Andringa

"I never thought I could hold on like this. If I had thought about it before, I wouldn't have had the courage to spend that time without being able to sit down or sleep. Three days at António Maria Cardoso being subjected to sleep and statue torture. Maria Eugénia underwent sleep torture for seven days."

Stella Piteira Santos, in *Mulheres em Tempos Sombrios (Women in Dark Times)*

"The interrogations were frequent and lasted for days and nights, under permanent threats and insults, psychological and physical torture, and sleep deprivation".

Graça Marques Pinto, in *Mulheres de Abril (April Women)*

"Of course I knew there were inequalities in treatment according to social class. There were common problems, of discrimination, inequality, but the life of a woman of the upper bourgeoisie was obviously different from that of her "maid". And yes, I wasn't distracted when it came to these things. I saw how people lived, how I would go to university and my friends from the Rio de Mouro school would probably be maids – or, hopefully, employees in a factory...".

Diana Andringa

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