

João Guilherme Rego Arruda

(Island of São Miguel, Azores, 13-01-1954 – Lisbon, 26-04-1974)

João Guilherme Rego Arruda was born on 13 January 1954, on the island of São Miguel, in the Azores, son of Eduardo Arruda, a roadmender, and Georgina da Conceição, a housemaid and washerwoman; they both had 13 children.

Foreseeing a career as a priest, at the age of 9, João Guilherme enrolled in the Minor Seminary of Angra do Heroísmo, on the Terceira island, in the Azores and, in 1972, at the age of 18, he went to Braga to study Philosophy at the Catholic University with a scholarship by the, then, General Board. Soon after, he broke with religious life and asked to be transferred to Lisbon. In the summer of 1973, during a brief stay in France, he bought the Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung and the Manifesto of the Communist Party by Marx and Engels, and, in September, he enrolled at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon. In addition, he worked for the National Employment Service.

Politically aligned with the left, although without a particularly strong activity, he took part in actions of the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) and the Reorganization Movement of the Party of the Proletariat (MRPP), like strikes and boycotts of classes and the distribution of posters and leaflets.

On 25 April 1974, upon learning about the military coup, he went, like thousands of other people, to downtown Lisbon to watch the events unfold.

The headquarters of the General Directorate of Security (DGS) – the name the International and State Defence Police (PIDE) had taken –, in Rua Antonio Maria Cardoso, quickly became a target of the people who followed the coup on the streets, even though its occupation was not part of the general plan of operations of the Armed Forces Movement (MFA), and its continuity was planned by António de Spínola, head of the National Salvation Junta, which had seized power. In the early evening, João Arruda was one of the many who gathered in front of the DGS headquarters demanding its occupation and surrender. However, the officers of the political police resisted and refused to surrender. Already after the surrender of the President of the Council, Marcelo Caetano, in Largo do Carmo, from the windows of the building, the DGS officers opened fire, indiscriminately, on the crowd, causing dozens of wounded and four dead. At around 8h30 pm, João Arruda was shot in the head by one of the political police's bullets, dying at the Hospital of São José at 00h30 am on April 26. The identity of the killers remains unknown.

Although his memory has been evoked in the Azores, in Lisbon the tribute to the memory of João Arruda and the other victims of 25 April 1974 was limited to a plaque next to the building of the old headquarters of the PIDE/DGS, placed in 1980 by citizen initiative.