

We Dreamed of a Country

Camilo de Sousa and Isabel Noronha. 2019. Documentary. 70 mins. Portuguese



Debate with poet and journalist **Luís Carlos Patraquim**, and with Centro de Estudos Sociais (University of Coimbra) researcher and historical advisor of the film **Maria Paula Meneses**.

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Sinopsys

In the early 1970s, Camilo de Sousa left Lourenço Marques, Mozambique, toured Europe and joined the Frelimo guerrilla movement. First in the Nachingwea training base and then in the National Liberation Struggle. He was twenty years old at the time. Today, living in Portugal, he returns to Mozambique to meet two comrades-in-arms, whom he met in the guerrillas and with whom he later shared the leadership of the party in Cabo Delgado, until he went back to what is now Maputo and joined the new Instituto de Cinema, becoming a director. With Aleixo Caindi and Julião Papalo he recalls ancient times, when the joy of liberation gave way to hard times when the search for the 'new man' came to destroy the dreams and illusions of a country.

Technical Credits

Directors: Camilo de Sousa
Isabel Noronha

Historical adviser: Maria Paula Meneses

Photography and Camera: Lara de Sousa
Ricardo Borges
Isabel Noronha

Sound: Malhatine Matusse

Producers: Daniele Gallo
Malhatine Matusse

Editors: Orlando Mesquita
Juliano Castro

Post-production editor: Patrícia Saramago

Sound mixing: Hugo Leitão

Music composers: João Costa
João Lima

Colorist: Jennifer Mendes

Graphics: Irma Lucia VFX

Laboratory: Loudness Films

Producer: Pedro Borges

Production: Sofia Tonicher

Introductory text for "We Dreamed of a Country"

Mozambique is a letter, a drawing on the map, situated in the south of the African continent, in Epsilon. An extensive coastline that the Indian Ocean flirts with. A trunk of living land that goes from Ponta do Ouro, in the south, to the Rovuma, the river of the north and of time. The guerrillas used to cross this river during the Armed Struggle for National Liberation. Touch the old memory with your fingers, draw it into the present. Feel the sinuous roughness of the interior border lines, running from South Africa to Swaziland, and from Zimbabwe to Zambia and Tanzania. Then there are the islands that peer out at you from the sea, one of which was named Omuhípi by Vasco da Gama, where he landed waiting for the monsoon to pass, from which he knew would take him to Calicut, to the Quirimbas archipelago, and to the north, in the province of Cabo Delgado. In the *Lusíadas*, Camões writes about a sultan: Muḥyiddīn Ibn, whom he 'Portuguesises' in his word.

Muḥyiddīn Ibn Arab, the Sufi poet and mystic and philosopher, who stated that life is a letter. What we have here is an Epsilon, where you can trace with your fingers of imagination and with the evidence of maps and the vicissitudes of history, the life within the two stems of the letter which encompasses the territory. To the northeast is the inclined stem, where the province of Tete is located and where the great Zambezi river flows. On the coast, in Cabo Delgado, the stem swoops into the air, after the Makonde plateau that runs down to the sea.

Then we have dates: the creation of Frelimo – the Mozambique Liberation Front – in 1962; the armed struggle against Portuguese colonialism that began on the 25th September, 1964; independence, which was proclaimed by Samora Machel on the 25th where June, 1975, at the Machava stadium, in what was then Lourenço Marques.

It is the nature of the letter to guard an abyss. Not the orography of Malawi, which penetrates and separates the provinces of Tete and Niassa, but rather the abyss that is characterized by the redemption of men on its slopes. This is where you go up to when night falls.

For Mozambique has always been populated by mankind, men and women, even when they were enslaved – and after the so-called 'pacification' that resulted from the defeat of N'Gungunhane in Chaimite, in the province of Gaza, in 1895. The last indigenous empire in the interior of the world and the effective occupation as a colony, along with dozens of revolts – the last of which was in Barué began in 1920.

We move on from the province of Zambezia, in the centre-north, with its deadlines, owners, its eminent people, and the singularity of the rebellious republics that faced up to the Portuguese Crown as the remnants of a unique and plural contradictory human fabric. The great majestic companies existing under the moon, with the wide-open spaces on which the full night is projected, as if like daggers. These are everyone's words.

Because we were citizens of a country that didn't even exist then, even when the dissidents who worked in the mines were enshrouded in ridicule, for it was our poets who said it, because the letter and its spirit, and the people and their houses built of wood and zinc and the spirits, all of whom populate the illuminated night and preside over the destiny of men, were free. Because hunger demanded it and the forced labour was obliged to hunt them down. Because the skin had the lightness of birds and fireflies sent out signals, the mysterious, the decisive ones.

And we climbed the cliffs of the abyss. We were, indeed we are, men and women. That is why we admit to a generalized popular insurrection: those working in the mines, in the fields, and in the plantations: workers, artists, and intellectuals.

If the letter in epsilon seems to force a fatality, we speak and talk about it because we want to climb the cliffs. Because we flew low above the bush trails, because we originate from many places and languages and ways of being. Because we also fall. Because we are now the ones who led the fight and we need to talk about it. We are a small part of a transfigured body, wounded where it was, including by us: who were young in spirit and neglected the snakes.

This film is the story of our reinvention and of our mismatch. A story that needs to be reinvented again, as we really need it.

We are not the new man. We are men and women.

And we are not tired.

Luís Carlos Patraquim