

Seminário História(s) do Presente. A formação do mundo contemporâneo.

Organizadores: Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo (Universidade de Coimbra) e José Pedro Monteiro (Centro de Estudos de Comunicação e Sociedade – Universidade do Minho)

5 de Abril, 2022

10:30, Sala de Actos do ICS (Campus de Gualtar, Braga, UM) e online*

Africa, the Africans, and the Red Cross: Assessing the Impact of the Long Second World War

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Although Africa is one of the main beneficiaries of humanitarian aid nowadays, its progressive inclusion within the scope of the International Movement of the Red Cross during the 20th century was not obvious. From the mid-19th century to the 1960s, the development of national Red Cross societies primarily concerned independent states, even if the establishment of local sections within the Empires were sometimes encouraged. In addition, until the middle of the 20th century, Red Cross principles were thought to be reserved for “civilized nations”, from which most of the African populations were largely excluded. This paper highlights the specific role played by the long Second World War in the

progressive inclusion of Africa and Africans within the scope of the Red Cross movement. More precisely, it examines how the establishment of local sections on the continent laid the foundations for a Red Cross network in Africa and questions whether the presence of African soldiers, such as the *tirailleurs*, in military troops led humanitarian groups and organizations to reassess their relations with “indigenous people”. In doing so, the paper provides new insights into the historical interconnections between warfare, humanitarianism, and colonialism.

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Developmental humanitarian shifts: the case of Angolan refugees in the Congo-Leopoldville (1961-1975)

Ana Guardiã
(Universidade de Florença)

Amongst other repercussions, the Angolan decolonization war (1961-1975) led to the flight of c. 500.000 refugees to the Congo. The response to the crisis marked the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)'s expansion to sub-Saharan Africa and entailed, for the first time, investment in rural and community development strategies. Multiple difficulties of operating in the Congo, combined with the persistence of Western ideas about the African other, political pressures, and financial limitations, concurred to this shift.

The impact of these new humanitarian strategies was varied. In the case of Angolan refugees in Congo, some triggered various and differentiated protests because the methods used - i.e., resettlement and

voluntary labor - were similar to oppressive measures implemented by colonial authorities in Angola to control the population.

If the Angolan refugees' agency prompted the abandonment of some of these methods, the use of refugees as a voluntary labor force was maintained for integration purposes in responding to the need of impoverished host states. Prompting both obstacles and opportunities for the UNHCR, this shift entailed multiple and varied impacts on refugees' lives. It also shows how humanitarian international organizations' adaptations to sub-Saharan geographies concurred with efforts to renovate imperial claims in the region.

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