

C 4.3. COMMUNICATION – ABSTRACT

Traumas in the 1961–63 War in Angola

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ABSTRACT: War has always existed, exists and will exist. It takes on different aspects wherever it regrettably unfolds and persists, modeling itself, however, to the local circumstances of the theaters of operations. It constitutes a period of unprecedented violence, in which fear, savagery, hunger and dirt are present. Our soldiers, who fought in the Portuguese Army on all fronts, went through all of this. There is no place where fighting took place that is better or worse, when you suffer and death awaits you. Soldiers subjected to these traumas are often affected physically and, often forever, psychologically. I was a doctor at the Command of Battalion 114. The Companies that were part of the Battalion had dozens of attacks, which caused several deaths and injuries in combat. The adventures that occurred during the trips constituted some of the stories that I remember here, as well as some of the most notable incidents in the Angolan War. On one patrol, among many others, we left Quicabo in the direction of Birila but, to our surprise, after a kilometer or two signs of enemy presence appeared. Air support was requested and two Harvard T6 planes appeared almost immediately. We had no direct contact with the enemy, neutralized by the Air Force. I noted, in fact, what I already knew: in war there are a few minutes of action and many hours and days of boredom, peace and inaction. Either in the North or in the South, the «picadas» (roads through the bush) were incredible. To travel three or four hundred km, it sometimes took three days (if not more) because, when it rained, the vehicles became bogged down to the chassis. Missing, in this summary of what happened during the patrols in which I lived and participated in the Angolan war from 1961 to 1963, is the story of the men of the Battalion 114. The human story that encompasses the uncertainties they experienced, the moments of anxiety, their emotions and longings, and also the joy and sadness they felt with the feeling of victory or failure, in carrying out their missions. These are scars and memories, which often leave an indelible mark on the soul, and sometimes on the body, that forever accompany all military combatants, until their pilgrimage in this world ends...

KEYWORDS: Portuguese Colonial War, Angola (1961–1963), Military Medicine, Combat Trauma, Portuguese Army, Personal Testimony