

The US and Portuguese colonialism as imagined through television drama

Abstract: In the 1950s and early 1960s, the Portuguese empire (mainly Macao, but also Mozambique) became a recurrent setting for the TV fiction of the United States of America, particularly through tales of adventure and espionage. This chapter examines the ways in which those programmes, shaped by plot formulas and Cold War politics, presented the colonial situation and, crucially, how they envisioned the US role – first as Portugal’s partner and later as its competitor. The chapter concludes that, although the images of Portuguese colonialism in television drama became gradually disenchanting, thrillers disregarded the liberation struggle taking place in Africa and continuously presented the Estado Novo as a close ally of the United States.

The position of the United States of America towards the Estado Novo – and particularly towards Portuguese colonialism – during the Cold War has been studied by scholars from both sides of the Atlantic (Rodrigues 2002; Rodrigues 2006; Schneidman 2004). Their work has traced the evolution of Washington’s attitude, beginning with benevolence towards the Salazar dictatorship (which the US helped integrate in the international system, ushering its inclusion in NATO and the United Nations), briefly followed by an anti-colonialist agenda in the early 1960s (during the Kennedy and early Johnson administrations), after the outbreak of the liberation wars, and then a progressively resigned posture that culminated in the Nixon presidency. While these studies, based mostly on diplomatic sources, have provided a solid grasp of the perspectives of American policymakers, they supply a limited view on the circulation of such perspectives beyond the sphere of high politics. This chapter will contribute to a further understanding of the discourse about the Portuguese empire presented to the broader public by examining how US television drama engaged with the topic.

American television gained vast projection since the late 1940s. By 1956, three out of every four households in the US had television (Segrave 1998: 35). By 1959, nine out of ten (Doherty 2003: 4). The presence of American programming was also increasingly felt abroad: in 1958, there were 566 television stations outside the United States, with over 100 different US programmes running every week in forty-three nations (Segrave 1998: 20). By the end of the decade, three American networks – American Broadcasting Company (ABC), Columbia Broadcast System (CBS), National

Broadcasting Company (NBC) – were the dominant sellers of TV programming in the world (Boddy 1995: 58,60). The internationalization of American television was strongly supported by the US government (Boddy 1995: 57; Segrave 1998: 33-4). Besides furthering commercial interests by promoting exports and advertising, support for this new mass medium fed into the cultural battlefield of the Cold War, where TV served as both a vehicle for propaganda and a symbol of global power. In 1955, NBC's president publicly proclaimed that a wide international network offering people 'our best television shows in the cultural field', as well as educational fare, could 'leave the Russians gasping for breath and out of the running' (Segrave 1998: 6).

Against this background, it is worth considering the discourse about international politics embedded in such a powerful medium. By and large, the presence of Portuguese colonies in US dramatic TV series took place in the 1950s and very early 1960s – and predominantly in the male action-adventure shows that characterized much of network television at the time (Miller 2001: 32 17). These thrillers often dealt with crime and espionage, which meant that they ended up engaging with the role of the colonial authorities, at least for the twenty-to-fifty minutes' duration of an episode. The connection with Washington's official views was sometimes quite explicit, for if the rise of television was shaped by the onset of the Cold War (Boddy 1995: 45-7; Doherty 2003), then its spy programmes were even more so. As a result of broadcast censorship and self-censorship, early spy shows rigidly identified the nation's interests, allies and enemies (Britton 2004: 21-6). With this in mind, the next pages will examine the image of Portuguese colonialism as conjured in black and white, on studio backlots – occasionally complemented with archival footage – drenched in ominous shadows that betrayed both the limited budgets and the direct influence of film noir, and repeatedly delivered to millions of homes through syndicated reruns. Specifically, this chapter will demonstrate that television series channelled, at first, an idea of partnership against common threats and, later, a disenchantment with Portugal's colonial rule, even though they continuously portrayed the metropolitan authorities as valued US allies.

Colonial partnership

In the 1950s, Macao became the most prominent Portuguese colony in US audiovisual fiction. Besides having an already established aura of lurid mystery and picturesque adventure popularized by literature, this colony became ideally suited for tales of intrigue in the aftermath of the Chinese Revolution of 1949. This event placed

Macao in the so-called ‘bamboo curtain’ of the Cold War divide, turning its border into a valuable pipeline for communist China, especially after the UN imposed sanctions on the latter following the Chinese intervention in the Korean War (Fernandes 2000: 92-106). In addition, because Portugal had not signed the Bretton Woods monetary agreement, there was no ceiling on the price of gold in Macao, which gave rise to a ready-to-be-fictionalized profusion of gold trade and smuggling. Hollywood capitalized on Macao’s reputation with a wave of thrillers, either largely set there – *Smuggler’s Island*, *Macao*, *Forbidden*, *Flight to Hong Kong*, *Hong Kong Confidential* – or featuring key scenes on this colony – *Dragon’s Gold*, *Soldier of Fortune*, *The Scavengers*.¹ Notably, the films tended to present a cynical view of Portuguese colonialism by depicting Macao as a place ripe with orientalist tropes of danger and vice barely tamed by self-styled Western civilization while simultaneously portraying Portuguese settlers as meek and highly corruptible (Lopes 2016a).

TV thrillers first approached the subject with a more benevolent attitude towards Portuguese colonialism. Although they too highlighted the criminal environment generated by Portugal’s refusal to sign the Bretton Woods agreement, television shows extended to the Portuguese empire the spirit of respect for state institutions and Cold War consensus typical of the Eisenhower era. While Macao’s authorities were shown to require assistance in order to solve specific challenges related to ruling the colony, the Portuguese presence and commitment were not questioned and neither was the support provided to them. This attitude mirrored Washington’s outlook: if until 1950 many US officials had felt decidedly uneasy about old world imperialism, the emphasis had shifted to Cold War ideological and strategic aims following the communist victory in China and pressure from domestic public opinion. The combination of containment policy with factors ranging from economic interests to Eurocentric preconceptions often led the Eisenhower Administration to support the colonial powers’ attempts to cling on to their empires (Fraser 1992; Westad 2007: 110-31).

This mind-set made its way into the recurrent plot formula of an American agent – the show’s protagonist – on a special mission abroad, where he co-operated with a welcoming local officer. In the case of Macao, such rapport suggested tight relations between the US and Portugal, including its colonial territory. An early example occurred in *Dangerous Assignment*, one of the first TV spy series. In the episode ‘The One Blue

¹ I could not locate *Dragon’s Gold*, but the relevant sequence is in the dialogue continuity script at the British Film Institute [BFI] (SCR-7134).

Chip Story' (first aired on 14 April 1952), undercover agent Steve Mitchell investigated a counterfeit dollars operation at the request of the Portuguese Police Commissioner Francisco. The two got along splendidly and, in one of the three scenes where they bonded in Francisco's office, the commissioner even insisted that Mitchell take a gun to a sting operation by quoting J. Edgar Hoover, the director of the FBI, thus displaying an affinity between the police of both countries.

Similar set-ups appeared throughout the decade. The series *Passport to Danger*, which spotlighted the diplomatic courier service, explained in the credits that 'one of the vital functions of the United States' government is to establish and maintain diplomatic relations with other countries' and that there were US embassies or legations 'in every friendly and civilized nation in the world'. The episode 'Macao' (27 February 1956) showed that this applied to the titular colony. The opening voice-over described Macao as 'a dozen square miles and a half million humans under the precarious protection of the Portuguese flag', whose border contained 'the last hole in the bamboo curtain, the Porto [sic] do Cerco, the Barrier Gate, scanty thirty feet through which China imports strategic goods and information, and pays off in rice and tea... and drugs', thus justifying US involvement in the area. Tasked by the consulate with bringing back home a drug-smuggling American sailor, Courier Steve McQuinn joined forces with the helpful superintendent of police, Captain Lacerda.² Likewise, in the episode 'The Quemoy Story' from NBC's anthology spy series *Behind Closed Doors* (12 February 1959), an US Naval Intelligence commander co-operated with Lt Miguel 'Mike' Perraera of the Portuguese police, 'one of his best contacts and personal friends', in thwarting a Chinese-Soviet plan to invade the Taiwanese island of Quemoy.³

2 The original screenplay went further in terms of relativizing Macao's dangerous reputation. Its voice-over introduced the colony as 'the only spot [in the Far East] where an Occidental can trade and live and find an unmolested grave'. The final scene (probably cut due to time constraints, since it was unnecessary for the plot) had Lacerda wishing McQuinn would come back to see the sights, for 'You must not leave with the impression that Macao is a hot-bed of crime and violence.' (Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research [WCFTR], Donald Sanford Papers, Box 21, Folder 5, 'Macao' script)

3 This episode appears to be lost. Its description is based on the revised final draft of the screenplay available in the Library of Congress, Motion Picture & Television Center, NBC Log Book, Box MT-887.

The Adventures of Dr. Fu Manchu, based on the pulp characters created by Sax Rohmer, introduced a slight variation by having the hero be a British agent from the Scotland Yard, Sir Dennis Nayland Smith, a traditional opponent of the titular crime lord. Regardless, the episode ‘The Golden God of Dr. Fu Manchu’ (10 September 1956) had the same story structure, with Smith contacting the chief of investigations for the Bureau of Internal Affairs in Macao, where Dr Fu Manchu had gained control of the gold market with the help of yet another American sailor, named Morgan. The chief of investigations acknowledged that the Portuguese government was glad Smith had come to Macao with his vast expertise on Dr Fu Manchu. With Smith’s assistance, the colonial bureau was able to dismantle the villain’s smuggling operation.

More than presenting the Portuguese authorities as close partners with the US and the United Kingdom, TV fiction validated this partnership by depicting the former as honest and brave. Unlike their Hollywood counterparts, the Portuguese settlers featured in these shows did not come across as corrupt. ‘The One Blue Chip Story’ actually ended on a humorous note with Commissioner Francisco reminding agent Mitchell not to keep any of the money used to entrap the counterfeiters. Moreover, not only did the local authorities convey their concern for law and order by accepting foreign aid, they valiantly fought organized crime themselves. In ‘The Golden God of Dr. Fu Manchu’, even before Smith approached the colonial police, the latter already had an undercover agent, Vicente, infiltrated among the smugglers. In a brutal scene, Vicente was tortured and killed by Dr Fu Manchu for refusing to reveal information about this police investigation.

The positive image of Portugal’s colonial presence was reinforced by the fact that, while the heroes of the narrative were Anglo-American, Macao’s police usually saved the day in the end. Acting as a convenient *deus ex machina*, the Portuguese rescued both Steve Mitchell and Steve McQuinn from the clutches of the villains. The same happened in the adventure series *Terry and the Pirates*, where the protagonists were pilots working for a private airline without official ties to any authorities. In the episode ‘Macao Gold’ (25 November 1952), after being robbed of a gold cargo, the pilots looked for it in Portugal’s colony, where one of them was captured by a black market ring. Although initially sceptical about their story and fooled by the ring leader, in the end the local inspector saved the pilots and dismantled the ring. The

aforementioned episodes therefore associated Portuguese officers with the forces of justice.⁴

Finally, along with resorting to the kind of ‘yellow peril’ stereotypes historically used to rationalize Western colonization of Asia – such as the ‘evil east Asian’ (Fu Manchu) or the ‘Dragon Lady’ (named after a character from *Terry and the Pirates*) – US television also anticipated the diffusion by popular culture of the luso-tropicalist notion of racial harmony in the Portuguese empire later promoted by the Estado Novo (Cardão 2014). In ‘The Quemoy Story’, Lt Perrera appeared to be in a loving relationship with Anna Sung, a local Eurasian woman working for US intelligence. In ‘The Golden God of Dr. Fu Manchu’, the chief of investigations, Lum Sen, was Asian, implying a fully-integrated colonial system that allowed indigenous citizens to ascend to high ranks and issue orders to Portuguese officers. In the same episode, when Morgan pretended to be a nurse in order to get near his hospitalized wife, he explicitly justified his American accent by telling another nurse: ‘Macao, just one big happy melting pot’.

Colonial rivalry

Television gradually incorporated starker anti-colonialist sensibilities into narratives set in Portuguese territory. TV thrillers followed the footsteps of cinema, where a more critical approach to aspects of imperial rule had been gaining ground (Cowans 2015), even if tempered by racial stereotypes embedded in enduring colonialist imagery. One of the settings where shows explored – ambiguously and tentatively – such a posture was Mozambique, a colony that, unlike the fictional Macao discussed in the previous section, came across as a place of lawlessness, corruption and racism. In *Markham*’s ‘Round Trip to Mozambique’ (14 November 1959), private detective Roy Markham travelled to this colony – which, as he explained to the audience, was called on the maps ‘Portuguese East Africa’ – in order to bring back Mona Deering, a wanted

4 According to the Internet Movie Database, Macao also served as setting for two episodes of *The New Adventures of China Smith* (‘The Paper Dragon’, ‘The Manchu Emeralds’, aired in 1954 and 1956) and *Hawaiian Eye*’s ‘Dead Ringer’ (11 May 1960). The credited cast in these episodes includes characters called Inspector D’Amico and Lt Juan Gomez, presumably Portuguese. Because the episodes appear to be lost, I was not able to determine how closely they adhered to the stated formula (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1017116/?ref_=ttep_ep18>; <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1013226/>>; <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0598291/>> accessed 23 September 2016).

witness for a case against her lover, the mobster Castellano. Deering had fled to Mozambique because there was no extradition from there and because it contained a town in the pocket of Vasco de Freitas, a grotesque, brutish local proprietor and a friend of Castellano's. A haven for foreign gangsters, this was a drab colonial town in which the only taxi cab did not even work.

Rather than forces of justice, the Portuguese authorities were now obstacles to its pursuit. In 'Round Trip to Mozambique', they were represented by a corrupt, one-eyed police constable who sleazily recommended to Markham a club near the Praça Salazar ('In Brazil Dancing there are girls. They are not beautiful girls, but they are girls!') and, later, undermined the hero's escape plan by double-crossing him after accepting his bribe money. By contrast – and conveying a clear racial divide – the only African character was the sympathetic guide Narciso, who carried Markham's luggage and brought the newspaper to one of the gangsters while the white population leisurely sat and fanned itself under the sun.⁵

At once more and less explicit than *Markham*, the crime series *The Case of the Dangerous Robin* also used Mozambique to denounce colonialism. In 'Jungle Quest' (9 January 1961), the show's protagonist, insurance investigator Robin Scott, travelled to the Mozambican bushland in search of the stolen manuscript of the latest novel by expatriate writer Addison Hanks. The manuscript had been stolen at the request of Gunther Harned, an influential British industrialist who owned bauxite mines and railroads and who was respected by the native population, even acting as groomsman at a tribal wedding. Harned – who tried to shoot Scott to prevent him from uncovering the truth – was motivated by the fact that the novel had been modelled after him, targeting him for hypocrisy and mass murder. According to Hank, Harned had 'turned the bush into an empire. Along the way, he's stolen birthrights along with riches, he's trampled

⁵ Mozambique had previously appeared in *Suspense* ('The Second Class Passenger', 28 March 1950) and *The Adventures of Dr. Fu Manchu* ('Dr. Fu Manchu, Incorporated', 1 October 1956). The former episode appears to be lost, but the series tended to faithfully adapt episodes from the radio anthology shows *Escape* and *Suspense*. Based on the original radio version of 'The Second Class Passenger', available at the Internet Archive (<https://archive.org/details/OTRR_Escape_Singles> accessed 25 September 2016), that episode – adapted from a Percival Gibbon short story (1913: 1-20) – may have anticipated elements of Mozambique's depiction as a corrupt haven for international criminals.

over thousands of innocent people and he's wrapped it all in the guise of good – the “great white father”.’

‘Jungle Quest’ confronted colonial methods and self-legitimation more openly than the earlier examples by turning this into a key plot device. Although criticism was focused on an individual rather than the system, Harned’s own fatalistic self-justification implied the potential for generalization: ‘A man does things in the course of building an empire which he considers expedient. But the world might not understand that expedients are necessary.’ Indeed, a comment in the last scene established that ‘the whole world’ had been shocked to learn ‘what kind of man’ Harned was. This resolution is all the more remarkable because the anti-colonial slant – and even Harned’s character – was absent from the script’s original drafts, from early August 1960. Instead, those drafts still featured a variation of the friendly colonial officer trope, in the form of Deputy Commissioner for Native Affairs George Alumbo, an Oxford-educated official who had met Robin in London⁶ – a character that did not make it to the final screenplay.

The fact that Mozambique had not initially been chosen with an anti-colonialist story in mind, but rather as an interchangeable African location, shone through in the lack of engagement with its status as a Portuguese colony. The inclusion of an imperial critique in later versions of the screenplay, completed in November 1960, suggests a last-minute wish to capitalize on the topicality of the subject, given the ongoing decolonizing wave, particularly across Africa.⁷ Yet Hank’s attack targeted a British settler and, in the absence of any references to Portugal, less informed viewers could be excused for assuming that Mozambique was part of the British empire.

The discourse on Macao was itself revised. In the crime drama *Hong Kong*, the adventures of two-fisted reporter Glenn Evans repeatedly featured smugglers from Macao (‘The Jumping Dragon’, ‘Blind Bargain’, ‘Colonel Cat’, 2, 9 and 16 November 1960), but for the most part the Portuguese authorities were nowhere to be seen. The one exception was the episode ‘Love, Honor and Perish’ (15 March 1961), in which Glenn travelled to Macao with Laura Johnson, a woman whose husband was missing in

6 WCFTTR, United Artists Collection, Series 7.2, Box 93, Folder 10, ‘Jungle Quest’ (formerly ‘Valuable Papers’), First draft, 02.08.1960, p.10. One version of the script described Alumbo as ‘an African Negro with Oxford accent, Bond Street Suit and dignity’ (10A).

7 WCFTTR, United Artists Collection, Series 7.2, Box 93, Folder 10, Annotated drafts from 21.11.1960 and 23.11.1960.

connection with a smuggling operation. When they contacted the Portuguese Lt Riviero, the weary officer refused to officially investigate either the smuggling ('These smuggling operations, if they exist, are directed against some other country.') or the disappearance of Laura's husband ('He has not asked for police help. When a man chooses to live in a jungle, he very often chooses to live with jungle law.'). Called to a crime location, the police did end up apprehending a local mobster, but only after Glenn beat him up and literally handed him to Riviero.⁸ The episode – with a script by Donn Mullally, who just a couple of years before had written a lenient portrayal of the Macao police in 'The Quemoy Story' – was full of allusions to the colony's feeble law enforcement, including the following exchange, when Laura first saw the city's port:

LAURA: Glenn, it's beautiful... what colours.

GLENN: Don't let all those pretty buildings fool you. Opium traffic money fills a lot of them.

LAURA: You can find bad people anyplace.

GLENN: Sure you can. Except in Macao you don't look for them. They find you.

Portuguese inefficacy was similarly notable in an episode of the anthology series *The Barbara Stanwyck Show*. With a gritty atmosphere crafted by veteran film noir director Jacques Tourneur, 'Adventure on Happiness Street' (20 March 1961) shifted the focus to the refugee crisis taking place in Macao. The opening voice-over explained that in the colony's harbour lived 'the fisherfolk and smugglers, breathing, working and dying on their junks and sampans, worshipping their ancestors and venerating their elders', in contrast to China, where 'the veneration is over – now the communists literally push their old people across the border onto the uncertain mercies of the free world'. Over stock footage of faces of old people, the narrator passionately exposed the humanitarian catastrophe:

Over they come, empty-handed and hungry. Some are given food, some find it where they can. Their faces are an album of misery. Once-honoured teachers with

⁸ This fit the series' formula. While the British colonial police did regularly appear in a relatively sympathetic light, the episodes' denouement always hinged on Glenn.

no students... Matriarchs with one eye, or none... The forgotten people, bewildered and heartsick.

The plot – which, according to the prelude, was based on ‘a dramatic incident personally observed in Macao a few months ago by writers Albert Beich and William H. Wright’ – revolved around Josephine Little, an importer-exporter trying to help American doctor Paul Harris obtain much needed medicine for his free clinic in Macao. Out of desperation, Paul resorted to smugglers who supplied him with unusable cut medicine, forcing him to temporarily start charging patients until Josephine helped resupply the clinic.

While the most explicit targets of outrage were communist China and cynical contraband, ‘Adventure on Happiness Street’ clearly indicted the Portuguese failure to deal with the refugees. In contrast to the lead characters of the 1950s, Paul Harris did not work with the colonial administration, but rather in a clinic that he supported himself, with an entirely Asian staff. Once an idealist doctor married to a Chinese wife, Paul was driven to despair by Macao, which he described as ‘poverty and squalor unequaled on the face of the earth. A harbour filled with junk-people, sightless with trachoma and choking with TB. Slums crawling with rats and mice, mosquitos, fleas, cockroaches, bedbugs and lice!’ His clinic was packed with aged patients suffering from acute vitamin deficiency and therefore susceptible to all kinds of disease. When Josephine asked ‘Isn’t there a government clinic?’, a nurse replied ‘The refugees all want the American doctor.’

If there was a leitmotif in these episodes, it was the notion that the time had come for the old empires’ replacement with well-meaning US intervention. Although some American characters strayed into crime – like the gangsters in ‘Round Trip to Mozambique’ or one of the smugglers in ‘Adventure on Happiness Street’ – the protagonists were now crusaders fighting the shortcomings of colonial rule: Roy Markham brought law to a lawless Mozambican town, Addison Hank shed light on the evils of European imperialism, Glenn Evans foiled the schemes of Macao’s underworld, Paul Harris provided health to the colony’s destitute. In the words of Paul’s wealthiest patient: ‘You’re an American. You’re their symbol of hope.’ The doctor’s reply – ‘Of course I’m an American. That’s the trap I’m in.’ – indicated that, like the United States, he acted out of a sense of moral obligation, convinced that only he could protect the victims of communist ruthlessness. This idea was reinforced visually by the US flag in

the clinic's reception room, given particular prominence in the scene where Paul announced he would begin to charge and all his patients left. The image of the flag in an empty room coincided with the refugees' abandoned hope, later restored when Paul resumed his philanthropic duty.

Regardless of this subtext, the critical lens applied to the Portuguese empire could have gained a new poignancy with the outbreak of protracted wars against liberation movements in Angola, since 1961, and later in Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. However, the Portuguese colonial territory seemingly vanished from TV fiction for the remainder of the Estado Novo. One factor which may have initially contributed to this was the reciprocal effect of the US role in international television. Having achieved global TV set penetration levels of eighty-six per cent by 1960, American distributors began to see television's greatest potential in the foreign rerun market, aiming their product not only at a broad domestic audience but also at the audience of other consuming nations (Boddy 1995: 60). This discouraged critical engagement with controversial real world conflicts, with network censors and sponsors often imposing the use of euphemisms and fictitious locations or organizations, even during the mid-1960s' boom of spy shows (Britton 2004: 11). The apparent reticence to approach the Portuguese colonial wars in Africa – with their uncomfortable resonance of the escalating conflict in Vietnam – may have spilled into the rest of the empire. As the next section will illustrate, however, this did not prevent the continuation of narratives set in metropolitan Portugal.

Metropolitan partnership

Like Mozambique and Macao, Lisbon belonged to crime and spy fiction's route of foreign intrigue.⁹ In part, this dated back to the Second World War, when Hollywood had repeatedly presented the then-neutral city as a romantic backdrop and a clearinghouse for espionage (Lopes 2016b). In those films, the Portuguese authorities had already appeared as an ultimately benign force that ended up helping the heroes, a convention that carried over into postwar cinema.¹⁰ US television then contributed to preserve Portugal's exciting reputation, using the country as a setting for international mystery and conspiracy tales throughout the Estado Novo, including in *Biff Baker, U.S.A.* ('Lisbon', 19 February 1953), *Four Star Playhouse* ('Madeira! Madeira!', 14

⁹ These three places were listed, among other Cold War locations, in the colourful credits of the NBC series *I Spy*, which ran from 1965 to 1968.

April 1955), *Man with a Camera* ('Blind Spot', 5 December 1958), *Blue Light* ('The Last Man', 12 January 1966), *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* ('The Master's Touch Affair', 16 October 1967) and *It Takes a Thief* ('A Thief is a Thief', 9 January 1968).¹¹ The episodes set in European territory, however, expediently disregarded the regime's contested imperial dimension. At the same time, TV series reinforced, in different ways, the notion of a close partnership between Portugal and the US.

At first, this took the same form as the earlier Macao-based episodes. Before visiting southeast Asia in 'The One Blue Chip Story', the star of *Dangerous Assignment*, Special Agent Steve Mitchell, had already travelled to Portugal in order to dismantle an illegal migration ring, in the show's pilot episode, 'The Alien Smuggler Story'.¹² In the fictional Portuguese fishing village of Mesimbra, Mitchell met a local police officer, Lt Vierra. Not only did the two agents successfully work together, but the acting and mise-en-scène also implied that they quickly established a personal bond. They were framed close together while sharing their thoughts after jointly interrogating a suspect's girlfriend, in a scene that finished with Mitchell lighting up both their cigarettes. Later, while on the phone with his superior, Mitchell sat on Vierra's desk and casually helped the Portuguese officer with a game of solitaire he was playing. Mitchell left that scene with the words 'So long, partner.'

In the mid-1960s, with Portugal increasingly entangled in colonial warfare, it actually appeared as a non-belligerent nation in the World War II series *Convoy*. Set in 1942, 'Sink U-116!' (12 November 1965) explored the challenges of neutrality through the story of a German submarine and an American destroyer – led by captains Gerhardt Steiner and Dan Talbot, respectively – that took shelter in the city of Porto after a confrontation at sea. Their presence was diplomatically handled by District

10 As seen in: *The Lady Has Plans*, *The Conspirators*, *Storm Over Lisbon*, *Jewels of Brandenburg*, *The Mutineers*, *Lisbon*, *A Man Could Get Killed*. Also, in *The Secret Door/Now It Can Be Told*, according to the Information Booklet at the BFI (ITM-5378).

11 The sitcom *Topper* played with this reputation – in 'Trip to Lisbon' (12 February 1954), when the titular banker was sent to Lisbon, South Carolina, his ghost friends assumed he was on a secret mission to Lisbon, Portugal. Also noteworthy, *TV Reader's Digest* dramatized the true story of a large-scale con perpetrated against the Bank of Portugal, in 'The Gigantic Bank Note Swindle' (11 June 1956).

12 I found no record of the first transmission's exact date.

Commandant Manuel de Gava, representing Portugal's neutral status. When Talbot accused Steiner of having docked in Porto under false pretences, de Gava replied with a resigned tone:

My dear Talbot, you mustn't expect too much of our poor neutrality. Perhaps Steiner's submarine is not damaged, as you claim, perhaps he has some other reason for being in Porto. I make it a point never to enquire too deeply into these things. The legal forms – that's what I and my small country survive by. Of course I'm not altogether a fool and I hope not altogether a scoundrel. I know my city is steaming with agents of all the belligerent powers.

Steiner turned out to be helping the Gestapo capture a representative of the French Fleet, whom Talbot and his men tried to save, leading to a standoff. The resolution hinged on de Gava, who was given a character arc reminiscent of Captain Renault's in *Casablanca* – after insistently professing to observe neutrality and seemingly conceding to German requests, in the end de Gava stood up to the Nazis while exchanging a sympathetic smile with Talbot. Ultimately, not only did 'Sink U-116!' display understanding towards Portugal's neutrality, it also highlighted, through the figure of de Gava, the Portuguese co-operation with the Allies while visibly dissociating the Estado Novo from the Axis powers. At no point did the episode acknowledge that Portugal was itself under a dictatorship inspired by fascism.¹³

Portugal gained its highest profile exposure in the final days of the Estado Novo, through *Madigan*, a series about rough New York police detective Dan Madigan (the protagonist of the acclaimed, same-titled 1968 film). The seventy-five minutes-long 'The Lisbon Beat' (3 January 1973) had Madigan search for Jake Preesly, a prisoner who escaped during an unscheduled stop in the Portuguese capital. Shot in colour and on location, the episode was blatantly filmed with the regime's endorsement, resembling a travelogue with scenic shots of the neighbourhoods of Alfama and Bairro Alto as well as a peek into a guided tour of the São Jorge Castle. Madigan assisted Colonel Ribeiro, who explained that Lisbon was a tourist-friendly city with an efficient police force:

RIBEIRO: All of my detectives are required to speak English.

¹³ At one point, Steiner did a 'Heil Hitler' salute and de Gava did not reply.

MADIGAN: Well, they speak it better than most of ours.

RIBEIRO: You see, most of our tourists in Lisbon are either English or American.

MADIGAN: Criminals, too?

RIBEIRO: No, not at all. Lisbon is almost free of crime, both foreign and domestic. It is one of the few cities left in the world where you need not lock your door, or you can walk safely in the park or in the streets at any time in the night.

Madigan also bonded with the coronel's son, Eduardo, a crooked policeman who redeemed himself near the end and died saving Madigan's life. In order to establish a family drama angle, the episode constantly reminded viewers that Eduardo's father strictly followed procedure and expected the same from his officers. While not devoid of the occasional bad apple, Portuguese authorities therefore came across as respectful of the rule of law and civil rights. At one point, Madigan did threaten Preesly by calling attention to the screams coming from a jail cell, but it turned out to be a ruse, with a fellow detective simulating a beating. In the world of 'The Lisbon Beat', the only torture committed by the Estado Novo took place in an American's prejudiced imagination.

Conclusion

Until 1961, Portuguese colonies – overwhelmingly Macao, but also Mozambique – appeared in over a dozen dramatic series produced and distributed by US television. The earlier episodes suggested that the collaboration between the United States and Salazar's Portugal should extend to the latter's empire, highlighting shared concerns such as money counterfeit, drug trade and communist expansion. Their stories validated this position by portraying the colonial authorities as co-operative and zealous agents of justice operating in a functioning multiracial society. By the turn of the decade, however, the discourse of TV fiction evolved into a noticeably more disgruntled depiction of Portuguese colonialism, now presented as decadent and unable to handle challenges like organized crime or the flood of refugees from China. American protagonists increasingly acted independently of – and sometimes in opposition to – the local authorities, foreshadowing the 1960s' spirit of missionary voluntarism and exceptionalism in US foreign policy.

The emergence of narratives dismissive, or even downright critical, of Portugal's colonial rule did not last. US series stayed away from the Portuguese empire during the

Estado Novo's controversial wars against African liberation movements. Conversely, until the final years of the dictatorship, television shows continued to promote a benign image of the metropolitan authorities – and, by extension, the regime they represented and enforced. Obscuring the colonial dimension, they dramatized the country's good relations with the US (including during World War II) and its touristic appeal. Ultimately, while TV fiction proved quite removed from colonial and metropolitan reality, it powerfully reflected the United States' official posture, which remained supportive of the Estado Novo despite a sense of frustration with Portugal's imperial designs.

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