

Abstract

This diploma thesis, titled „Presence of Colonial Past in Contemporary Portugal“, deals with how the Portuguese society has coped with their loss of the last colonies after the democratic revolution in the year 1974. Portugal belonged, along with Spain, to the first colonial powers in Europe and for long time - till the 20th century - the independence of colonies was for many Portuguese people unimaginable. Therefore a lot of them were surprised with the speedy decolonization of these territories after 1974.

Investigation of reactions of Portuguese society to this change is based on the analysis of responses of its political and academic communities after the year 1976. Attitudes held by the wider society was demonstrated by the massive support of Portuguese to the former colony of East Timor during September 1999.

The approach of politicians is analysed in this work through their speeches during the key' historical moments, which influenced relations between Portugal and its former colonies during the years 1976-1996, as well as through government' programmes and comments in mass media. Analysis of academic discussion is concentrated mainly on the 1990s and present, when the colonial past has become a topic of great interest to many Portuguese people. A new field of academic interest, referred to as postcolonialism, emerged in the country at the end of the 1990s. This academic movement is also briefly outlined in this paper. A case study, focused on the occurrence of massive public demonstrations in Portugal in support of East Timor during September 1999, illustrates the attitudes of a wider Portuguese public to the colonial experience and its relations to the former colonies.