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MARCELLO CAETANO

THE TOWER
AND THE SWORD
MILITARY ORDER

SPEECH DELIVERED DURING THE CERIMONY OF
CONGRATULATIONS BY THE ARMED FORCES, TO
MARK THE AWARD OF THE GRAND-CROSS OF THE
ORDER OF THE TOWER AND THE SWORD, AT
SÃO BENTO PALACE ON 4 OCTOBER 1971

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SECRETARIA DE ESTADO DA INFORMAÇÃO E TURISMO

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THE TOWER
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THE TOWER AND THE SWORD

Ministers and Secretary of State
High-ranking officers of the Armed Forces:

I am greatly honoured by your presence here today and I have been moved by the words of the Chief of the Naval General Staff. The present time does not favour luxury or waste, even if only of words. Language only assumes its real value when it is employed to reveal real thoughts and to express sincere feelings. That is why, Vice-Admiral, I appreciate the simple, direct style of your greeting.

In our country the Military Order of the Tower and the Sword, for Valour, Loyalty and Merit, is an award of great prestige which brings its holders vast responsibilities. The law states that it may be conferred for services done as Prime Minister, as provincial governor and in the command of operational troops but above all, and this is its nature, as most firmly rooted in the consciousness of the population, it should reward military or civic heroism or

exceptional acts of self-denial and self-sacrifice for the Homeland and for Mankind.

Since the reform of the Order decreed in 1832 in the name of Queen Maria II, the Order has been conferred almost exclusively on officers and soldiers. This was at first because of the Liberty campaigns. Then, in the middle of the 19th century, came the contribution of civic heroism of doctors and others who aided them to fight against cholera and yellow fever. At the end of that century the African campaigns enriched the history of the Order with glorious names which stand for remarkable deeds of the Army and the Navy.

In the Great World War, which we entered so as to enjoy authority to claim, when the peace returned, our rights over the overseas territories, the Armed Forces, in Africa and in Flanders, again fought bravely and contributed new names to the ranks of the Order. In the last ten years, since we were forced to defend the frontiers of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea and combat the subversion brought there by our enemies, almost all those who have been admitted to the Order have been officers and soldiers.

In short, those who enter the Order meet with a glorious pleiade of warriors, where the spectres of the dead stress the stature of the living: when we regard them we are reminded of a century and a half of Portuguese military history. The register of the Order contains many figures, from humble soldiers and sailors, such as the recently deceased and well-known 'Milhões', who aroused so much

curiosity in the First World War by his exceptional bravery, to marshals and admirals. Three of these I knew — Gomes da Costa, João de Azevedo Coutinho and Craveiro Lopes — and they were proud to wear the dark-blue ribbon of the Order, which they had won in very harsh conditions in Africa. All three had distinguished themselves there, on different occasions and to different degrees, but all were at one in the integrity of their military spirit and their unlimited devotion to their Homeland.

Those registers contain the widest range of actions which reveal what a French writer called 'military service and grandeur': so many men who proved able, by despising danger, by blindly doing their duty, by dedicating themselves totally to a higher cause, to rise above the mediocrity of daily life and make, at a moment marked out by destiny, the vigorous gesture that gives sublimity to a whole life!

There are many others, whose heroism lay in the firmness of their command, with the apparent serenity that spreads calm about them while concerns and worries distract the mind just before a decision on which may depend victory or defeat, or at critical moments of carrying out decisions, which must be accompanied moment by moment, without any wavering in the guidelines laid down but with full lucidity so that perseverance shall not degenerate into stubbornness and so that logical coherence shall not contradict inescapable realities.

Such leaders have had to concern themselves with the men under their command, watching over their discipline, their training, their morale and their comfort, bearing in

mind the thousand and one aspects on which the cohesion and effectiveness of an army depend; but at the same time they are forced to consider the use made of their men to fulfil the missions that their Country has given them and to take such decisions as ever-changing circumstances demand.

Armies cannot do without soldiers, but they cannot exist without leaders. The multitude of recruits is only the raw material: only the leaders commanding them can transform this material into a regular force with the dignity, the nobility and the usefulness of an arm in the service of the Nation.

'A weak king weakens a strong people'. The higher the leader's position, the more extensive his possible influence and the heavier his responsibility. Soldiers fight, and on many occasions in their history Portuguese soldiers have shown their ability to fight hard. But more and more individual bravery needs, if it is to be effective, to form part of a collective whole, and must be inspired and guided by those who possess the talent for impressing, inspiring and leading men.

This is why the register of illustrious officers and soldiers, members of the Order of the Tower and the Sword, includes those who won the decoration for their personal heroism and those who merited it for the quality of their leadership.

At this time, when, in all probability, the Portuguese Nation is making the greatest military effort in all its history, your presence both indicates the esteem felt by the

Armed Forces for the highest Portuguese decoration and also your fidelity to the traditions which it stands for.

Materialism stifles the purest Christian virtues, which are still the precious spiritual patrimony of our people. The air is full of a sociology which eliminates individual merit and worth and makes man a mere cog in the machine, turned out in series according to the circumstances and the needs of the community. False élites seek every pretext to destroy the feeling for the Homeland, which is still deep-rooted in this Nation, whose sons may be scattered about the world but who are united in the community of their shared feeling of nostalgia.

But it is also a time of great deeds and great souls. We must continue to state the primacy of ideals over interests, the unrivalled nobility of generosity which gives without counting the cost, the supreme greatness of serving the Homeland without thought of reward. In the Armed Forces there should only be a saving, or even avarice, in the blood of the young men who are entrusted to them, only to leave them later more virile, more cultured and more experienced for life, and in the taxpayers' money which the State has to manage like a watchful father, so that all the members of the family may have what they need even though, on critical occasions, they have to do without what is not absolutely necessary.

We must go on exalting man's worth as an individual, not so as to make him into a demigod, sacrificing to him, in a spirit of egoism, social demands, but so as to state that it is individual intelligence, man's character, will, deter-

mination, courage, spirit of sacrifice and decision that may influence the destinies of Mankind and mark out the paths of History.

It is for us to go on cultivating the love of the Homeland, not as an idea, not as a mere concept, not as a historical category, but as a living reality rooted in every inch of our being, present in our every gesture and action from the very beginning of our lives, which possesses us, whether we like it or not, like a motherhood to which we owe a precious part of our being.

Hitherto there has been no lack in the Armed Forces of the cult of individual Worth, of Loyalty to the Homeland and its Leaders and of Merit in a spirit of Justice; however severe the selection, it is the Armed Forces that continue to provide the greater number of the members of the Order of the Tower and the Sword. This spring must not be allowed to dry up; quite the contrary — it must flow more strongly, even though the criteria of choice are not extended at all.

The soldiers of our time must continue, as did their forebears of the 16th century, to inspire epics when called on to perform the harsh duties imposed by defence:

‘Yielding up their bodies to hunger and vigils,
To steel and fire, to arrows and bullets,
To burning desert and icy strand,
To the blows of Pagan and of Moor ...’

Four hundred years have gone by since the publication of 'The Lusiads', which exalted the expansion and the presence of the Portuguese in Africa, in Asia and in Oceania. They have been four centuries of struggle, of labour, of efforts, of contribution to Civilization and to the spreading of Christendom, but they have not broken the temper of the Portuguese, nor have they weakened their determination.

The Armed Forces must continue to be the best school of conscientious patriotism and the disinterested service of the Nation. This is why I greet them and express my respect for them, through you and in your presence.

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