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The Radical Right and the Military Dictatorship in Portugal: The National May 28 League (1928-1933)

António Costa Pinto*

The process of transition from liberalism to authoritarianism in Portugal after World War I has yet to be fully investigated. The military dictatorship which replaced the parliamentary Republic by military coup in 1926 represented a key phase in this transition. Though supported by a broad spectrum of forces that participated in the overthrow of the liberal Republican regime, the military dictatorship was rent by grave internal contradictions, inherent in such heterogeneous backing.

Use of the tripartite typology of rightist political groups developed in recent years by historians of interwar Europe appears applicable to the Portuguese case.¹ In effect, the diverse political and social agents who supported the overthrow of the First Portuguese Republic competed among themselves during the years of the military dictatorship that followed, to dominate the new "state of exception" that had been established.

This paper proposes to analyse the political behavior of the radical right during the transition from the military dictatorship to Salazar's "New State," since the radical right made an important attempt to dominate the new regime. The conflict with Salazar also helps us to understand the *ideological background* and *nature* of the political regime established in Portugal in the 1930s.

The radical right took part in the postwar antidemocratic conspiracy. After the military dictatorship had been established, it immediately tried to dominate it and was responsible for much of the instability which characterized that period. One of the main organizing forces with which they tried to dominate the dictatorship was the National May 28 League, a political organization founded late in the year 1927 to be the keystone in the construction of a new regime. The period of the military dictatorship is still a mysterious phase in modern Portuguese history.

A North American political scientist has classified it as a "vague period about which we know very little but which is crucially important for an understanding of later developments in Portugal."² The study of this league with fascist leanings³ will, we think, reveal a little known facet of the political conflicts which accompanied the rise of Salazar.

1. *THE RADICAL RIGHT AND MAY 28, 1926*

One of the merits of the few works on the fall of the parliamentary republic in 1926 is that they demonstrate the great ideological and political diversity of the social agents which brought about its overthrow. The other is the fact that they emphasize the extreme political conflicts that typified the military dictatorship which was then established.

The military coup of May 28 was a temporary compromise between several wings of an army which had become politically divided during the life of the republic. It had been dragged into the limelight by the interventionist strategy of the Republican regime during the First World War and penetrated by diverse segments of the postwar political spectrum. The crisis in the parliamentary-liberal system would only be overcome at the turn of the decade when Salazar's "New State" emerged.

The "state of exception" established in Portugal in 1926 provided no alternative to republican liberalism, being merely negative in character. As the then young integralist Marcelo Caetano said "...we all knew what we didn't want."

The May 28 movement itself was marked at the beginning by a rapid succession of coups which immediately led to the alienation of the liberal republican wing and soon after of the "leader" himself, General Gomes da Costa. The military dictatorship fell under the influence of several different political programs dating from the postwar period imposed by its heterogeneous bloc of supporters. Many of them were notable for their lack of order obviously connected with the military nature of the new regime. No analysis of their rifts is complete without mention of the corporative and cliental tensions of the military which were transferred to the state machinery and which influenced many of these conflicts. It is, however, possible, using their ideological background and political programs to characterize the three currents which tried to mold the new regime.

--The first, which might be called conservative liberalism, had representatives in the conservative Republican parties. They tried to enlist the help of the military while supporting the military dictatorship as a temporary regime which would allow them to reform the republican constitution of 1911 in the direction of presidentialism, limiting parliamentarism and remodelling the party system. With the support of the state, a strong conservative party would be created, capable of standing up to the Democratic party once constitutional law had been reestablished. This current did not, however, question the liberal model of political

representation.

--The second, which might be termed authoritarian conservatism, was markedly antiliberal. It proposed to construct an authoritarian regime which would eliminate the old system of Republican parties and introduce a one-party system. The new party would be created by the state machinery while building mechanisms for corporative representation at the same time. Ideologically, these would derive from Catholic corporativism and the theory of governments of "technical competence." This current consisted of Catholics, monarchists and authoritarian republicans.

--And finally, the radical right, which proposed a complete break with the liberal system, aimed at the construction of a nationalist, corporative, integral state based on a more charismatic legitimacy and totalitarian nature. The building of the New Regime would begin with the creation of a party of the masses, taking advantage of the military dictatorship which would lead the nationalist reform of the State. Its main ideological base stemmed from the radical conservatism of *Integralismo Lusitano* (Lusitanian Integralism), a traditional monarchist and antiliberal movement which emerged on the eve of the First World War, but which merged with other ideological currents after the war.

These were the three currents which led the call for military intervention and which coexisted in the first years of the dictatorship. Having taken an active part in the conspiracy which led to the coup of May 28, the radical right immediately tried to dominate the shaky power established after the coup. Right from the start, two types of new political parties evolved, each prepared to play the role of single party. Some came from outside the State machinery although they included some personalities and groups from among the leaders. Others came from within the state machinery and had the support of the dictatorship. The former had a more clearly defined political program and ideological base. The latter were more eclectic, more "glutinous." The radical right sponsored organizations of the former type.

A few weeks after the coup, a group consisting of Martinho Nobre de Melo, João d'Almeida, Filomeno da Câmara, Rolão Preto and others formed a party and paramilitary militia with the support of General Gomes da Costa. Gomes da Costa was under the direct influence of Lieutenant Pinto Correia, Silva Dias, his secretaries and liaison officers. The campaign was launched in the newly created daily newspaper *Revolução Nacional* (National Revolution), the mouthpiece of the movement.⁴ The rapidity with which the group manipulated Gomes da Costa in order to obtain a majority in the government was the cause of the coup by General Sinel Cordes and Carmona, who dislodged them from power.

Both the people involved and their program are worthy of note as they were to be involved in all the subsequent attempts at seizing power by the radical right. Five years later, one of the leaders of the May 28 League (the abovementioned Silva Dias) considered the coup of July 29, 1926 "a terrible reverse for the National Revolution,"⁵ and claimed responsibility for the actions of this group in the following years.

A second attempt was launched shortly after the abortive Republican revolution of February 7, 1927: the "militia lusitana." It was started by the same group and was immediately disowned by the conservative Republican parties and the Catholic center. The fact that some of its leaders had already taken part in an attempted coup by the radical right, which came to be known as the coup of the "Fifis" (*Fidelino de Figueiredo* and *Filomeno da Câmara*) had a lot to do with its sudden disappearance.

The third initiative was that of the National May 28 League. It was joined in force by members of the military, militants, supporters of *Integralismo Lusitano* and by organizations supporting *Sidônio Pais*, and made the most serious attempt to dominate the Military Dictatorship.

2. THE FOUNDATION OF THE MAY 28 LEAGUE AND THE CRISIS OF THE MILITARY DICTATORSHIP

The National May 28 League was created at the end of 1927 and presented publicly in January 1928. It appeared at a significant moment. In December 1927, General *Vicente de Freitas*, Minister of the Interior, announced an electoral bill, a census for a plebiscite for General *Carmona* as President of the Republic and "administrative elections." With the plebiscite and especially the subsequent elections in mind, the government decided on and announced the formation of a party to support the dictatorship which would be as comprehensive as possible. A ministerial committee was appointed to organize it (including *Sinel de Cordes*, *Manuel Rodrigues* and *Vicente de Freitas*). The committee became known as the National Republican Union or simply the National Union (*União Nacional*). The government involved the administration in the process and began to form district committees. Its program was vague but its purpose was clear: to contribute to the legitimation of the regime, first in *Carmona's* plebiscite, and then in the "administrative" elections.

The appearance of the League while the government was organizing its own party is a clear indication of the difficulty in uniting the supporters of the dictatorship into a new regime. The League, which was founded January 15, planned to unite the whole of the radical right. The initiative was taken by a group of young officers of the May 28 coup, intellectuals and politicians, almost all of whom belonged to *Integralismo Lusitano*, or who had at least been politically educated along its lines. The short-lived regime of *Sidônio Pais* had an important influence, especially on the military who joined the League.

This plan to form a political organization which would give voice to the program of the radical right dated from the immediate postwar period, but the origin of the League itself dated from the first days following the May 28 coup. The abortive coup by *Gomes da Costa's* followers was the first catalyst to contribute towards it. Several militants of *Integralismo Lusitano* (above all, those who played a most direct role in the political struggle within the

military dictatorship) suggested the formation of a political organization which would go beyond mere ideological and backstage activity within the dictatorship. This direction was taken by certain factions of Integralism with either the support or the tacit consent of its leaders, who were to take part in the formation of the League and directly run its activities in some districts.

The creation of an organization like the League was not merely an indication of its antiparty ideology. The leagues which appeared in the first decades of the 20th century represented the normal expression of the radical right. Maurras's *Action Française* inspired several similar organizations, not only ideologically but also in the organizational field, especially in Latin Europe. In founding the May 28 League, the Portuguese radical right followed the example of other countries: *Action Française*, and the *Cuza National Christian League* in Rumania. These examples were even more appropriate for those trying to seize power in a "state of exception," characterized by a situation of limited pluralism, since some parties, trade unions and other organizations were still working legally or outside the law. This leads to a very important point.

In 1928 there was still a relative plurality in the field of political representation and action, partly leftover from the parliamentary republic. Some parties, such as the Liberal Union and the Nationalist Party, still functioned, while others, such as trade unions, the Communists and some sectors of the Democratic Party, were outside the law. Even among the supporters of the dictatorship there was a wide range of different organizations. Within this context the May 28 League was formed.

Its program was very simply presented, calling for a "civilian force to support the dictatorship" which, in the words of Raúl Pereira Caldas,⁶ its first president, would eliminate "bolshevism" and neutralize the workers' trade union movement by creating a "White C.G.T." (General Labor Confederation),⁷ a "single front" of those who "want to free themselves *once and for all* from party intrigue and the secret power of the Freemasonry." The League demanded "ideas to be given to the government and the State organization so that the Liberal Masonic organism would be succeeded by a true, strong, Christian, corporative Portuguese State..."⁸ The program contrasted with the government's project for a clear, nationalist, Integral, anticommunist, antiliberal stand.

After General Carmona's plebiscite, the uneasy government kept postponing the "administrative" elections and the government party (*União Nacional Republicana*) died. Here we have, as Arlindo Caldeira says, the closest prototype of Salazar's *União Nacional* (National Union): in its origins in the government, in the direct role played by the State administrative machinery, in its organization, in the way it stood for elections to legitimate a new regime.⁹ Thus, just as when later, in 1930, Salazar launched the *União Nacional*, the League faced a competitive situation when it began its organization and was presented on January 15, 1928. Its

appearance was welcomed by the monarchist press and had the support of members of the dictatorship. In February they began organizing district and local cells (Oporto, Leiria, Braga, etc.) mainly based on previous programs by integralist groups and sympathizers among the military working in local institutions. The first street actions took place in Lisbon. There were demonstrations (one in front of the British Embassy and another on the arrival of the Portuguese delegation to the League of Nations) and rallies, some of which involved violent incidents. Shortly after, the *Cruzada Nun'Alvares Pereira* announced its affiliation with the League. This event is particularly significant: the "Cruzada" was, at the end of the first Republic, an important source of opinion in favor of dictatorship and Italian fascist propaganda. When, however, the elections were postponed indefinitely, the League ceased its activities and only reappeared "reorganized" in 1930 when the government launched the *União Nacional*.

Taking advantage of the notorious incompetence of the military, the radical right had been able to neutralize the more moderate sectors but failed in its attempt to dominate the military dictatorship. In 1928 the dictatorship went through its worst crisis. It was unable to hold its supporters together while the state's financial crisis became a central question which placed the survival of the dictatorship in jeopardy.

3. THE LEAGUE'S IDEOLOGY AND POLITICAL PROGRAM

Article 3 of the organization's statutes (pending official approval) defined the League's aims:

- "to support the situation created by the national movement of May 28, 1926"
- "to integrate the working classes in the spirit and aims of the Dictatorship so that governments can act and move in permanent contact with public opinion, with the acclaim and approval of the masses"
- "to work energetically in the academic field"
- "to encourage not only nationalist feelings and ambitions, but also a strong, modern, social conscience..."
- "...It will only maintain an absolutely national character, with respect for the republican regime...united around the Head of State..."¹⁰

To achieve these aims, the League proposed: to include in the organization all defenders of "the idea of the social nationalist movement;" to develop the dictatorship's propaganda; to set up study committees; to organize lectures and workers' courses, marches and demonstrations while maintaining "strict discipline in its ranks, in absolute obedience to the elected leaders."¹¹

In the second phase of its activity, the League restated its program for state reform and took on a function similar to that of the government party, *União Nacional*. In the words of the organ of the Leiria district delegation, it was necessary "to introduce radical reforms in the political organization of the state," which

must be "...nationalist, totalitarian, corporative, organic and syndicalist..."¹² Repeating its principles, the Coimbra district delegation explained each of these attributes in a debate with the *União Nacional*:

- The State "is essentially a totalitarian state, i.e. it understands the nation and adjusts itself to it."

- "By an organic state we mean a hierarchized and rationally articulated, antiindividualist, antibourgeois, anticommunist, antimasonic state."

- "A syndicalist state is one in which individuals are grouped according to their professions, their activities, i.e. according to their interests, production needs, controlled by the state..."¹³

An important point in this program, apart from its being different from Salazar's, is that it reflects the profound changes which occurred in the political culture of Portugal in the postwar period, especially in the field of antiliberal nationalism.

The radical right played an important role in the downfall of the first Republic. In the ideological field it was the main propagator of the theory that republican political and economic liberalism lacked legitimacy. The theory was spread by *Integralismo Lusitano*, a group formed on the eve of the First World War in the wake of Charles Maurras's *Action Française*, defender of the traditionalist, corporative and antiliberal monarchy. Forged in battle against the recently established parliamentary republic, the Integralists introduced to Portugal the ideological principles of the new radical conservatism which emerged in Europe at the turn of the 20th century. During the war, this group left its mark on Portuguese political culture and developed a nationalist interpretation of Portuguese history. They revived the antiliberal views of the 19th century and legitimated the defense of Integral Corporativism. Elitists in politics, when Sidónio Pais tried out the first modern dictatorship in 20th century Portugal, the Integralists were the only conservative group with a concrete political plan: a total break with the liberal system.¹⁴

After the war, Integralism underwent an internal crisis arising from the dynastic conflict which divided the Portuguese monarchists. As a result of this crisis, the group's organization was split and destroyed, though, ironically, its influence grew as a result, helping to bring about the fall of the Republic. Its militants took part in the political education of employers' associations and dominated a significant sector of the student and intellectual elite. Their influence in the army went beyond the small circle of monarchist officers, and they took an active part in the movement which led to the May 28 League.

Their organizational efficiency also helped to relegate to second place the so-called "question of regime," which in postwar Portugal meant the choice between monarchy and republic, after the overthrow of the parliamentary regime. The Integralists joined nationalist political organizations like the *Crusada Nun'Alvares Pereira* where they coexisted with those of different ideologies, such as the republican authoritarians, united around Sidónio

Pais's dictatorship and the Catholic corporativists.

Under the impact of postwar social and political changes, new elements were introduced into the Integralist program: the defense of the totalitarian state, government syndicalism, and the rejection of the "question of regime." This shift took place during the parliamentary republic and included several attempts by the Integralists to form organizations which could enlist the "popular classes" in the antiliberal struggle and the construction of the nationalist state. Rolão Preto made several attempts to "nationalize" revolutionary syndicalism through the "monarchist/syndicalist" paper *Revolução* (1922). Other integralist groups formed workers' sections.

As in other European countries, this movement was a reaction to the outbreak of social unrest after the war, to the mass society which, in proportion, seemed to have reached the Portuguese urban world. Other examples of this new political culture were new theorists of new mass action such as George Valois, and Italian nationalists coming from syndicalism, and George Sorel. The radical right's main publications in the last years of the first Republic reflected the impact of the seizure of power by the fascists in Italy. The new political culture was also reflected in the formation of various pre-fascist organizations, encouraged by circles close to Integralism.¹⁵ Martinho Nobre de Melo, one of the sponsors of the May 28 League, said in 1930: "it was not from Maurras or the right-wing writers that I learnt to be an antiparlamentarist; it was from revolutionary writers from Proudhon to George Sorel, from republicans like Duguit."¹⁶

Nobre de Melo's words lead us to another facet of the postwar radical right: nationalist Republican authoritarianism.¹⁷ Its origin is different from that of Integralism and it deserves more attention than it has received, for it dated from the beginning of the century and came out of the Republican movement. After the establishment of the Republic, this sector became violently antidemocratic. Sidónio Pais's support of the dictatorship provided its first point of reference, for when Pais formed an antiparty, Republican, populist regime, he gained the support of this group. It sponsored several organizations after the war¹⁸ and was a minority group within the radical right.

4. THE ORGANIZATION, ITS MEMBERS AND ELITE

When it was founded in 1927, the League began to form district and borough delegations, but was stopped by a government ban. Two years later, it "reorganized" its activities, took up the existing organizations again and created a national network. This coincided and competed with the formation of the *União Nacional*, which the government promoted. At the beginning of 1932, the *União Nacional* was almost complete, while the May 28 League had delegations in the main cities and about 20 sub-delegations in boroughs despite opposition from the state machinery. The government issued orders to the civil governors to prevent the formation of

League delegations, but it had nonetheless become a nationwide organization.

If we analyse the League's leadership and its public demonstrations, we immediately note the large number of members of the military. Its first leaders in 1928 had been military men, most of whom belonged to the so-called "Lieutenants of May 28," such as David Neto, Carvalho Nunes, José Virgolino, Carrasco, etc. This group of officers of junior and medium rank played a decisive role in the coup of May 28 and constituted a real "soviet" within the army. They were the first agents of the radical right in the antiparliamentary conspiracy. Most of them had fought in the First World War or supported the dictatorship of Sidónio Pais in Portugal, encouraging political indoctrination of the army after the war. Their presence ensured the army's influence among the supporters of the regime and was an important factor in the establishment of the League locally, where the administration was still in the hands of the military. This also discouraged possible repressive measures by the government. The "Lieutenants" made a habit of attending all the League's public events, which they normally directed. They formed a real military sector of the organization in all its conspiratorial activities.

A survey of the leadership of three district delegations, (Leiria, Coimbra and Evora) and two borough delegations reveals the political origins of its ruling elite at the national and local levels. They came from various postwar radical right organizations of the parliamentary republic period (neo-Sidonists, Integralists, etc.), or from the parties formed after the establishment of the dictatorship. Some biographies are very informative.¹⁹ The Leiria district delegation was uneventfully run by two officers who had been "cadets" of Sidónio Pais, members of his praetorian guard, active antidemocratic conspirators, and later militants of neo-Sidonist organizations. In Evora, the main leader, Silva Dias, was an Integralist who took part in the dictatorship coup on April 18, 1925 and was secretary to Gomes da Costa during his brief presidency. In Coimbra, the delegation was composed of a group which had resigned from the *União Nacional* but which had a similar background: most of them were Integralists. In Lisbon, apart from the mainly military leadership there was a group of students who, in the late twenties, formed the Lisbon School Integralist Board, including António Tinoco and Dutra Faria.

Almost all of the League's elite came from existing organizations. We can therefore consider it a veritable depository of the different political expressions of the radical right before and after the military coup of May 28. Among them, Integralism was definitely dominant.

The central committee of the most active group of Integralists, including Rolão Preto (its youngest member), issued orders for its affiliates to join the League. In some cases this merely officially confirmed the decision of militants and sympathizers who had already joined. One example among many: in January 1932 one of the leaders of the Beira Provincial Committee of *Integralismo*

Lusitano summarized in a report the aims of the Coimbra district delegation: "We hope to create a fine, politically integralizing block." He emphasized that their domination of the League would help them "to use it to control events, because it seems to me that the League may soon play a vital role."²⁰ This was an example of what was generally happening.

They wanted an organization that would concentrate on action of the masses, that would encourage and support the nationalist reform of the state, and therefore aimed their activities at "popular" social groups, such as the urban petit bourgeoisie and the working class, and formed organizations in the most industrialized areas. This effective integrating effort was reflected in the social status of the members, who were calculated to be about 5,000 in 1932. Local delegations formed workers' sections and some of them included workers among their leaders (Lisbon and Coimbra). In Coimbra, according to an internal report, the workers' section had 96 wage earning members in 1932.

While we have been unable to obtain overall figures for the social composition of the organization, we have gathered figures from some of the district delegations. They confirm that most of the members were junior army officers, employees, professionals and students. The average age of the national and local leaders was 27, which contributed to their radicalism. Although the figures on the social composition of the members and elite are vague, we feel they are significant if compared to those of the *União Nacional* in the same period (1931-32) when none of these groups was fully represented and the working class not represented at all.

5. THE POLITICAL ACTION OF THE LEAGUE AND THE UNIAO NACIONAL

In November 1930, the League resumed its activities "maintaining the same spirit which inspired it in its first period of activity."²¹ Its reappearance a few months after the *União Nacional* had been formed with "official approval" was an expression of hostility to the latter. Some sectors of the dictatorship's supporters managed to escape the attempt to absorb as many groups as possible when the *União Nacional* was being formed. When the latter had been announced in July 1930, it was defined as a "Patriotic League," independent of the state, but it was the government which, through its local administrative machinery, directly sponsored its organization. By mid-1931, the civil governors had finished forming their borough and district committees, which were frequently mistaken for the local administration itself. However, as yet it had no official leadership apart from the Ministry of the Interior.

In 1931 the League took part in all the demonstrations organized by the dictatorship and sponsored events all over the country. These events were, at first, quite different from those of the *União Nacional*. Although the activities of the *União Nacional* were organized on a national scale, they passed almost

unnoticed. The apathy shown by the *União Nacional*, together with the appearance of the *Aliança Republicana e Socialista* organized by the opposition, is perhaps the main reason why the "legislative elections," planned for 1931, were postponed. The League took part in the electoral census, but, due to the prevailing situation, feared a resounding defeat in the elections. The *União Nacional* then "appeared to go into hibernation" and showed no signs of life until mid-1932, and it was in this same period that the League was most active.

The organization of demonstrations and other street events (rallies, distribution of pamphlets, etc.) was typical of the League's political activities, but was almost unheard of among other supporters of the dictatorship. On March 25, 1931, the League's "workers' section" organized a march in honor of General Carmona. It became known as the "Marcha dos Archotes" (March of the Torches). In Belém, speeches were made by Carmona and by a worker who spoke in support of the nationalist corporative program.

Such actions went beyond the preventive conservatism of the dictatorship's preceding governments. By 1931, however, the dictatorship waged a widespread anticommunist campaign that called for the eradication of the political and trade union elite of the workers' movement and spread the principles of corporative nationalism in "sociopolitical primers."²² Some League delegations sponsored meals for the unemployed. One speech was published calling for improvements in the living conditions of the working classes and condemning the "selfish, individualist, bourgeois usurer."²³ Whenever a League delegation was opened, the event was turned into a street demonstration. Some of these provoked violent incidents which were not entirely unprecedented in the turbulent life of the military dictatorship, though few were initiated by its own supporters. Although there were skirmishes between League and opposition militants in Lisbon, the most important incidents took place in the provinces.

In December 1931 the opening of the Evora district delegation included a tribute to "the junior officers of the Lisbon military garrison." This was really just an excuse for a meeting of the League's military members since the tribute was, in fact, for them. The meeting was attended by 27 officers, members of the organization, who represented the youth section of the Lisbon delegation and others. After the meeting, shots were exchanged between League and opposition militants and one person was killed.²⁴ The next day the head of the delegation was shot and killed. In *Marinha Grande* a hostile demonstration surrounded the site of the opening of a League sub-delegation. Political violence thus became typical of the life of the May 28 League.

While at a national level relations with the *União Nacional* were considered "excellent," tension rose locally. The League's publications tried to justify their separate but complementary activities ("The League is more aggressive, but bursts with youth...it is the sentinel..."²⁵), but this did not preclude criticism. The latter stemmed both from the lack of political

activity on the part of the *União Nacional* and the tendency for the conservative republicans and militants of the parliamentary parties to join the organization.

As yet we have no research at our disposal to cast light on the political origins of the members of the *União Nacional* when it was formed. We can, therefore, only mention isolated cases. As far as we have been able to find out, some local republican notables joined the *União Nacional*. Although this can only be confirmed by wider research, it is worth mentioning a fact which has been largely ignored: while most of the Republican party leaders were against the dictatorship and Salazar, the same cannot be said for their local affiliates. Of three studies on district organizations, two confirm Arlindo Caldeira's theory about the local organization of the *União Nacional*, i.e. that it favored the local notables and people of influence, "the traditional or potential *cacique*."²⁶ These had sometimes been members of the Republican party's machinery. In Évora one League group refused to join the *União Nacional*, alleging that republicans of the old parties were known to have joined its district committee. The most serious case occurred in Coimbra and initiated direct conflict with the *União Nacional*. For the first time, a group of leaders left the official party to join the League, and in February 1932, the Coimbra district delegation was formed. Almost all the members came from the former *União Nacional* district committee (e.g. Eusébio Tamagnini, Pedro Bravo, Amadeu Ferraz de Carvalho, Carlos Proença de Figueiredo). The conflict which led to their resignation arose when Bissaia Barreto, a conservative republican and member of a pre-May 28 party, joined the *União Nacional*, bringing with him "numerous district party members."²⁷ The opening session turned into an anti-*União Nacional* demonstration. They approved a motion of solidarity with the old district committee "which fervently served the principles of totalitarian nationalism proclaimed by the government on July 30, 1930."²⁸ Speeches were made against the "infiltration" of republicans, accomplices of parliamentarism.

The League delegations, local centers of resistance against the republican liberal regime, began an open conflict with the dictatorship ministries which were already dominated by Salazar and which, during the formation of the *União Nacional*, opted for the republican conservative notables. This attitude (which would be confirmed in later years) was logical for those who had no intention of forming an ideological party of the masses, but relied on the power of the state.

As Salazar, while still Finance Minister, went about building the image of the new regime, the League took up a more radical position, with the government's new draft of a constitution another bone of contention. Though the leaders did not take an official position as regarding its text, the League delegations criticized it: the constitution agreed with the liberal system; it did not give its blessing to integral corporativism; it formally sanctioned party pluralism. The Leiria delegation was particularly radical on the subject: "we will vote 'no' in the

constitutional plebiscite."

At the same time maneuvering for a candidate for prime minister increased. Some candidates had already been defeated: Gomes da Costa in 1926 and Filomeno da Câmara in 1927. In 1932, the candidate pushed forward to run against Salazar was João d'Almeida, a nationalist general of monarchist origins. The military sector of the League urged Presidente Carmona to appoint him prime minister. In a document presented to the President, João d'Almeida was declared "the man who embodies all the country's ideals."

The League's publications sponsored him as the perfect candidate "for premier." It was, however, Salazar who was appointed.

On March 12, 1932, the government finally acted, making Lopes Mateus, head of the *União Nacional*, president of the League. This had the effect of dismantling the military sector's conspiracy. Speeches by João d'Almeida and leaders like Captain David Neto were cancelled. A "session in honor of the President of the Republic," planned for a few days after Salazar's appointment, was postponed indefinitely. Carmona by now represented the only legal institution of the dictatorship and the military sector of the League kept trying to turn him against Salazar. When Lieutenant Assis Gonçalves, Salazar's secretary and informer in the army (one of the founders of the League in 1927) asked for orders, Salazar did not reply, preferring control through the government and refusing any contact with the organization.

In February 1932, a group of students, who comprised the active youth sector of the League in Lisbon, founded the daily newspaper *Revolução* which was to become the mouthpiece of those who did not accept the forced integration into the *União Nacional*. Dutra Faria, António Tinoco and António Pedro were the main theorists of action of the masses during the final period of the League and expressed a fascist ideology. These young men were the founders of a movement formed mainly from the 28 May League: the nationalist syndicalist movement headed by Francisco Rolão Preto, a true fascist-type party.

When in 1933 the May 28 League's "collective membership" in the *União Nacional* was decreed, no one but a few leaders actually participated. Rolão Preto travelled round the country and enlisted most of the district and borough organizations for national syndicalism. In some cases the government had them closed down, but the Coimbra district delegation was dissolved to reappear a few months later in Rolão Preto's movement. The national syndicalist movement thus rose out of the radical right of the twenties.

The radical right played an active role in the antidemocratic conspiracy and tried unsuccessfully to dominate the military dictatorship, of which it was a part. It did not, however, play the same role in the construction of the authoritarian regime which was built in Portugal in the thirties. In the final years of the dictatorship, the radical right opposed Salazar. As in other European countries, the institutionalization process of an authoritarian regime required the elimination or "forced

integration" of internal fascist movements. This would be the cause of the conflict between Salazar and the national syndicalists in the years to follow.²⁹

NOTES

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¹See Stanley G. Payne, *Fascism: Comparison and Definition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), pp. 14-21.

²Howard J. Wiarda, *Corporatism and Development: The Portuguese Experience* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1977), p. 95. About the military dictatorship see António José Telo, *Decadência e Queda da 1ª República, Vol. II* (Lisbon: Regra do Jogo, 1984); Arnaldo Madureira, *O "28 de Maio": Elementos para a sua Compreensão, Vol. II: Na Hora do Corporativismo* (Lisbon: Editorial Presença, 1982).

³This paper is based on current research into the radical right and fascism in Portugal. The May 28 League is only a small part of the research and is presented here as an introduction.

⁴Led by Lieutenant Pinto Correia himself, but under the political guidance of Rolão Preto, it was closed down by the government after the coup.

⁵*Manuelinho d'Evora*, 7/9/1931, p. 1.

⁶Raul Pereira Caldas would later take part in an attempted coup against Salazar with the help of ex-National syndicalists and would spend some time in prison.

⁷*A Voz*, 1/17/1928, pp. 1-2.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹Arlindo Caldeira, "O Partido de Salazar: antecedentes, organização e funções da União Nacional (1926-1934)," *Análise Social* (forthcoming).

¹⁰*União Nacional*, 9/19/1931, p. 2.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³*Reacção*, 6/4/1932, p. 1.

¹⁴See Manuel Braga da Cruz, "O Integralismo Lusitano e as origens de Salazarismo," *Análise Social* 70 (1982):137-182; and articles of Miguel Esteves Cardoso, António Costa Pinto and Cecília Barreira, *Análise Social* 72-74 (1982):1399-1429.

¹⁵See António Costa Pinto, "Fascismo e Movimento Fascista nos finais da 1ª República: os Nacionalistas-Lusitanos (1923-1925)," paper presented at the *Seminário sobre o fascismo e as suas origens em Portugal*, Lisbon, June 1982.

¹⁶*A Voz*, 12/14/1920, p. 3.

¹⁷With the exception, to the best of my knowledge, of recent articles by Manuel Villaverde Cabral. See "A Grande Guerra e o Sidonismo (esboço interpretativo)," *Análise Social* 58 (1979):373-

392; and "Basilio Teles (1856-1923): Portrait d'un Républicain nationaliste et autoritaire," *Coloquio Luso-Français*, Lisbon, April 1982.

¹⁸Parties such as Partido Republicano Conservador, Centro Sidónio Pais, Partido Nacional Republicano Presidencialista. These are discussed in the paper by António Costa Pinto mentioned above in note 15.

¹⁹Lieutenants Marino Ferreira and José Virgulino.

²⁰Letter from Carlos Proença de Figueiredo, 1/16/1932, Arquiv R.P.

²¹*União Nacional*, 3/28/1931, p. 1.

²²The delegations printed pamphlets containing corporative propaganda. See, for example, Liga Nacional 28 de Maio, *Cartilha de Iniciação político-social*, (Leiria: n.p., 1931).

²³*Manuelinho d'Evora*, 3/3/1931, p. 1.

²⁴Silva Dias was assassinated by a small group in Praça do Geraldo while driving with Rolão Preto. Silva Dias was a lawyer and had been a militant from his student days. He took part in the coup of April 18, 1925 and was secretary to Gomes da Costa.

²⁵*União Nacional*, 10/31/1931.

²⁶Arlindo Caldeira, p. 31.

²⁷*Anais da Revolução Nacional*, Vol. III (Barcelos, 1948), p. 102.

²⁸*Manuelinho d'Evora*, 2/25/1932, p. 4.

²⁹See António Costa Pinto, "The National-Syndicalist Movement and Portuguese Fascism: First Approach," unpublished paper presented at the 14th SSPHS Meeting, Boston College, April 1983.