

## **'Chaos' and 'Order': Preto, Salazar and Charismatic Appeal in Inter-war Portugal**

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There emerged this man [Salazar] who was the greatest representative of the aspirations of the army and of the people ... There emerged this man – providence's secret – who was suddenly revealed ... There emerged this man who was destined to overcome an alarming crisis in order to reintegrate the nation in the consciousness of its duty, its power, its greatness and its mission in the world.<sup>1</sup>

This excessive praise for Antonio Salazar by a priest may express the classic triangle of a charismatic juncture, yet it dates from a moment in which Salazar was already leader of the Portuguese dictatorship and was driving forward with the institutionalisation of the *Estado Novo* (New State). The takeover of power by Salazar transpired in the elitist context of a crisis within the military dictatorship; nevertheless, it provides us with an interesting example of a *post hoc* utilisation of some of the characteristic processes that are associated with charismatic leadership.<sup>2</sup>

Salazar was not the charismatic leader of a political party that led him to power, nor was he the most visible 'candidate' dictator during the final years of the parliamentary regime. There were others who preceded him that had greater charismatic appeal: Sidónio Pais, who led the brief dictatorship of 1918, being a case in point. During Salazar's lengthy regime, he cultivated a 'charismatic' image, despite himself and despite his personality. During the 1930s he used all the methods possible to construct an image that would enable him to strengthen his position as dictator and encounter models of legitimation.

This text will examine three interrelated areas. The first of these areas to be investigated is the process by which the political space opened up for charismatic alternatives to the crisis of liberal democracy in Portugal. This involves considering the location of some of the cleavages (e.g. secular/religious, civil/military) taking place during this period, as well as the absence of a fascist party as an important political actor in the fall of the democratic regime. The second aspect to be examined is the late development of fascism as a movement in Portugal. As a movement, fascism only appeared during the military dictatorship, when it was led by the charismatic Rolão Preto. Its existence was brief, being destroyed by Salazar's emerging authoritarian order. Finally, the third area for investigation

relates to the methods Salazar used in adapting his 'traditional' dictatorship to the needs of the new mass politics.

### Charisma and Crisis in early-twentieth Century Portugal

The 1910 republican revolution was a precocious political phenomenon that introduced Portugal to the twentieth century's dilemmas of mass politics and democratisation. Secularisation, democratisation, and republicanism were the cleavages of the republican regime that was installed in 1910 in a backward country with a traditional social structure accentuating the differences between rural society and the small, politically mobilised, urban elite.<sup>3</sup>

During the Republic's early years there were several attempts made to restore the monarchy, with the King in exile becoming an important symbol for a small but especially mobilised sector of political society. The Catholic Church, which was, throughout the early Republic, suffering from republican anticlericalism, also became a source of legitimation for authoritarian alternatives.

Despite being highly unstable from almost the first moment, the parliamentary republican regime was to suffer even more with the country's participation in the First World War. The republicans forced Portugal's entry on the side of the Allies, acting out of fear that Britain would bargain away Portugal's African colonies as a part of peace negotiations with Germany. Moreover, Portuguese belligerency on the side of the great democracies would, the republicans believed, provide some legitimacy to the Portuguese Republic.<sup>4</sup> However, troubled by the social mobilisation of the working classes and by the differences between the various republican parties over the country's participation in the war, the young republican regime immediately fell to a *coup*. Portugal officially entered the war in March 1916, but was in no position to send troops until January 1917. Eleven months later, Sidónio Pais, a conservative army officer who had served in early republican governments, took power in a *coup* that was supported by elements who opposed the war, and whose unspoken aim was to expedite Portugal's withdrawal. Although Sidónio Pais used his military past to obtain charismatic appeal, the leader of the December 1917 uprising was a member of the conservative elite. As well as being an army major, former cabinet minister and minister to the Portuguese legation in Berlin, Pais was also a professor of mathematics at the University of Coimbra and a member of parliament. By the time of his *coup*, he had long since left his military career. Nevertheless, following the *coup* he was never seen in public wearing anything other than a military uniform, albeit one that he had designed himself. Despite having obtained power with the decisive support of conservative parties, Sidónio decided to establish a dictatorial regime that would be centred upon himself.<sup>5</sup>

After some hesitations, Sidónio exiled a part of the republican elite, broke with the 1911 constitution, and tried to institutionalise a plebiscitary presidentialist dictatorship. Following a triumphant visit to the provinces, where he was proclaimed 'the saviour of Portugal' by large crowds that were mainly mobilised by the clergy, Sidónio introduced universal suffrage, had himself elected president without opposition, and took control of the entire executive that the conservative republican parties had left. He then created a single party, the National Republican Party (PNR). No other republican party contested the elections. Apart from the PNR, only the monarchists and the Catholics were represented in parliament. The former supported the regime, and were reinstated in a number of

institutions, including the military; the latter supported Sidónio to the end, given his policies on revoking the most radical of the anti-clerical legislation previously enacted, and of re-establishing relations with the Vatican.

Another novelty in the new political system was the experiment in corporatist representation. Yet the corporatist Senate, like the Chamber of Deputies, was soon scorned by Sidónio, who sent both houses on recess and governed alone, ever more confident of his charismatic legitimacy. During the war there was a great deal of general shortages. Sidónio's political discourse was anti-plutocratic, emphasising the struggle against party oligarchies and messianic nationalism. Sidónio thus was able to bring together the monarchists and conservative republicans under one umbrella. He also used a group of young army officers from the Military Academy, who accompanied him at demonstrations, at the same time as the PNR's newspaper began to describe him as 'one of those figures that destiny singles out to come forth at decisive points in the history of a people: to save and redeem it'.<sup>6</sup> It was at this moment that the cult of personality began to be sketched out; however, this was not to endure, for Sidónio was assassinated in December 1918, little more than one year after coming to power. After he was assassinated by an ex-rural trade unionist, a monarchist revolt broke out in the north of the country. The republicans mobilised in the cities, and several military units declared themselves neutral, thereby facilitating the democrats' victory and the return to a constitutional regime.

The 1920s were fertile years for dictatorial candidates – both civilian and military. The conservative republicans as well as segments of the military elite dominated the anti-democratic reaction, in addition to occupying the space of the small and fragmented fascist groups. The neo-*Sidonistas* and the small fascist groups were the heralds of the later 'Saviours' and the cult of personality that was to surround the martyred Sidónio during the early-1920s. *Sidonismo* became a point of reference for the interwar Portuguese fascists, most of whom were intellectuals and students who went on to establish several movements including, amongst others, Lusitanian Nationalism (*Nacionalismo Lusitano*) and National Action (*Acção Nacional*), that increasingly cited Mussolini's Italian Fascist Party as their main influence.<sup>7</sup> Political space for small fascist-style political parties in Portugal during these years was, however, very limited.

The prospect of military intervention, and the constant appeals by segments of the conservative elite for just such action by the armed forces, ensured that they were to become central actors in the downfall of Portuguese democracy, thereby closing the door to any possible 'charismatic triangle'. The small organisations of the radical Right, including the most radical, sheltered behind the military. Even some conservative republicans called for and supported the need for a military *coup*. In May 1926, following several failed uprisings, the military took power in a *coup* that was, in every essential aspect, negative. The consequent military dictatorship was, as one observer has noted, a 'dictatorship without a dictator'.

### The Transition to Authoritarianism and the Fascist Challenge

Salazar's rise to the position of dictator came about in the context of a financial crisis. When he accepted the military dictatorship's invitation to become Minister of Finance in 1928, Salazar did so only on his own terms, obtaining complete control over all government expenditure. This ensured his position as the most important minister within the dictatorship. From this beginning, Salazar began to

climb the ladder of power. His position as a professor of finance at Coimbra University, and as the leader of the small Catholic Centre Party (CC—*Centro Católico*), are important factors in explaining his rapid rise.<sup>8</sup>

Salazar played no part in the 1926 *coup*, and nor was he listed as a potential 'saviour' during the last years of the parliamentary regime. He was the son of a modest rural family from Vimieiro, a village in central Portugal. Salazar had a traditional Catholic upbringing, and completed most of his intellectual and political education before the First World War. He attended a seminary, but abandoned the ecclesiastical path in order to study law at the University of Coimbra on the eve of the monarchy's fall.

A reserved and brilliant student, he led the best-known Catholic student organisation in Coimbra, the Christian Democratic Academic Centre (CADC—*Centro Académico de Democracia Cristã*). His friendship with the future Cardinal-Patriarch of Lisbon, Manuel Cerejeira, dates from this period. He pursued a university career as a professor of economic law, and his only political activity during the liberal republic took place within the strict limits of the Catholic social movement. He was one of the leaders of the Catholic Centre Party, and was elected as a deputy for them in the 1921 elections. With the early dissolution of parliament in July 1921, Salazar left his position as deputy, and returned to both academic life and a more discrete involvement in Catholic political circles. Nevertheless, he did not lose any opportunity to reaffirm his position as the country's leading specialist in finance, which eventually resulted in an invitation for him to join the first cabinet formed following the 1926 *coup*. However, after noting that the political situation remained highly unstable, Salazar declined the invitation. He was asked again two years later, and this time he accepted, but only on condition that he received important powers over the other ministries in order to resolve the dictatorship's budgetary crisis.

Between 1928 and 1932, the year in which he became Prime Minister, Salazar, with support from the Church and important sections of the armed forces, came to dominate the military dictatorship. Neither the financial crisis nor the policies designed to bring the country out of it favoured the emergence of a 'heroic leadership',<sup>9</sup> while the presence of an elected military president was also a factor rendering the 'charismaticisation' of Salazar less likely. The creation of the single party in 1930, the National Union (UN—*União Nacional*), was another factor working against the development of charismatic leadership under Salazar. Whilst the single party was used to legitimate the dissolution and 'forced unification' of conservative parties supporting the dictatorship, it would never become a party of mass political mobilisation.

The regime's single party, which had been created by the Interior Ministry, was weak and initially controlled by the administration, over which Salazar's rule was complete. Benefiting from a new constitution, which was the product of a compromise between corporatism and liberalism that had been approved in a popular plebiscite in 1933, Salazar created the single party from above, ensuring that it remained weak and elitist from the very outset.<sup>10</sup> The UN was not given any predominant role over either the government or the administration. Its position was simply one of political control; as a tool for the selection of members for the Chamber of Deputies and the local administration, as well as to provide some legitimacy in the regularly held 'non-competitive elections'.<sup>11</sup>

However, the anti-charismatic discourse that apparently sought to reject 'easy popularity' was very rapidly followed by the establishment of a propaganda

apparatus that, alongside political repression, eliminated the fascist alternative – Rolão Preto's National Syndicalist Movement (NS—*Nacional Sindicalismo*) – that existed during the transition to from the military dictatorship to the New State. By 1933, Salazar was being introduced in the official national press as a leader 'who commands like Caesar'.<sup>12</sup> He was a 'caesarist' prime minister of a dictatorship with a military president – General Antonio Carmona – whose political decline was slow and complex.

### 'Chaos' and 'Order': Preto's Fascist Challenge

Paradoxically, it was the military dictatorship that permitted the organisation of a fascist movement in Portugal, and which allowed it to come close to achieving power. As with other processes of transition to authoritarianism that took place during the 1930s, one of the challenges facing the institutionalisation from above of the New State came from below and from the Right. In 1932, a well-known member of Portugal's radical Right succeeded in unifying many others of the radical Right within a clearly fascist organisation. Rolão Preto was to become the charismatic leader of Portuguese National Syndicalism, and was to become one of Salazar's rivals at the beginning of the 1930s.<sup>13</sup>

Fascism arose in Portugal towards the end of the 1920s, attempting to cut across the right-wing political spectrum. Numerous young military officers with influence in the barracks supported it. It also inherited the small militias that had been hurriedly established by the military 'barons', and began to mobilise sections of the working class against an unstable dictatorship that was already dominated by the Catholic 'financial dictator'. As an organised movement, National Syndicalism was a latecomer that aimed to be an alternative to Salazar's authoritarian order.

Preto was very different from Salazar: not only in terms of their personalities, but also in terms of their social origins and political careers. Preto was the youngest of *Integralismo Lusitano's* founders. Born in central Portugal in 1896, he was only 17 years old when he became the managing editor of the first Integralist publication – one of many publications to be founded by Portuguese emigrant students in France and Belgium under the influence of *Action Française*.

Although they were from different generations, Preto always recognised the two writers who most inspired him: Georges Sorel and Georges Valois. As Preto was to confirm in later years, the former was his great master: 'he was the one who did perhaps everything'.<sup>14</sup> During the 1920s it was Valois, the pro-fascist dissident from *Action Française*, who was to become his main reference. Having returned to Portugal on the eve of Sidónio's *coup*, Preto lost no time in consolidating his responsibility for Integralism's 'social' areas. Longer exile and the adventure of war enabled Integralism's youngest leader to forge close links with French intellectual pro-fascism and, in a rare – perhaps even unique – case for any of Integralism's founders, with the Italian pre-fascism of Enrico Corradini and the *Idea Nazionale*. Preto's political activities during the 1920s were dominated by his attempts to 'nationalise' the Portuguese working class via his system of 'organic syndicalism', through which he sought to reconcile 'syndicalism with the monarchy'. During the 1930s he replaced the monarch with a charismatic leadership.

Preto and the other fascists coexisted peacefully within the Integralist family due to the weakness of Integralism as a political organisation, as well as its abandonment of its belief in the restoration of the monarchy as a principal goal, following the premature death of the movement's leader and main ideologue,

António Sardinha, in 1925. With the victorious military *coup* of 1926, Preto was lifted to new political heights. During the brief leadership of General Gomes da Costa in June 1926, Preto attempted to create a militia organisation that, in association with junior military officers, would support the new regime. It was during this time that Preto came closest to exercising real political power, standing as he did in the shadow of the old general. Following Gomes da Costa's overthrow in a palace *coup* in July, the most radical wing of the Integralist family gambled upon the establishment of a fascist party through which the military dictatorship would be controlled.

The first steps toward the organisation of National Syndicalism took place during summer 1932. By the end of that year, National Syndicalism had been fully established, although its leaders denied this for tactical reasons. The organisation's statutes, which were signed by Preto himself, were then published in 1933.<sup>15</sup> The organisational model adopted by National Syndicalism was similar to that adopted by many other European fascist parties. Preto had closely studied the structure of several of these parties, including the early fascist movement in Italy, Valois *Faisceau* and the Spanish JONS.<sup>16</sup>

National Syndicalism's statutes gave its leader complete control. The leader controlled the management of the movement, including the nomination and removal of delegates. He was the one with the ultimate say on any matter concerning the movement, and was charged with upholding 'the movement's doctrine' and ensuring that 'others upheld it'. The leader was thus the true depository of the movement's ideology. This was reflected in the symbols that it used. According to the rules, only Preto was permitted to wear Christ's Cross over a white background on his right arm. This distinguished him from the other leaders.<sup>17</sup>

Preto was the movement's charismatic leader from the start. Despite his control over the organisation, this supremacy, like in other parties of the same generic family, was not tension-free. In the case of Portugal, however, the tensions inherent to personalised leadership were exogenous rather than endogenous: Salazar was the driving force behind the creation of the official party, and had recently been nominated to lead the government.

Although respectful of Preto's leadership, the early statutes established bodies with decision-making powers. At the beginning of 1933, however, when the movement was organised on a national scale, Preto proposed new statutes that eliminated all power sharing. This immediately provoked tensions with a small sector of the organisation, which then sought to reach an understanding with Salazar. Being in the minority, this group accepted Preto's statutes as a provisional position until the organisation's first national congress.

Preto's personality cult grew during 1933 as the movement took to the streets and its leader embarked on a national propaganda tour. The movement's newspapers began to call Preto the *Chefe* (Chief), and internal Party correspondence from the time reveals that he was quite widely revered. His supremacy within the movement was confirmed during its schism, and is reflected in many of the letters from local militants who expressed their loyalty and obedience to him.<sup>18</sup> Following the split, alterations were made to the nomination process, particularly the explicit adoption of 'power by delegation'. In 1934, nomination documents for the district and local commissions begin with the words: 'In the name of Rolão Preto, leader of National Syndicalism, I nominate comrade...'<sup>19</sup> The same was also true of membership application forms, which included an 'honourable agreement' that consisted of an oath of loyalty to the Party and its leader.<sup>20</sup> Former

National Syndicalist militants always referred to Preto's qualities as a public speaker capable of mobilising the masses as his most obvious claim to the charisma of fascist leadership. These were also the qualities that Salazar saw as evidence of 'chaos in the making'.<sup>21</sup>

National Syndicalism was constructed around the charismatic figure that brought together the pre-existing groups previously been dominated by Integralism. The formation of this fascist party is an example of the penetration model of party organisation, in which the party was created around an individual personality, the small core of 'political entrepreneurs' with whom he associated, and the local groups that were established or reorganised to ensure loyalty to his leadership.<sup>22</sup>

The Party's structure was initially fluid and dispersed. Various links that were inherited from previous political experiences and conspiracies remained strong, affecting the Party's internal functioning. Preto's authority was challenged on several occasions, albeit in subtle and disguised forms, and criticisms on the lack of any clear definition caused increasing internal tensions right up to the first national congress. Despite this challenge, the leader remained the organisation's focal point.

Moreover, the demonstrations organised by National Syndicalism introduced Portugal to the choreography of fascism. Paramilitary parades, combat songs, and the charismatic ritualisation of Rolão Preto were trademarks of the movement's political activities. The movement's presence on the streets began during September 1932, reaching a high point at the 1933 Party rallies in Lisbon and Oporto. In response to this increasing crescendo of activity, anti-fascist activities became more commonplace and, from mid-1933 onwards, confrontations between opposing political factions became more widespread.

The first rallies were local, and relied upon the support of sympathisers within the administration, many of whom were military officers. Their presence in the rallies was important to the construction of Preto's leadership. The example of a 1932 rally in the small town of Alenquer provides a faithful picture of the choreography of the National Syndicalist rally. The local delegation had announced that there would be a rally for Alenquer's working classes, and that Preto would address this meeting. The language of the publicity leaflets revealed the National Syndicalists proclaiming the unity of all Portuguese people against 'those who have sold themselves to foreigners and proclaim a class conflict that generates the confusion that they take advantage of in order to obtain their secret goals'.<sup>23</sup> Their rallying cry was anti-communist, favouring 'social justice' and 'the family, the municipality and the union'. Preto arrived in Alenquer with the young leaders, and was met by a uniformed local delegation who then escorted him in a cortege to the town hall, where he was welcomed by local dignitaries.

This pattern was repeated in several of the provincial towns and villages that were visited by Preto and his entourage. It was becoming customary to address him as *Chefe*. The image of Preto dressed in his militia uniform was prominent in all of the movement's publications, and he was routinely described as having 'a strong personality'. In short, Preto and National Syndicalism became synonymous: the latter could only exist with the former.<sup>24</sup>

Preto's speeches all followed the same simple pattern. National Syndicalism was described as being the vanguard of the 'National Revolution' representing, as it did, the dictatorship's young supporters. He criticised conservatives and those

who had 'infiltrated' the revolution, and never missed the opportunity to raise the 'social question' by constantly repeating his mantra that National Syndicalism's aim was to 'raise the working class out of, and prevent the middle class from falling into, the proletariat'.<sup>25</sup>

From 1933 on, Preto had to face up to constant attacks on his movement by various regime supporters, particularly from republican and Catholic groups. Internal National Syndicalist correspondence reveals that Preto had been counting on a disillusioned and pressurised military to remove Salazar from power. In a series of articles, Preto accused Salazar of being a man of the 'centre', while 'the leaders of the nations that had been liberated from the ruins of Europe had, in a demonstration of their faith in military virtues, adopted the combat shirt and the uniform as their dress code'.<sup>26</sup> Salazar's 'cold empiricism' was a reflection of his dispassionate 'financial dictatorship'; for Preto, 'only totalitarian formulae [are able to] evoke passion'.<sup>27</sup>

Salazar maintained a prudent distance between National Syndicalism and himself, and lost no opportunity to emphasise the differences between his doctrines and policies, and those of Preto and his followers. He condemned their admiration for totalitarianism, a practice that 'tends towards a pagan caesarism, and will lead to a "New State" that does not know the limits of moral or judicial order'.<sup>28</sup> While Preto's supporters were in Braga on 26 May 1933, where they were commemorating the anniversary of the 1926 *coup* by holding military-style parades, Salazar was denouncing their 'feverish, excited discontent ... [as when] faced with the impossible, continue to shout: more! more!'.<sup>29</sup> The following September, Salazar decided to act. The regime offered to officially recognise National Syndicalism, but only on the condition that Preto and his lieutenants be removed from their positions of leadership. This officially backed schism ultimately failed, as those who had been tempted by Salazar's offer failed in their attempt to remove Preto. As his relationship with several important military leaders remained tense, and given that he remained dependent upon the president's support, Salazar avoided any direct confrontation. It was not until the following year that he felt confident enough to order the banning of National Syndicalism, forcing its leaders, Preto and Monsaraz, into exile in Spain.

In September 1935, National Syndicalism, in alliance with many other groups opposed to Salazar, rose up in an ultimately unsuccessful *coup* against the regime. This failure marked the end of organised fascism in Portugal, with many former National Syndicalists joining the regime, especially following the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, when the regime adopted a certain fascist choreography. Nevertheless, this process of integrating former fascists into Salazar's New State was a deliberately weak one, and bore all the hallmarks of regime elite's bureaucratic caution.

### **Salazar's 'Constructed' Charisma: Decision-Making and the Role of Institutions**

Above all, Salazar was a master of the manipulation of a perverted rational-legal legitimacy: he had little need to seek recourse in charismatic leadership to rise above the bureaucratic and governmental mediation between himself and the 'nation'.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the military origins of the regime ensured that his position remained linked to that of the president, General Carmona, who had been voted

in through direct elections, and who retained the authority to dismiss any of his appointed officials, including Salazar.

The extensive centralisation of decision-making within Salazar's regime clearly justifies the use of the term 'strong dictator' to describe the manner in which Salazar exercised power. Cold and distant from his ministerial colleagues and supporters, Salazar instead cultivated a small circle of trusted 'political counselors'. The main trait of Salazar's governmental style was his almost obsessive concern for the minutiae. While most of Europe's other dictators concentrated on areas of central importance to their own person – areas such as foreign policy, internal security, the armed forces, and so on – Salazar also initially retained control of the more technical portfolios.

Some of these characteristics were evident from the very moment Salazar took office as Minister of Finance in 1928. Once elevated to the office of prime minister, his attention extended into practically every area of legislation, going far beyond the requirements for control that were common in other dictatorial political systems. Despite surrounding himself with highly competent ministers, Salazar refused to allow them anything but the smallest margin for autonomous decision-making. The amount of information to which he had access was indeed impressive, and extended far below that appropriate to the ministerial level.

The history of relations between Salazar and his ministers during the 1930s is one of the concentration of decision-making power into the person of the prime minister. The corollary of this is that both cabinet ministers and the president saw a reduction in their authority. Inevitably this led to the rapid elimination of any sense of collegiality within the cabinet, and there was a drastic reduction in the number of times this body met after 1933.

The main characteristic of this concentration of power to Salazar is further reflected in his formal accumulation of the most important ministerial portfolios; that is to say, in the accumulation of those portfolios that Salazar himself believed to be the most important. Consequently, Salazar was Minister of Finance from 1928 to 1940, Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1936 to 1947 and, in an attempt to secure his control over the military, Minister of War from 1936 to 1944.<sup>31</sup>

Another characteristic of Salazar's relationship with his ministers was that he emphasised the 'technical' nature of their function. The truly political areas of the regime were not, in general, accorded ministerial rank, as Salazar dealt with these directly. This was the case, for example, with Anónio Ferro's National Propaganda Secretariat (SPN—*Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional*), which reported directly to the prime minister. Another example of this trend was the Under-secretariat of State for Corporations and Social Welfare (SECPS—*Sub-secretaria de Estado das Corporações e Previdência Social*), which did not achieve cabinet rank until 1945. Salazar's official explanation was that, despite 'politics, as a human art, [being] forever necessary as long as mankind exists; government ... will increasingly be a scientific and technical function'.<sup>32</sup>

However, as a political regime, it is important to note that the central location of power and decision-making remained with Salazar and his government. It was they who were responsible for the great majority of the decisions. In many dictatorial regimes, both the government and its administration were, to some extent, subjected to interference from a single-party that had become an influential organisation. This did not happen in Portugal. There, the centrally controlled public administration remained the main instrument through which dictatorial authority was exercised.<sup>33</sup> When the regime created organisations like the paramilitary

youth movement, *Mocidade Portuguesa* (MP—Portuguese Youth), and the anti-communist militia, *Legião Portuguesa* (LP—Portuguese Legion), these came under the control of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of the Interior, respectively. This remained unchanged for the entire lifetime of the regime.<sup>34</sup>

The SPN, which was paraded as the great ‘nationalistic’ institution of the 1930s, perhaps represented the most consistent effort at the ‘reinvention of tradition’ and the construction of the cult of the dictator by any official governmental organisation. This agency, which was headed by António Ferro, a cosmopolitan journalist and admirer of Italian Fascism, organised large demonstrations in which the masses could participate, and which would appeal to their sense of the aesthetic. These events were usually accompanied with the unveiling of statues celebrating Portugal’s medieval past and the age of discoveries.<sup>35</sup>

The Portuguese regime radicalised with the outbreak of civil war in neighbouring Spain in 1936. Some of the regime’s organisations that had been inspired by the fascist example, like the MP and LP, introduced elements of the cult of the leader. Nevertheless, the centres were always discrete from one another and, despite the homogenisation that was a result of censorship, they never succeeded in giving off anything other than parallel signals. A more traditional conservatism continued to dominate the majority of the written press, which was closer to the paternalistic ‘prime ministerial’ model of dictatorial leadership than that of the ‘leader’ of the Portuguese Legion; of the ‘country of folklore and dams’ before the ‘para-military country’; of the ‘country of the National Union’ before the ‘country of national unions’. The Church, both through its influence within official institutions and by its powerful nucleus of autonomous institutions, was transformed into a powerful and complementary instrument of ideological socialisation. Nationalism and ‘providence’ both completed and introduced elements of diversity into the official discourse.

The ‘Lesson of Salazar’ included in schoolbooks of the 1930s provided a picture of Salazarism’s ‘new man’. This new man lived in the country, was respectful, obedient, and God-fearing. He was happy with his place in society and in the nation; proud of his country’s past, as represented by the medieval castle; and he took care of his wife and children. Other components could be added to this ‘ideal’ man, with a more mobilisational appeal being directed toward the young and those in the militia; however, what is important to note is that the picture remained here, perhaps intentionally unclear, but also much more inclusive.

While Portugal experienced some fascist inflections with the MP, LP, and the SPN, through its pagan ‘leader cult’, more ‘warrior’ and ‘communitarian’, the ‘nationalisation’ of Portuguese society was systematically – and with very few difficulties – dominated by conservatives and Catholics. It was they who constructed the paternalistic image of the dictator as ‘saviour’.

Portugal’s single party, which was kept organisationally weak and dependent, was never an important element in either the political decision-making process or in the selection of the ministerial elite. Nor was it important for the creation of an autonomous ‘army of followers’.<sup>36</sup> The Party’s main function was to select the local and parliamentary elite, and therefore it remained devoid of any mobilising organisations. There was there a complete absence of tension between the UN and the regime, and neither the dictatorial system nor the political decision-making and implementation processes were ever threatened by the existence of autonomous political institutions that remained directly subordinate to Salazar.

## Conclusion

The crisis and collapse of democracy, and the transition to authoritarianism in Portugal, is a period fertile in charismatic junctures. Sidónio Pais's short dictatorship, which took place within the context of a crisis that had been provoked by war, is a precocious example of this. Nevertheless, even in the context of the forceful personalisation of politics so characteristic of the First Portuguese Republic, the appeal to the military effectively closed off political space to the small fascist groups. It was only later, during the military dictatorship of 1926, that these groups were able to assume any weight. On the other hand, we must not underestimate the extent to which certain institutions, such as the armed forces and the Catholic Church, occupied the 'crisis space', nor can we ignore the royalist myth of monarchical restoration as a factor capable of mobilising certain segments of the political elite.

The 28 May 1926 *coup* that brought the military to power in Portugal marked the beginning of a series of failed attempts by the military leaders to secure their regime. Attempts to install a military leader continued until Salazar's arrival in government. His 'rise to power' was a result of elite manipulation, with there being no popular involvement at all in the process. The Church, the small Catholic party, and some military officers were much more important to Salazar's rise. The short-lived challenge of the National Syndicalists contributed towards the outward 'fascistisation' of the dictatorship.

Salazar is an excellent example of the *post hoc* construction of a personality cult and the 'charismatisation' by a propaganda apparatus that was only partially inspired by the fascist model, and only then in reaction to the emergence of rival fascist organisations, and as a way of appealing to and integrating their members. The Portuguese dictator thus cannot be considered a charismatic leader in the strict Weberian sense. The existing confusion between, on the one hand, the personalisation of power or the emergence of a leadership cult as it was developed by the propaganda apparatus that is inherent to the majority of the twentieth century dictatorships and charisma on the other, is great, and has at times characterised analyses of Salazarism. The Portuguese dictator, however, did not emulate either the German Nazi 'polyarchy' model, or Mussolini's 'cult of the Duce' and its powerful political socialisation apparatus. Salazar never went beyond the classic institutional decision-making mechanisms of an authoritarian state.

Without a strong single party that held the monopoly on ideology, propaganda, and the organisation of the masses, the Portuguese New State did not codify the 'cult of the leader' in any way comparable to that which existed in Mussolini's Italy or Hitler's Germany. Even in neighbouring Spain, Franco, who was the leader of a military 'crusade' that emerged victorious from the bloody Civil War, better fits the charismatic triangle. The 'charismatisation' of Salazar nevertheless illustrates the attractive and diffuse capacity of both the fascist leaders and their charismatic appeal, as expressed through their leadership cults and charismatic organisations upon more 'traditional' right wing dictatorships during the interwar years.

## Notes

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13. A. C. Pinto, "Elites, Single Parties and Political Decision-Making in Fascist-Era Dictatorships", *Contemporary European History* 11/3 (2002), pp.429-54.
14. Cf. J. Medina, *Salazar e os Fascistas. Salazarismo e Nacional-Sindicalismo: A História de um Conflito, 1932-1935*, (Lisbon: Bertrand, 1977).
15. F. R. Preto, *Orgânica do Movimento Nacional Sindicalista* (Lisbon: Nacional Sindicalismo, 1933).
16. R. Soucy, *Le Fascisme Français, 1924-1933* (Paris: PUF, 1989); S. G. Payne, *Fascism in Spain* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999).
17. Preto (note 15).
18. At the end of 1933, during the pro-Salazar schism, Preto received a number of eulogistic letters. The most interesting of these came from small branches in the north of the country. Amongst those received at the end of 1933 was one from the Moncorvo branch, which stated that 'for our Single Leader the moral oath of the Trench of Félgar.... When there is need for the greatest sacrifice, the clamour will be filled with desire. Forward! So that no one may shame us.' Letter from an unknown member of National Syndicalism to Rolão Preto, 30 December 1933, *Arquivo Rolão Preto* (ARP).
19. Process 1771/SPS, PIDE/DGS Archive, ANTT.
20. The second principal stated: 'I accept ... that the leader ...', while the third stated that 'I recognise Rolão Preto as the only leader of the movement.' Process 1771/SPS, PIDE/DGS Archive, ANTT.
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23. Communique from the Alenquer branch of National Syndicalism, 5 November 1932.
24. *Revolução dos Trabalhadores*, 4 February 1933.
25. *Revolução dos Trabalhadores*, 25 February 1933.
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