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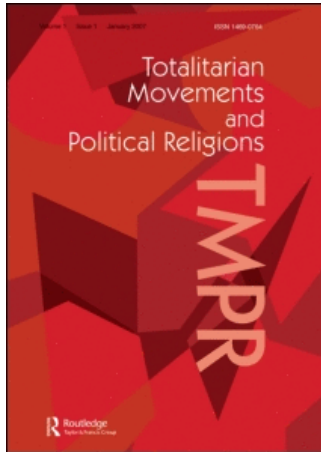
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Political Catholicism, Crisis of Democracy and Salazar's New State in Portugal

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In interwar European conservative circles, António de Oliveira Salazar's New State was praised for being an example of a 'good' dictatorship: one that avoided the 'totalitarian' and 'pagan' elements of both Mussolini and Hitler. Salazar, Portugal's 'Catholic dictator', was a political product of the war of secularisation that followed the country's republican revolution in 1910. The leaders of the 1910 revolution believed that Catholicism was holding Portuguese society back; in the years that followed, the cleavage between the church and their regime was to increasingly radicalise them. Co-existing with and permeating other Catholic Southern European societies, this secularising movement, which was often linked to the difficult consolidation of democratising republicanism, became a powerful engine that drove the ideological and political conflict during the transitions from oligarchic to democratic liberalism.¹

The main hypothesis of this paper is that the compromise between the Roman Catholic Church and the Portuguese state formed the basis for the institutional framework of Salazar's New State. The church was also a powerful agent against the 'fascistisation' of some of the regime's institutions, 'Catholicising' them (particularly the corporatist apparatus and the youth movement), whilst simultaneously maintaining its strong and independent Catholic Action movement.

The Secularisation Cleavage and the Breakdown of Portuguese Democracy

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Portugal was a non-industrialised country governed by a stable 'oligarchic parliamentary' system: the 'age of the masses' was inaugurated in Portugal without many of the upheavals that affected democratic regimes – either in terms of crises or overthrow – elsewhere in inter-war Europe. On the eve of the twentieth century, both Portuguese state and nation coincided in conditions of cultural homogeneity: there were no national or ethno-cultural minorities, nor were there Portuguese populations in neighbouring countries; there were no religious or ethno-linguistic minorities; dialects were rare, found only in some areas near the Spanish border. Thus, historical and cultural variables that were so apparent elsewhere were either negligible or absent.²

From the beginning of the twentieth century, the republicans applied strategies of populist electoral and social mobilisation that successfully eroded the system of *caciquismo* [clientelism], upon which the monarchist *rotativismo* [rotation]

system was based. The Republican Party's programme was flexible: it made successful use of nationalist and anti-clerical themes, and advocated political participation as well as the right to strike – one of the weak labour movement's demands. Portuguese society did not fully meet the economic, social and cultural requirements for the formation of a civic political culture when the republicans overthrew the monarchy and began implementing their political programme; consequently, the republican political system became what Mattei Dogan has called – in reference to Romania – a 'mimic democracy'.³

The republican elites adopted a programme of universal suffrage, anti-clericalism and nationalism based upon the fight against dependence on the United Kingdom and the defence of Portugal's colonial heritage. As early as 1910, legislation for swift secularisation was passed and a strong, urban, anti-clerical movement emerged. These measures, mostly inspired by those taken five years earlier by the French Third Republic, had a profound impact on the Catholic hierarchy.⁴ Suffrage was not extended, however, the pretext being the pro-monarchist revolts that had broken out from bases in Spain. The Democratic Party, successor to the Republican Party after the defection of key leaders in the wake of the revolution, became the ruling party.

The establishment of a parliamentary regime, with the approval of the new republican constitution in 1911, was undertaken by a parliament dominated almost entirely by the Republican Party. Yet they still did not implement universal suffrage, arguing that rural *caciquismo* made such a move impossible. Indeed, pressure for the implementation of universal suffrage was very limited (if not non-existent) at the 1911 constitutional assembly. Demands 'from below' were also very weak, both because of the rural world's absence from the political arena, and the anti-participatory tendencies of the urban working class's 'active minorities'. The republic also put an end to the constitutional monarchy's two-party system, and replaced it with a dominant-party, multi-party system. The Republican Party had been the first quasi-mass party during the final years of the monarchy: with the 1910 revolution, however, dissident conservative members of the party left to create the Unionist and the Evolutionist parties. However, these were never more than groups of notables.

One of republican propaganda's main themes was the call for secularisation; it is therefore unsurprising that the first political battle of the 1910 revolution was fought over religion. During the first days following the revolution, a large anti-clerical movement swept through Lisbon. Several convents were closed. Religious orders, such as the Jesuits, were expelled from the country. Supporting legislation was passed: on 3 November, a law legalising divorce was introduced; a month later a new law attributed marriage an 'exclusively civil status'. Strict regulations were imposed upon religious ceremonies held without churches, and all religious rites within state institutions, such as the courts, the universities and the armed forces, were abolished.⁵ The government's response to the church hierarchy's reaction was to forbid the reading of the latter's pastoral letter. This action led the Vatican to sever all relations with the Portuguese state: by 1912, all but one Portuguese bishop had been dismissed from their diocese.

The religious/secularisation cleavage soon became a focal point for Portuguese political life which endured, despite later attempts at reconciliation, until 1926. This cleavage resulted in the creation of a new Catholic movement, the *Centro Católico* [Catholic Centre], which had close links to the church hierarchy and which also displayed some authoritarian tendencies. The *Centro Católico's* social-Catholicism

was soon to become a corporatist, authoritarian alternative to liberal republicanism, demonstrated by its support for Sidónio Pais' dictatorship in 1917.⁶ Largely dependent upon the church hierarchy, and having the recuperation of the church's lost rights as part of its political programme, political Catholicism occupied an elitist space as a consequence of the nature of the republican political system and the absence of universal suffrage.⁷ The second cleavage of this period was expressed in the resistance to the regime of a small, but relatively strong, nucleus of monarchists who were unconnected with the liberal parties that had been dissolved in 1910. In 1911 and 1912, two pro-monarchist incursions, led by Paiva Couceiro – a former cavalry officer with ceasarist leanings who had led Portugal's campaigns to occupy its African colonies at the turn of the century – were launched from Galicia in Spain. Couceiro's followers included a number of young men who, upon their return from exile in 1914, were to form *Integralismo Lusitano* [Lusitanian Integralism], a movement based on the same Maurrasian ideology as that which guided *Action Française* (AF).

The first political manifestation of fascism to emerge in Portugal was associated with this part of the radical right during the 1920s, a faction closer to reactionary royalism. Rolão Preto was the pioneer of Portuguese fascism: as leader of Integralismo's 'social' section he formed a syndicalist party section and founded the newspaper *Revolução* [Revolution] (1922–23). Nevertheless, the rise of fascism in interwar Portugal was characterised both by its early adoption of the Italian fascist model and its weak and fragmented political expression.

Although the interwar crisis produced other movements that were not influenced by Integralismo, the movement's ability to present a new, reactionary ideological package was decisive. Despite the obvious foreign influences, this was legitimate in the Portuguese cultural context. Integralismo's ideological vigour and its capacity to permeate the elites thus conditioned fascist development and penetration in Portugal. As a Portuguese sociologist has commented: 'At a time when Italian Fascist and Nazi models assumed 'world-historical' importance, those most predisposed to learn from and emulate them were all grounded in the teachings and intellectual style of Integralism'.⁸ Indeed, almost all attempts to establish fascist parties – the last and most successful of which was National Syndicalism – were shaped by Integralismo.

Integralism established durable foundations for a new, reactionary nationalism in Portugal: it reinvented the 'tradition' of an 'organic' and corporatist society based upon the conception of a medieval Portugal that had been destroyed by 'imported' nineteenth-century liberalism. The idea of universal suffrage was replaced by a vision of the corporatist representation of the family, the city and town councils, as well as the professions. Parliament was rejected in favour of an advisory national assembly representing the nation's *forças vivas* [economic and social forces]. In response to the liberal state's centralisation, destruction of local community life and uncontrolled urbanisation, Integralismo advocated an anti-cosmopolitan and bucolic decentralisation that would allow an 'eminently agricultural country to fulfil its historical mission'. Corporatist representation thus became the antidote to a liberal economy and the 'disastrous agitation of class struggle'.⁹

Although it underwent fascist-leaning changes in the interwar period, the ideology of Integralismo's founders remained traditionally anti-liberal. Its 'historical' nationalism was the expression of a rural reaction to industrialisation. Socialism and communism were seen as variants of liberalism and democracy, undeserving of great attention. Masonry and anti-clerical (or Jacobin) republican-

ism remained its great enemies, although a new generation of young, Sorelian Integralists emerged which was to 'postpone' the republic-monarchy cleavage. Organisations such as the Nuno Álvares Crusade testify to this: it united Sidonistas, Catholics, Integralists and fascists. The Integralists also received significant support from members of the armed forces, who played an important anti-democratic role in some conspiratorial groups.

Unlike the *Centro Católico*, which was linked to the church hierarchy and therefore more cautious, the Integralists played a key role in conspiratorial and propaganda activities. An important sector of the civilian radical right had lent support to the 1926 coup, while conservative republican leaders also emerged to join the small and elitist extreme right-wing groups that supported military intervention and formed factions within the armed forces. Francisco Cunha Leal, a leader of the Nationalist Party, was one such leader. Leal had been calling for military intervention since 1923, and negotiated a *post facto* political arrangement with parts of the military. These groups were instrumental in giving the military a political programme that transcended the mere call for 'order in the streets and in the government'. Yet military intervention in republican politics predated the interwar period, as did persistent factionalism in the ranks of the military. The main difference between the pre-war interventions and the 1926 coup lies in three factors: the proliferation of corporate tensions within the army as an institution; increasing tensions of the same kind within the government; and the growing unity of the military in its political interventions.

Sidónio's assassination and the return of the liberal regime threw a good number of these officers into the orbit of the radical right. The failure of the 1919 monarchist uprising sounded the death-knell for further restorationist revolts, and the Integralists began to back all right-wing military candidates campaigning for the overthrow of the republic. Integralists acted as the 'civilian link' in a number of coup attempts, including that of 18 April 1925. Widespread civilian participation in that attempted coup enabled contacts with the more radical lieutenants and with Manuel Gomes da Costa – the maverick general who led the 1926 uprising – to be consolidated. As he marched to Lisbon from Braga, in the north of the country, Gomes da Costa negotiated his new powers with conservative republicans headed by Admiral Mendes Cabeçadas. There was little military resistance to the coup; civilian mobilisation was similarly absent. The legacy of the parliamentary republic, and the outcome of its legitimacy crisis, led to the establishment of an unstable military dictatorship.

Although the Integralists played an important role in the first phase of this dictatorship, the new political situation divided them. On one hand, a large proportion of the youth sector and some military men supported fascism; on the other hand, the hardliners within Integralismo's central junta remained faithful to the monarchy, and supported projects seeking to install a new and radically anti-liberal corporatist order. This latter group viewed both Salazar's subsequent rise to power and the hybrid political institutions he created with suspicion. A good part withdrew into the various fascist oriented organisations, later forming the core of *Movimento Nacional-Sindicalista* [National Syndicalist Movement, MNS] in 1932; however, many of those belonging to Integralismo's so-called 'second generation', including Marcello Caetano (Salazar's eventual successor in the late 1960s), supported Salazar.

Yet the secularisation cleavage was perhaps the most important of those created by the First Republic. Even in cultural terms, Portugal was a good example of how

there is little space for the emergence of a 'fascist intelligentsia' when 'the hostile response to modern society and the concomitant rejection of liberalism and democratisation remain embedded in traditional religious forms, and reactionary or conservative politics is linked to the defence of the position of the church'.¹⁰ The Church and the *Centro Católico* thus constituted a powerful obstacle to the 'fascistisation' of academic and intellectual elites, occupying a key political space in the anti-democratic reaction. Another important cleavage was that of the regime. Indeed, it was the 'regime question' that broke the understanding between Integralists and social-Catholics, both of whom were defenders of authoritarian corporatism as an alternative to liberalism.

Salazar, Fascism and the Centro Católico

The coup of 28 May 1926 was, as expected, welcomed by both the church hierarchy and the Portuguese Catholic Church. However, the military dictatorship did not simply restore the situation that existed prior to 5 October 1910. Nevertheless, goodwill signs were apparent: confiscated property was restored to the church; religious education was reintroduced; previously expelled religious orders were allowed to return; the state signed the 1928 Missionary Agreement; and the Sacred Heart of Our Lady was rededicated. Both the church and ordinary Catholics were to become the first and most visible of the military dictatorship's supporters.

Confrontation with republican radicalism was proof of the need for Catholic unity: the dictatorship offered the conditions for this to become a reality. Catholic unity and obedience was the dominant message in the pastoral letter issued by Portuguese bishops in 1930.¹¹ This missive advocated the creation of a 'disciplined and strong army' that was ready to engage in 'the Lord's battles', whilst also calling for the church to be united and disciplined. This was a new strategic conception, one that was translated into the spirit of crusade developed and amplified in the most diverse demonstrations in the following decades.

The Catholics invested enormous hope in the new order. António Salazar, the leader of the government, had begun his career in the church's politicised party and was a noted Catholic and personal friend of the Cardinal-Patriarch. For many, Salazar's rise was providential and offered Catholics and the Church sufficient guarantees of respect, protection and freedom of action: his presence signified the end of persecutions and spoliations, and offered the possibility for the restoration of the church's former prestige and influence.

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 on the eve of the fall of the monarchy and instead studied law at the University of Coimbra. A reserved and brilliant student, he led the best-known Catholic student organisation in Coimbra, the *Centro Académico de Democracia Cristã* [Christian Democratic Academic Centre, CADC]. His important friendship with the future Cardinal-Patriarch of Lisbon, Manuel Cerejeira, also dates from this period. He pursued a university career as a professor of economic law, and his only political activity during the liberal republic (1910–26) took place within the strict limits of the social-Catholic movement. He was one of the leaders of *Centro Católico*, and as such, was elected a parliamentary deputy in the 1921 elections. With the early dissolution of this parliament in July 1921, Salazar left Lisbon and returned to academic life and a more discrete

involvement in Catholic political circles. Nevertheless, he accepted every opportunity to reaffirm his position as the country's leading specialist in finances, which eventually resulted in an invitation to join the first cabinet following the 1926 military coup; however, noting that the political situation remained highly unstable, Salazar declined the invitation. Two years later he was asked again and this time he accepted, but only on condition that he received substantial powers over the other ministries in order to resolve the dictatorship's budgetary crisis.

The image Salazar cultivated was that of a reserved, puritanical and provincial dictator; it was an image that held sway until his death, and one that he never attempted to change. As a young Catholic militant he left Portugal only once, to take part in a Catholic congress in Belgium. Similarly, after taking power, he made a single trip to Spain in order to meet with Franco. He ruled over a colonial empire but never visited a single colony during the 36 years of his rule; yet it would be a mistake to assume that his provincialism reflected a lack of political culture. Salazar was an 'academic' dictator who followed international politics and ideas of the times very closely. He was ideologically and culturally traditional, anti-liberal, Catholic and integralist in the context of secularisation and accelerated modernisation. He was also ultra-conservative, in the most literal sense of the term; he steadfastly defended his rejection of democracy, favouring an 'organic' vision of society based on traditional, Catholic foundations. In short, as the nation's leader, he was aware of the inevitability of modernisation, but also acutely aware of the threat it represented.

The systematic, cartesian nature of his speeches provides a good indication of his political thought. He always addressed the elite, never succumbing to populist mass appeals, and as an economist he had clear ideas about the management of a state's balance sheet. Portugal's dictator rejected the fascist model of charismatic leadership for ideological and political reasons, not out of pragmatism; he rejected it even more because of the nature of Portuguese society, the structure of which was not unlike that of societies subjected to a more fascist type of populism. As a 'strong' dictator, he rarely decentralised decisions, and he relied on a docile administration.

Paradoxically, it was the military dictatorship that facilitated the organisation of a fascist movement in Portugal, and which enabled it to come close to achieving power. As in the other processes of transition to authoritarianism that took place during the 1930s, one of the main challenges facing the institutionalisation of the New State from above came from below and from the right. In 1932, a well-known member of Portugal's radical right succeeded in unifying many of his peers within a clearly fascist organisation. Rolão Preto was to become the charismatic leader of the MNS and, consequently, one of Salazar's main rivals at the beginning of the 1930s.¹²

Fascism arose in Portugal towards the end of the 1920s, and attempted to cut across the right-wing political spectrum: numerous young military officers with influence in the barracks gave Preto their support. Portuguese fascism also inherited the small militias that had been hurriedly established by the military 'barons', and began to mobilise sections of the working class in the context of an unstable dictatorship already dominated by a Catholic 'financial dictator'. As an organised movement, MNS was a latecomer attempting to pose as an alternative to Salazar's authoritarian order.

To be sure, Preto was very different from Salazar: not only in terms of personality, but also in terms of social origins and political career. Preto was the youngest

of Integralism's founders; born in central Portugal in 1896, he was only seventeen years old when he became managing editor of Integralismo's first publication – one of many to be established by the Portuguese emigrant students in France and Belgium influenced by Action Française. Although they were from different generations, Preto always acknowledged his debt to the two writers who most inspired him: Georges Sorel and Georges Valois. As he was to confirm in later years, the former was his great master: 'he was the one who did perhaps everything'.¹³ During the 1920s, however, it was Valois – the pro-fascist Action Française dissident – who was to become Preto's main reference. Having returned to Portugal on the eve of the Sidónio coup, Preto lost no time in consolidating his responsibility for Integralism's 'social' areas. Longer exile and the adventure of war enabled Integralismo's youngest leader to forge close links with French intellectual pro-fascism and, in a rare—perhaps even unique—case for any of Integralismo's founders, with the Italian pre-fascism of Corradini and the *Idea Nazionale* [National Idea].

Unusually, Preto and the other fascists were able to peacefully co-exist within the Integralist family. This was largely due to the weakness of Integralismo as a political organisation and its abandonment, following the death of the movement's young leader and chief ideologue, António Sardinha in 1925, of its belief in the restoration of the monarchy as its principal goal. With the victorious military coup of 1926, Preto was raised 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 of that same year, 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 towards the organisation of MNS took place during the summer of 1932. By the end of that year it had been fully established, although, for tactical reasons, its leaders denied this. The organisational model adopted by the movement 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's Faisceau in France and the Spanish JONS.¹⁴

The hierarchy of the Catholic Church and the Catholic Centre – key political elements within the dictatorship from the overthrow of Gomes da Costa onwards – was an important obstacle to fascist development. Although they shared part of the Integralist programme, differences between Catholics and Integralists during the interwar period developed into open animosity between the two groups. The church began to criticise the fascist and Integralist doctrines developed during the 1920s, and after the 1926 coup, Portuguese Catholicism increased pressures against militia-style parties that promoted an 'exaggerated nationalism'.¹⁵ For the church ultimately feared that power holders, and the military in particular, might support the fascists. When the MNS announced the creation of a nationalist student organisation that included 'monarchists, republicans, Catholics and atheists', the official church paper, *Novidades* [New], responded by stating that 'only a nationalism that professes statism, and which seeks to replace religious faith with a socio-political mysticism, can include Catholics and atheists – both bowing before a new god: the divine state'. Tellingly, the article concluded that 'no true Catholic can accept this'.¹⁶ From the autumn of 1932 onwards, these attacks

increased in number and intensity; National Syndicalist positions were denounced as anti-Catholic for exacerbating old quarrels between the church, Action Française and Italian Fascism.¹⁷ The official Church press condemned these movements for promoting a 'pagan and agnostic nationalism', a heresy that slighted 'eternal truths in order to revere a deified state'.¹⁸

Fascist leaders deliberately ignored their critics and continued to proclaim their loyalty to Catholicism. Some branches in the north, where many Integralist parish priests were also active as local MNS leaders, reacted strongly. Yet *Novidades* insisted on reasserting its criticism of 'political syndicalism', denying that MNS had any Christian traits: on the contrary, it was 'influenced by an excess of nationalism and practical secularism, a fact that has earned similar movements in other countries the condemnation of the church'. The only solution was for fascism to 'Christianise itself and become part of the social-Catholic movement for which the known, confirmed and practised forces of truth and justice constitute the only instruments capable of defending societies threatened by revolutionary violence'.¹⁹

The church hierarchy also cooperated with local authorities against MNS, particularly in attempting to isolate areas where the party was politically powerful within municipal councils. Meanwhile, the church supported the consolidation of authoritarian rule, and was content to see the regime adopt Catholic principles in its activities, ideology and symbolism.

Salazar maintained a prudent distance between himself and MNS, and lost no opportunity to emphasise the differences between his views and those of Preto and his followers. He condemned the appeal of totalitarianism, a doctrine that 'tends towards a pagan Caesarism, and which will lead to a "New State" that does not know the limits of moral or judicial order'.²⁰ 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!'.²¹ The following September, Salazar decided to act: the regime offered to officially recognise MNS, but on condition that Preto and his lieutenants were 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. Since 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 ban MNS and force its leaders – Preto and Alberto Monsaraz – into exile in Spain.

In September 1935, MNS, in alliance with several 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 in 1936, when Salazarism adopted a certain fascist choreography. Nevertheless, this process of integrating former fascists into Salazar's New State was deliberately weak, and bore all the hallmarks of the regime elite's bureaucratic caution.

'Catholicising Institutions'

Corporatism was one of the fundamentals of the Salazarist new order: it was written into the constitution and given a central role in determining institutional

structures, ideology, relations with 'organised interests' and the state's economic policy. Corporatism, however, is not specific to fascism; generally speaking, the term has covered a wide ideological spectrum within the authoritarian right since the beginning of the twentieth century. Corporatism was also a key legitimating element for authoritarian regimes in Austria, Spain, Vichy France and Portugal.

However, if corporatism was one of the fundamentals of the Salazarist new order, Salazar did not give the corporatist sector a monopoly on representation, despite pressures from the radical right to do so. Elections were held, but the Corporatist Chamber retained merely consultative status in a powerless National Assembly. The Portuguese corporatist edifice was thus never completed: its influence on economic policy or its capacity to act as a buffer against social conflict, however, are worthy of detailed study. Although no corporations were created to represent the 'organic elements of the nation' in the Corporatist Chamber, no intermediate organisations emerged either. The distance between constituencies and members of the chamber was maintained. Consequently, procurators were chosen by the Corporatist Council, which consisted of Salazar and the ministers and secretaries of state for the sectors involved (such as the Ministry of Economy).

The lynchpin of the corporatist structure was the 1933 *Estatuto do Trabalho Nacional* [National Labour Statute, ETN], along with the 'industrial conditioning' law. The ETN was largely based on the Italian Fascist *Carta del Lavoro* [Labour Charter], although naturally tempered by the New State's strong Catholic leanings. The statute, approved in September 1933, sought to establish a synthesis between the Italian model and the ideals of social-Catholicism. The founder of the Portuguese corporatist system, Pedro Teotónio Pereira, was a friend of Salazar's. He was also a former Integralist who united young radical right-wingers as well as social-Catholic civil servants within his department (he was Secretary of State for Corporations). Unsurprisingly, Rolão Preto's fascists were explicitly excluded from the enterprise.

From the 1930s on, the official version of Portuguese history was rigidly codified. History was revised and relative pluralism eliminated, pursuant to the slogan: 'Everything for the nation; nothing against the nation'. As early as 1932, the Minister of Education drew up a new policy that greatly strengthened 'the family as a social cell', 'faith, as an element of national unity and solidarity' and 'authority' and 'respect for the hierarchy' as 'principles of the social life'. The Salazarist reform of the school system was an example of the church's victory. The school system and the youth organisations had been a classic theme of tension between the Christian churches and fascism. Yet, in the Portuguese case, the dictator opted for the systematic Catholicisation of the school and state organisations, leaving the development of their autonomous organisations to the Catholic Church. Tensions, consequently, were very weak. The New State was obsessive about education. At issue was the primarily ideological reorganisation of what had been the pride of the liberal republican elites: the secular, state-run school – particularly the primary school. The Salazarist ideology contained in the phrase, 'God, nation, family, work', shaped teachers' lives to no small degree. The values of acceptance and obedience, as well as the concept of a society free from factional politics, dominated primary-school teaching. Indeed, Catholicisation was an official project that affected everything from classroom decorations to mandatory school textbooks to school rituals.

The official youth organisations were another area of dispute between nascent authoritarian regimes and the churches.²² *Mocidade Portuguesa* [Portuguese Youth,

MP] was created in the middle of 1936. Membership was obligatory: it was presented as a 'national and pre-military' organisation destined to stimulate 'integral development' of the young, in terms of 'physical capability', 'character formation' and 'devotion to the motherland', placing them 'in conditions to be able to efficaciously provide for its defence'.²³ The first two years of its existence were apparently peaceful. Nevertheless, the Church reacted in 1938, when the then Minister of Education, Carneiro Pacheco, revealed his intention to dissolve the *Corpo Nacional de Escuteiros* [National Corps of Scouts]. In his opinion, the Scouts' mission seemed to coincide with that of *Mocidade Portuguesa* in many respects. The Cardinal-Patriarch himself argued for the Scouts' independence and autonomy. In a strongly worded letter to Pacheco, Cardinal Cerejeira made both his disagreement and incomprehension patently clear: how could it be possible to consider the Scouts to be a rival or 'obstacle' to the 'development and efficiency of *Mocidade Portuguesa*' while membership of the state organisation was obligatory? Moreover, Cerejeira wrote, its functions are not coincident and 'to have the Scouts spontaneously dissolve', it would be necessary for *Mocidade Portuguesa* to say to their Catholic affiliates that 'it is not yet enough in any measure to justify the sacrifice. I am not saying that after this they must disappear; I am saying that they must not disappear'.²⁴

The Cardinal did not disguise the fact that the church and its ancillary organisations held certain fears about the regime's totalitarian inclinations. These fears were not wholly without foundation: the fascist tendencies of Carneiro Pacheco and Francisco José Nobre Guedes, *Mocidade Portuguesa's* pro-German National Commissioner, were well known. In a speech to a Hitler Youth delegation on 5 March 1938, Carneiro Pacheco did not hesitate to compare *Mocidade Portuguesa* with the Nazi and Fascist youth organisations.²⁵ If, on remodelling the Ministry of Education, Carneiro Pacheco wished to impose the requirement for each school to display a crucifix, he nevertheless hoped that *Mocidade Portuguesa* would be the only youth organisation, a consideration that made clear his intention for education to be integrally controlled by the state. Still, this episode resulted in a victory for the church. Not only did the Scouts not dissolve, they managed to remain active despite both the existence and rivalry of *Mocidade Portuguesa*. Moreover, the church's demand that *Mocidade Portuguesa's* members receive moral and religious instruction was met in 1939. In September of that year, the position of the director for *Mocidade Portuguesa's* moral education services was created and filled by Father Manuel Rocha, a former Louvain youth, a stubborn defender of Catholic syndicalism and of the church's social doctrine, and an important promoter of Catholic Action's workers' organisations.

The Catholic Church and Salazarism

Curiously, the pressures that led the *Centro Católico* to cease its activities and dissolve itself emerged – at least initially – from the heart of the church itself. This reflected the reality of the new relationship existing between church and state, and the confidence with which the former considered the emergence of the new regime and its proposals. Additionally, this anticipation of government moves to abolish the *Centro Católico* also reflected the church's own view of its mission in the new political situation. The process of reorganisation saw the creation of new structures and organisations that would confirm and indoctrinate the faithful; in effect, this guaranteed that the situation offered to the Catholic world resulted in

sizeable sectors of the church believing that the *Centro Católico* was no longer necessary. Clearly, the abolition of the *Centro Católico* was not entirely unopposed, for there was some resistance to Salazar's view that 'the *Centro Católico* ... the independent organisation of Catholics ... in the political field' was 'inconvenient to the advance of the Dictatorship'; meaning that it was 'unnecessary for politics, although by transforming itself into an organisation dedicated to social activities, the *Centro Católico* would only bring advantages to the country'.²⁶ Salazar restated this view in his December 1932 interview with António Ferro, arguing that the *União Nacional* [National Union] was created 'to destroy the spirit of party or of faction'. Thus, in order to fit in, the *Centro Católico* needed to transform itself into an organisation that had 'purely social action' at its heart. His appeal was that all Catholics 'who wished to collaborate with his patriotism in the political life of the nation' should join the new organisation and participate in the new order.²⁷

In asking it to demobilise as a political party and transform itself into a social organisation, Salazar's 'invitation' to the *Centro Católico* caused some unease within Catholic circles. Breaking from the principle that, at its core, the *Centro Católico* was the 'indispensable reaction' against the attacks and 'political intrusion in the domain of religion', it seemed that the hour had finally arrived for Catholics to renounce their defensive activities.²⁸ Following this debate, the point approached for a vote of confidence in the regime. The new framework for Church-state relations and the creation of *Acção Católica Portuguesa* [Portuguese Catholic Action, ACP] at the end of 1933 ultimately signalled the end for the *Centro Católico*, despite the Bishops pronouncing themselves in favour of the terms in which the party had originally been established.²⁹

United by a strong personal friendship, Salazar and Cardinal Cerejeira shared interests, ideas and beliefs. This convergence of positions was well expressed in the regime's slogan ('God, nation, authority, family') and was soon to bear fruit with generous rewards for both institutions. The two men's relationship, however, was not wholly equal. Cerejeira, through the years, reminded Salazar that he was an 'emissary of God'; however, Salazar could not always peacefully and openly assume the mission that his old university companion wished to confer upon him. This can clearly be seen in the dialogue that both were to maintain when, after Salazar had been appointed head of government, he visited Cerejeira at the Bishop's Palace. Announcing his desire that church and state 'maintain good collaborative relations', Salazar went on to inform his old friend that their destinies had, from that moment, diverged: 'I defend the interests of Portugal and of the state; the interests of the church are only important to me insofar as they coincide with them, and only to that extent: it is the state that is independent and sovereign'.³⁰ However, despite the separation that Salazar wanted to maintain between his state and the church, there were never any real frictions between him and the Cardinal.³¹ Cerejeira apparently entrusted the 'church's cause' to Salazar; he never renounced his proximity either to the regime or its leader: he defended both tenaciously.

After almost a decade spent discussing new means of intervention that could lead to the church regaining its influence and prestige without losing sight of the need for Catholic unity and the autonomy of Church activity, ACP was founded at the beginning of the 1930s. A highly centralised movement dominated by the Church's hierarchy, at ACP's roots – and in the organisational model chosen for it – the conditionings imposed by the regime weighed heavily. Despite recognising

the church's juridical personality, the state constantly insisted that its activities be restricted to religious and social spheres. It was within these limits that the church attempted to secure its autonomy and win new spaces of influence. According to its charter and the teachings of Pope Pius XI, ACP proposed to secure 'the participation of lay Catholics in the apostolic hierarchy'. This was to be the union of Portugal's lay Catholic organisations that would, 'in collaboration with the apostolic hierarchy, propose the diffusion, the actuation and the defence of Catholic principles in individual, family and social life'.³² This document, dated 16 November 1933, marked the movement's official birth. Soon after the approval of this charter, Cardinal Cerejeira stated that: 'For many centuries Catholics have, in their great majority, been limited to being on the defensive ... The modern world has to be re-conquered for Christ. It is the ACP's mission to do this'.³³ Conceived as a movement dedicated to the Christian re-conquest of Portuguese society, by 1945 the ACP had become a powerful social network.

By the beginning of the 1940s, the church had affirmed itself as both an institution and as a social force undergoing rapid and significant expansion in every area, both quantitatively and qualitatively. It is easy to recognise both its expansion and its importance, through data relating to the increase in the number of priests, seminarians, lay religious movements and Church schools, and the rise in number of major centres of devotion to Our Lady that mobilised thousands of pilgrims annually. Analysis of this information enriches the statistics and gives effective account of the Catholic Church's enormous social projection, and it points in one, clear direction: the signing of the official opening of the centennial commemorations during the summer of 1940 was the high-point of this approximation between the church and the state. The idea of celebrating this accord, which consecrated and consolidated the existing 'alliance' between the two institutions, had been discussed for some time within national and international Catholic circles. After some timid and inconsequential early initiatives, serious negotiations began in 1937. Cerejeira reminded his old university companion of the importance of the text under discussion, as well as the high mission with which it was charged: 'You are making a work that is not, as others, only for the present moment: it is a work made for God, and it is his church that also expects justice. God himself chose you: for you to give to Portugal as He gives to Portugal'.³⁴ Cerejeira thus conjured an image of Salazar as protector of the Catholic Church, a view reinforced by the end of this synergistic process, and one of which Salazar was to take full advantage.

Contrary to what may have been expected, given the good understanding and close relations that existed between the two institutions, negotiations on the Concordat were long and complex.³⁵ One of the sticking points was the ACP, which Salazar was adamant should be excluded from the negotiation process. Salazar feared that ACP would be transformed into an instrument of Catholic political activity if the church were to insist on its inclusion, seek to guarantee its legal recognition or ensure conditions that would be favourable to its activities. Indeed, in every agreement reached between Salazar's state and the church during the 1930s, the former had consistently denied the latter any possibility of acting independently within the political area. The negotiations on the Concordat also generated polemics on matters such as the prohibition of divorce to Catholics and the consecration of religious education in public schools. On these matters, Salazar was prudent: he feared the reaction by the regime's republican supporters and initially resisted Rome's demands. In the end, however, he consented to the

prohibition of divorce for Catholics and allowed Catholic instruction in state schools, with parents being permitted to excuse their children from these lessons on request. The result of three years of difficult negotiations, the text of the Concordat signed on 7 May 1940, represented a compromise that apparently satisfied both parties. Justifying the accord to the National Assembly, Salazar explained there was no 'intention to repair the past thirty years ... history, but [rather] to go beyond it and return to the better tradition and to reintegrate ... Portugal in the traditional direction of its destiny'.³⁶

Analysing its contents, we can conclude that the Concordat agreed by the Portuguese state and the Vatican in 1940 sanctioned an already consummated fact and conferred upon it both a legal foundation and personality. It was Cerejeira himself who confirmed that 'the Portuguese state can almost say that it signed a Concordat without giving anything away', given that 'the majority of the Concordat's articles are already – explicitly or implicitly – Portuguese law'.³⁷ Whilst maintaining the constitutional provision according to which 'the state retains the regime of separation in relation to the Catholic church', the Concordat granted the church a number of privileges. Yet, most importantly, the Portuguese republic recognised the church's legal personality and granted it free exercise of its authority, organisation and worship; it was later to recognise civil effects to religious marriages and ensure their indissolubility. In terms of education and instruction, the Concordat guaranteed the unrestricted establishment of private schools and provided for the teaching of both religion and Catholic morality in state schools and educational establishments. Yet this protectionism went further, and guaranteed religious assistance to those within all state establishments, including the armed forces. Moreover, the Concordat granted the Church an exemption from taxes on places of worship and establishments used in the training of clerics.

Despite these privileges and protections, the Church was not indemnified for the losses it suffered during the First Republic and – except in the case of missions – worship remained unsubsidised. However, the Concordat anticipated the restitution of most church property that remained in the state's possession: the only excluded property was classified as national monuments and those used in the public service. Summarising the spirit informing the final text, Cardinal Cerejeira stated that, through the Concordat, 'the state accepts the Church as it is. It encounters the Catholic fact, not only as a national fact, but as a fundamental fact of the historical life of the nation – rendering it with legal personality'.³⁸

Concluding Remarks

It is difficult to fully comprehend the political system and ideological foundations of the Portuguese New State without taking into account the determining influence of traditional Catholicism, for the church affected all major texts and institutions, including the constitution and declaration of corporatist principles. As well as illuminating the nature of the regime's propaganda, Catholicism's influence also explains the weakness of both the *União Nacional* and the regime's paramilitary organisations.

The Catholic Church was a crucial contributor to the ideology of Salazar's regime. Not only did the regime have the church hierarchy's explicit approval to use Catholic symbolism, but it also actively pursued a policy of 'Catholicising' institutions and the education system. The close association between church and

state represented more than just a convergence of interests: it expressed a common ideological and political nucleus that was corporatist, anti-liberal and anti-communist. While the 'Catholicisation' of the New State's institutions was one of Salazarism's founding elements, the church, nonetheless, was apprehensive of the totalitarian bent of some state organisations after 1936, fearing the eventual 'forced integration' of its youth organisations into official – albeit Catholicised – bodies. In the end, the church's concerns proved groundless. The regime granted the church control over the symbolic and ideological framing of large sectors of society – particularly traditional rural society – and opened up social space for the church's own organisations. For instance, the Scouts were not abolished, and they developed alongside *Mocidade Portuguesa*; ACP's organisations were linked to the corporatist system, but were also allowed to maintain their autonomy; a significant Catholic private education sector emerged; and finally, the church 'defeated' both conservative republican resistance and tendencies towards fascism with relative ease.

Once the New State had become institutionalised and the *Centro Católico* disbanded, Salazar gave the church hierarchy the task of re-Catholicising the country after decades of republican and liberal secularisation. Nevertheless, the Catholic Centre was restricted to the social arena and barred from the political. The 1940 Concordat put the finishing touch to church–state relations and established norms for *de facto* cooperation. A subsequent revision of the constitution established Catholicism as 'the religion of the Portuguese nation'. As Salazar himself stated, the New State granted the church 'the possibility to reconstruct ... and recover ... its leading position in the formation of the Portuguese soul'. Consequently, Pope Pius XII held Portugal up as a model: 'the Lord has provided the Portuguese nation with an exemplary head of government'.³⁹

When the regime's vigour began to fade after 1945, the church gradually became an ideological haven, and the vitality of the Catholic organisations increased. In the early 1940s, ACP organisations had almost 70,000 members, mostly in the youth organisations; by 1956, membership had reached 100,000.⁴⁰ Traditional Catholicism and the church were, on one hand, the dictatorship's most powerful weapons; on the other, they limited fascist tendencies, and became the driving force behind the New State's 'limited pluralism'. Salazar once told Henry Massis that his aim was to 'make Portugal live by habit': this *maître-mot* [key phrase], which so delighted his French supporter, perfectly sums up the traditionalism of the New State.⁴¹ It would be a mistake, however, to confuse Salazar's regime with a 'pragmatic' dictatorship, particularly between 1933 and 1945. Salazarism officially instituted an 'organic' vision of society, and deployed all the ideological and social instruments of administrative, corporative, educational and propagandistic control – as well as the elite, the state and the church – to make that vision a reality.

Notes

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