Transcultural Mobilities and Memories

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Mobilidades e Memórias Transculturais

Separata

Lisbon, May 1945: An aide-mémoire

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This paper is about the malleability of memory (Brown et al., 2012) rather than about the mobility of memory, though both concepts are closely related and admittedly interdependent. It deals with a very short and yet very important time span of twentieth-century world history – May 1945, the end of World War II in Europe and Hitler's death –, and examines how the memory of that period changed and adapted to the events in a, again, very localized social and political context: Lisbon, the capital of a country that opted for neutrality at the outbreak of the conflict.

The paper is thus intended as an "aide-mémoire" – an expression frequently used in the diplomatic jargon of that period where it referred to a brief memo note summarizing the content of a verbal conversation – to recall the atmosphere that took over Lisbon in May 1945.

Neutrality revisited

Around the end of May 1945 the Portuguese Secretariat of National Propaganda, an institution that had timely undergone cosmetic changes just the year before and was now officially known as Secretariat of National Information, Culture and

Tourism, published a pamphlet that could hardly go unnoticed in the months that followed the fall of the Third Reich and the end of the war in Europe. Its author was Luiz Teixeira, a journalist who had won an Essay Prize of the Secretariat in 1938 with a *Profile of Salazar,*[1] and the pamphlet's title was *Portugal and the War: Collaborating Neutrality* (Teixeira, 1945).[2]

To a present day reader, used to seeing the word "collaboration" and its cognates associated with the nations or individuals that aligned with the Axis powers, the title is somewhat puzzling. And for someone especially attentive and interested in the German-Portuguese relations of the period, and therefore well aware of the close ties between the two authoritarian regimes,[3] the title of the pamphlet is no less ambiguous, to say the least. After all, it cannot be overlooked, and much less ignored, that at the beginning of May 1945 the Portuguese flags were flown at half-mast in mourning for Hitler's death. To be sure, the pamphlet raises several issues that undoubtedly need clarification: what does "collaborating neutrality" mean? And collaborating with whom? With the Allies or with the Axis powers?

A quick look at the table of contents of the pamphlet dissipates any doubt. In an incisive emotional style, the author dramatically reenacts the role played by the Portuguese in the war.

Clearly addressing an Anglo-American audience and supported by numerous quotes of British and American politicians, Teixeira begins his plot with two events which took place, coincidentally, in Berlin and Lisbon on the same day: May 22, 1939. The first of these events was the signature of the political and military treaty between Italy and Germany, the second a speech given by Salazar at the National Assembly, where the Portuguese Premier

> defined the bases on which our foreign policy was established and solidly affirmed: the British-Portuguese Alliance, the solidarity of interests of the Iberian Peninsula, and the intimate link, due to the blood-tie and the souls of our ancestors, with Brazil. (Teixeira, 1945, p.6)

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1 Teixeira (1938). The *Profile* was translated into Spanish and French in 1940, and into English in 1943.

2 The pamphlet was also available in Portuguese and Spanish. The English version was reprinted in the following year. Throughout this paper Portuguese sources will be quoted from contemporary English versions whenever they are available, all other translations are my own.

3 See e.g. among several others, Matos and Grossegesse (2011), Pimentel and Ninhos (2013) or Ninhos (2021). This paper draws on and expands two previously published essays dealing with German influence in Portugal during the period (Clara, 2019, 2021).

This rather unusual and eccentric view of World War II, resulting from the combining of two "diplomatic events", which, according to the author, had an "exceptional influence" on the course of the conflict, is decisive for Teixeira's plot because it enables him to place Portugal and Portuguese neutrality during the war at the center of a narrative that has on one side Berlin, Hitler, Mussolini and the German-Italian Pact, and on the opposite side Lisbon, Salazar, Britain and the Anglo-Portuguese Alliance.

Building on this view, Teixeira begins by noting that Portuguese "neutrality [had been] prepared in advance" (Teixeira, 1945, p.8) and that during the whole war the Portuguese were "quiet but on the watch and faithful" (p.9). In fact, as he further points out in a tone that becomes more emotionally intense as the plot develops, the Portuguese were "ready to fulfil [their] duties – ready to die" (p.12). And finally, in a last melodramatic move Teixeira reminds his readership that, after all, "Hitler might well have materialized his dream" (p.15), and concludes highlighting "some Portuguese contributions towards victory and the benefit of Humanity" (p.20) and regretting that "it was a pity that we could not do more…" (p.28). Briefly: the country was not only among the victors, it had discreetly but decisively contributed to the Allied victory in World War II. Convenient and skillfully presented as it was, the argument quickly spread among the Portuguese public opinion.[4]

The pamphlet is actually based on part of a speech given by Salazar at the National Assembly on May 18, 1945 which was also published by the Secretariat of National Propaganda in a small volume that gathered three public speeches given by the Portuguese Premier in May 1945 (Salazar, 1945). The first two were delivered at the National Assembly on May 8 and May 18, and the third was given at a national demonstration to thank Salazar for keeping the country out of the war that took place in Lisbon on May 19. Teixeira's pamphlet and this small volume aimed at different audiences and do not really overlap, they simply complement each other as both titles seem to suggest. The pamphlet, entitled *Portugal and the War*, is focused on the past and rewrites the Portuguese history of the period in a popular propagandistic manner, while the volume, entitled *Portugal and the Peace*, is meant to project the future and anticipate the country's role in the post-war world.

4 It is worth noting that some contemporary research that addresses Portuguese neutrality during World War II still adheres uncritically to this argument. The first pages of a recent essay on this subject (Bannister, 2020) are paradigmatic in this respect; other examples are provided in Clara (2021, pp.232-233).

Of all the three public speeches that Salazar gave on May 1945, the one delivered at the National Assembly on May 18 is the longest, clearly the most elaborate and definitely the most important one. In it, Salazar speaks, as he suggests, as a privileged witness to the war events and reclaims therefore the authority of anticipating the judgement of history. He undertakes a reassessment of Portuguese neutrality during the period recalling "that Portuguese neutrality was prepared long hence" and pointing out that "for England the first service rendered was precisely our neutrality [for] in political affairs between nations as well as between public men it is at times a great favour to be quiet, provided one is vigilant and faithful". Finally, the Portuguese Premier closes the first part of his speech emphasizing the fact that the country never adopted "the concept of selfish or sterile neutrality",[5] and he explains further.

> The active guard of the key positions of the Atlantic, the concession of bases in the Azores, with many other related and further reciprocal services, the greater and best part of our economy in the service of the Allies, financial assistance, transatlantic shipping, made this neutrality a collaborationist neutrality. (Salazar, 1945, pp.14-15)

All this may be true, above all if one has in mind the time that goes from around September/October 1943 (when Italy surrendered to the Allies and Portugal agreed to Britain's request of aviation facilities in the Azores) to the end of war in Europe in May 1945. However, if one considers the whole period of the war (or even the relations between the German and the Portuguese regimes from 1933 to 1945) Salazar's arguments seem far less convincing. Moreover, it would not be entirely inappropriate to say that his memory must have been very selective (or very defective) by the end of the war in Europe. How selective – or how forgetful – Salazar was in May 1945 is something that definitely calls for a closer examination. Interestingly, in this case, the remembrance effort needed can be carried out with the help of Salazar himself.

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5 "Selfish" or "sterile" were adjectives frequently associated with neutrality during the period. As one author puts it, after the end of the Great War and when the League of Nations came into being, "neutrality was held to be something purely negative: nonintervention, egoism, the desire to feather one's own nest while others were fighting for right and justice" (Cohn, 1939, p.5); on Portuguese neutrality in World War II see Rosas (2002) and Telo (1998) among many others.

Anamnesis

Take for instance two speeches given by the Portuguese Premier in 1937 and in 1942, both published by the Secretariat of National Propaganda. On July 6, 1937, after an attempt against his life, and in a particularly sensitive moment for the country with the Spanish Civil War being fought next door and the political tensions between a pro-Nationalist Portugal and a pro-Republican Britain rising, Salazar feels the need to publicly clarify the relevance of the Anglo-Portuguese Alliance. And also its limits.

In a speech made to "the Minister of Marine, Under-Secretary of State for War and Officers of the Army and the Navy who assembled to congratulate him on his escape from the attempt made on his life" (Salazar, 1937, [p.5])[6] Salazar begins by regretting "the troubled international atmosphere of our day" (p.7) and the fact that "the whole foreign policy of our Government and specifically the alliance with Great Britain should be so systematically misunderstood [...], as if we felt the need to seek new alliances" (p.8). He assures his audience that that is not the case and that the Portuguese Government has no intention of neglecting "that most valuable item of our external policy which is the age-old friendship and alliance with Great Britain" (p.10). But at the same time, however, he also concedes, now in a somewhat unexpected and more familiar tone, that "there is no doubt that old friends can be a nuisance". And with that thought in mind, Salazar leaves a warning that could hardly be clearer: "the alliance is not the whole of our foreign policy and [...] it is not incumbent upon England to defend all our interests, before we ourselves do so or even against our own wishes" (p.14). A warning justified by the fact that

> public opinion [...] in France and Great Britain is ill-informed as to the true nature of the Spanish problem [...]. Some people do not believe in the Communist peril; we on the other hand, feel it, see it and fear that Communism, with the connivance of other countries, may take root in Spain. (p.15)

To be sure, the Anglo-Portuguese Alliance is ascribed an important role in Portuguese foreign policy even before World War II broke out, but on the other hand it is impossible to ignore that the Alliance is also seriously questioned and subject to a sharp criticism.

Five years later, the same ideas emerge again in a communiqué addressed to the country and broadcasted by the National Broadcasting Service

6 The speech was also available in Portuguese and French; on this speech see also Lopes (2017).

(Emissora Nacional) on June 25, 1942 (Salazar, 1942).[7] It is true that the world situation had changed dramatically since the outbreak of World War II. The Iberian countries had declared their neutrality at the beginning of the conflict (though Franco changed the status of Spain to "non-belligerent" in 1940, after the successful German campaign in France and after Italy had entered the war), but in 1942 the world was completely different and, what is more, it was changing rapidly. Operation Barbarossa had put an end to the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, which had been received with a mix of disappointment, apprehension and mistrust by the conservative public opinion of so many European authoritarian states, the United States and Japan had entered the war, and the Japanese invaded Timor (February 20, 1942), a former Portuguese colony in South East Asia.

With the risk of Portugal getting inadvertently involved in the conflict increasing, Salazar's address to the nation takes place, therefore, at a decisive turning point in the war. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, the communiqué was broadcasted only two weeks after the United States and Britain had signed a mutual aid agreement with Soviet Russia (June 11, 1942).

With the "Communist peril" looming again over the horizon of a post-war (Iberian) world Salazar feels that Portuguese neutrality and the Anglo-Portuguese Alliance were once more colliding with the country's national interests. Neutrality, he notes in his speech, "is only advantageous as long as it serves the National interest", and besides, "neutrality is subject to a continuous revision, and therefore it is never possible so say, that it is definite". As far as his domestic audience is concerned the warning is therefore very clear.

> […] the desire of neutrality cannot be superior to the interest of the Nation. And being so sincerely neutral, as we are, I think it wise not to allow our spirits to soften under the idea that we shall not fight. (Salazar, 1942, p.19)

It is obvious that this change of perspective is directly motivated by the "trouble caused in people's minds on account of the Anglo-Russian alliance". According to Salazar, "the solidarity lent to the Soviet Government by the British and American democracies" led to a "painful unrest felt everywhere" and the ultimate responsibility for this "unrest" was "the superiority with which the British people consider themselves immune from disorder and the

7 The speech was also available in Portuguese, Spanish and German. In fact, it is worth pointing out that of all Salazar's speeches that have been quoted so far this is the only one that was also published in German.

economic and social virus" (i.e., communism), an attitude which he sees as "rather presumptuous and full of danger". And while he admits that "it is an exaggeration to think and say that England desires or wishes to favour communism for the Europe of tomorrow" (p.20), he nevertheless warns that "if there is one thing proved by experience, it is the fact that [British and American] democracy and liberalism have worn themselves out during the last century". They failed to adapt to "the necessities of the times" (p.22) and they find it difficult to understand "the general line of European political evolution", which is dominated by "the social preoc[c]upation" of "creating a new man" (p.23).

Predictably, the Portuguese Premier's speech found very positive echoes in the German (or pro-Axis) press. Under the title "Portugal ready to defend", Salazar's address reaches the front page of the Nazi party newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* in its edition of June 27, 1942, while Karl-Heinz Abshagen, a former correspondent of the German news agency Europapress in Lisbon and by then working in Tokyo for the Transocean (another German news agency close to the Nazi regime), publishes an extensive eulogy of the Portuguese Premier where the author highlights the "very definite common interests between the present regime in Portugal and the totalitarian regimes in Germany and Italy" and where the country emerges as "one of the last neutrals" (Abshagen, 1942, p.117).

A year later, the war situation was completely different though. After Italy surrendered to the Allies at the beginning of September 1943, the tide of the war had turned definitely against Germany, and Portuguese neutrality, which in the words of Salazar was "subject to a continuous revision", changed accordingly. An agreement between Britain and Portugal concerning the use of facilities in the Azores was signed on October 8, 1943 and publicly announced by Salazar and Churchill on October 12 (cf. *Diário de Lisboa*, October 12, 1943, p.1 and Churchill, 1948, p.146-148). As the former editor of an Austrian Christian magazine who had spent one year in Portugal rightly noted at the time, Salazar "chose his hour well" (Dohrn, 1943, p.7).

The malleability of Portuguese neutrality during the war is no different from the malleability of Salazar's memory in May 1945. Both are "subject to a continuous revision" and the dynamics of that rescripting process is also highly selective in both cases. Moreover, they are as eclectic about the past as they are eclectic about the present (i.e., about the actual current conditions in which Salazar's speeches were delivered at the end of war in Europe). In fact, in May 1945 the Portuguese Premier does not only ignore the past troubled relations with England during the Spanish Civil war or with the Allies after the Anglo-Soviet pact was signed in 1942, he also ignores the fact that his speeches were

published by a Portuguese agency formerly known as Secretariat of National Propaganda, that had been created in April 1933 after the German Ministry of Propaganda (like many other Portuguese institutions of the period that were created after German or Italian organizations). Furthermore, Salazar evidently omits the fact that on May 18, 1945 his speech was being delivered at the National Assembly in Lisbon, a building that like all other state buildings in Portugal, had had its flags at half-mast in mourning for Hitler's death just two weeks before (from May 2 to May 4, 1945).

Historians generally tend to devalue the so-called "affair of the flags" blaming a stiff diplomatic protocol and the attitude of the Portuguese Premier in matters of legal form for the whole episode. Winston Churchill himself seems to corroborate this view. In a minute dated May 10, 1945 the British Premier suggests that

> it would be wise to let them [the Portuguese] play around and not be too much down on them. [...] After all if you are a 400 [sic] year old Ally, you must be allowed to kick about sometimes as you choose. I should treat them like well-loved children who make absurd grimaces. (quoted in Peter, 1996, p.251)

Diplomats, in their turn, find the Portuguese reaction to Hitler's death nothing more than a "silly incident", "an amusing footnote of historical trivia" as an author puts it (Marques, 1992, p.108).

However, when one takes a closer look at the Portuguese and international press of these days the picture changes dramatically: instead of a "silly" or "amusant" episode, or instead of a childish whim caused by the idiosyncrasies of a dictator, the Portuguese flags at half-mast for Hitler's death assume a rather tragic character (and so do, to a certain extent, the pamphlet mentioned at the beginning as well as Salazar's speeches of May 1945). The drawing by the Russian exile Gregor Rabinovitch, published in May 1945 in the Swiss magazine *Nebelspalter,* is highly elucidatory of the shocking impact that the "affair of the flags" had on western public opinion (fig. 1).

When viewed against the background of the news that was by then making the headlines of the media (national and international) the "affair of the flags" definitely acquires darker and gloomier colors that require closer scrutiny.

Fig. 1: "Ireland, Spain and Portugal mourned the German Führer, no flag was hoisted at half-mast for his victims!" (Rabinovitch, 1945)

The Press

The Portuguese press announced Hitler's death on May 2, 1945. The *Diário de Lisboa* reports that Hitler died in combat and dedicates a whole page to "Hitler's career" noting, nevertheless, that most of what is known about his life is "autobiographical and should therefore be subject to correction" (*Diário de Lisboa*, May 2, 1945, p.1). Quite a different tone is adopted by the Lisbon pro-Axis newspaper *O Século* on the following day. The piece on Hitler's life and death is now based on German sources, namely the official German News Agency (DNB, Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro), and the Portuguese editor of the newspaper finds it relevant to highlight phrases of the original German dispatch such as: "whatever happens now one thing is certain: the Führer already shapes and masters the future" (*O Século*, May 3, 1945, p.4). The newspaper also provides some information about the "funeral manifestations in Portugal", but the *Diário de Lisboa* of May 3 is much more detailed in this respect. Under the title "Mourning in Lisbon" the newspaper informs that

> Because of Hitler's death, the flags of the Apostolic Nunciature, the Spanish Embassy, the legations of Germany, Switzerland, Sweden and Japan, the consulate and several other German institutions in Lisbon continued today at half-mast.
>
> The Government and numerous official and private entities sent their condolences to the German minister in Portugal, Mr. Gustav von Harlem. [...]
>
> Tomorrow the German legation will have a Requiem Mass celebrated. (*Diário de Lisboa*, May 3, 1945, p. 6)

The second secretary of the Irish legation in Lisbon, Patrick J. O'Byrne, summarizes the events in a long letter to Joseph P. Walshe, secretary of the Irish Department of External Affairs who had accompanied the Irish leader Eamon de Valera in an equally controversial visit of condolence to the German Ambassador in Ireland on Hitler's death.[8] O'Byrne's first hand report, dated May 11, 1945, provides an invaluable insight into the agitated atmosphere of Lisbon during these days and is therefore worth a long quote, not least, also, because he mentions the misunderstandings caused by a Nazi flag flying at half-mast in the Irish legation building in Lisbon (O'Byrne, 1945).

> The news that Adolph Hitler had died in action in Berlin came to Portugal over the air from Hamburg and Bremen on 2nd May. In the afternoon the Government had the National flag hoisted at half-mast on its buildings. The newspapers gave the announcement in its columns what appeared to be second priority: the complete occupation of Berlin by Russian troops and the surrender of the garrison came first in importance. [...] The Irish flag did not at all appear on the Irish Legation – which brought us into unusual prominence and was the cause of a great deal of speculation. The building in which our present premises are situated (on the ground floor) consists of two upper stories, the second of which has been occupied for the past five years by a German organisation supposed to be engaged in the insurance business (but quite obviously in other more important activities). Thus, the only flags that flew on 2nd, 3rd and 4th floors from this building (right

8 On De Valera's visit of condolence see Keogh (1989, 1997). As happened with the Portuguese "affair of the flags", historians also tend to devalue the Irish "condolence" episode asserting that during the war Ireland was "benevolently neutral for Britain" (see e.g. Lee, 1989). A different perspective, based on many contemporary documents, is provided by Douglas (2006) who points out that "The extent of popular sympathy in Ireland for the fascist States in the early years of the Emergency is a subject that demands much more scholarly attention than it has hitherto received" (p.1180). I would say the same applies to the Portuguese case.

> over the Legation) were the Swastika at half-mast and alongside it a Portuguese flag similarly displayed. As the existence of the German office seems not to have been generally known and as the only nameplates on the entrance to the building are those of the Irish Legation (Passport and Shipping Office), it was generally supposed that the whole building was ours and consequently the Legation which had never before during three years displayed a flag here, had produced a German one especially in sign of mourning for Hitler. As a result of this, most of my time on 3rd May was spent answering enquiries on the telephone, in the streets, and even at home on this matter. One of my enquirers by telephone was a very irate Irishman who spoke of throwing up his nationality if what he had heard was true etc. and at the office I received visits from the correspondents of Reuter and of the English Daily Express [...].
>
> In compliance with the formal procedure, I duly sent my card to the German Minister expressing the condolence of the Irish Legation. [...] Religious commemorative services were held in the German Catholic and Protestant Churches respectively, at the instance of the Legation on Sunday last. Members of the German Colony, the Japanese and some Portuguese sympathisers were present.[9]

As expected, the strange and disturbing news coming from Lisbon (and Dublin) quickly reached the Allied press. Under the title "Lisbon Flags half-mast for Hitler" the circumspect London *Times* reports

> The Portuguese Government has decreed that all official flags are to be flown at half-mast until noon to-morrow on account of the death of Hitler. [...]
>
> The German Legation has issued an announcement saying that a memorial service for Hitler will be held in Lisbon to-morrow and will be attended by the representatives of the neutral countries. [...]
>
> Mr. McDunphy, secretary to the President of Eire, called on the German Minister yesterday to express condolence on behalf of the President on Hitler's death. (*The Times*, May 4, 1945, p.3)

9 This specific letter is curiously not reproduced (nor mentioned) in Meneses (2005). Instead, Meneses opts to print parts of a letter that O'Byrne sent to Dublin on June 5, 1945, one month after the events took place. The selected excerpts of this letter are focused on the "victory celebrations in Lisbon" and highlight the fact that in these celebrations "the [Portuguese] people gave full rein to their pro-ally feelings" (Meneses, 2005, p.79).

Many other newspapers were far less discreet or restrained in their reports about the events taking place in Portugal and Ireland, though. Titles like "Tears for Hitler", "They wept for Hitler" or "Tears for Fuhrer" flooded the Anglo-American press, from the British *Daily Mail* to the Australian *Courier-Mail*, not forgetting more local newspapers like *The Yorkshire Post*. The situation in Lisbon was especially appalling for together with the news about the flags at half-mast and the memorial service for Hitler there were also accounts of a "requiem mass for Mussolini" celebrated at "the fashionable Church of the Martyrs in Lisbon" on May 5 (*The People*, May 6, 1945, p.6).[10]

The foreign correspondents mentioned in O'Byrne's letter play a crucial role in the spreading of this disturbing news. Douglas Brown, Reuter's correspondent in Lisbon, is probably one of the most active, most critical (as far as Salazar's regime is concerned) and most quoted foreign correspondents of the period on matters related to Portugal.

On the evening of May 6, the Secretary General of the Portuguese Foreign Office, Teixeira de Sampaio, informs the German Ambassador that the German government is no longer recognized by the Portuguese authorities. On the following day, the front page of *The Daily Mail* reproduces Brown's dispatch from Lisbon under the heading "Germans in Portugal: Arrogance and Heel Clickings":

> There were extraordinary scenes outside the German Legation in Lisbon after the Portuguese Government's decision to seize all German diplomatic and official property on the ground that the National Government of Germany no longer exists. [...]
>
> The Government's decision came at the end of a day of particularly ostentatious German behaviour. It was Hitler Memorial Day and the church services and other functions were expressions not only of mourning but of national arrogance.
>
> There were Prussian heel clickings, and Hitler salutes, as the Minister and his staff toured the city. (*The Daily Mail*, May 7, 1945, p.1)

10 According to the Australian *Courier-Mail*, in the following year another requiem mass for Mussolini was celebrated in Lisbon: "A large congregation filled the Church of the Martyrs for a Requiem Mass commemorating the first anniversary of the death of Mussolini" (*The Courier-Mail*, April 29, 1946, p.1).

Salazar's speech of May 18 also catches the attention of the Anglo-American newspapers and of Douglas Brown in particular, who does not miss the opportunity to subtly and yet effectively criticize the Portuguese dictatorship. Under the title "Portuguese Premier and Neutrality", Brown's dispatch is quoted for example by *The Yorkshire Post*.

> Portugal's Premier, Dr. Salazar, in a speech to his *single-party Parliament* to-day, said that Portuguese neutrality during the war had been collaborationist neutrality with Britain, but this was the last European war in which Portugal could or should remain neutral. (*The Yorkshire Post*, May 19, 1945, p.1, emphasis added)[11]

All in all, the reactions of the Anglo-American press to the events in Lisbon and Dublin are well summarized by the Australian *Courier-Mail* under the title "Caustic on 'Honour' to Hitler":

> Action of the Eire Prime Minister (Mr. De Valera) and other neutrals in "honouring" Hitler is coming in for caustic criticism in Britain and America.
>
> The London Star commented: "The forbidding fanatic who directs the affairs of Eire might have spared us this crowning tomfoolery. We wonder what must be the feelings it will stir in the hearts of the tens of thousands of southern Irishmen who have bled for Britain in this war."
>
> Portugal, "Britain's oldest Ally," has ordered two days' mourning and the half-masting of flags in Lisbon. The Portuguese Ambassador in London, however, did not receive instructions about half-masting the Embassy's flag.

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11 In most of Brown's dispatches from Lisbon there is an undisguised criticism of the Portuguese regime. Scarcely a week after VE Day, the British *Daily Mirror* reports that "Allied firms in Lisbon have been fined up to £l00 because they did not obtain permission from the National Labour Institute before granting two days paid VE holiday to their Portuguese staff, says Reuter" (*Daily Mirror*, May 17, 1945 , p.3), and in December 1945, under the heading "British were left out", the Australian *Sunday Mail* writes: "Reuter's Lisbon correspondent says that none of four British journalists in Lisbon was invited to the State opening of the new Portuguese National Assembly by President Carmona. All other foreign journalists were invited" (*Sunday Mail*, December 2, 1945, p.2). Not surprisingly, Brown would be expelled from Portugal in the following year according to a dispatch from the Australian Associated Press: "The Portuguese police on Tuesday told Reuters correspondent, Douglas Brown, that he must leave Portugal within 48 hours. No reason was given. Portuguese newspapers recently violently attacked Brown, accusing him of participating in Portuguese politics and helping the opposition" (*Examiner*, February 7, 1946, p.5).

> The New York Herald Tribune in an editorial said: "If this is neutrality, it is neutrality gone mad. If De Valera and the Portuguese dictator, Salazar, believe their tears for the late unlamented Hitler will either be forgiven or forgotten they are more naive than men in their position have any right to be." (*The Courier-Mail*, May 5, 1945, p. 2)

Lisbon and the Portuguese regime were under a heavy storm in mid-May 1945, and in more than one sense for by that time a film named *Storm over Lisbon* (directed by George Sherman, 1944, USA) was showing in several European cinemas. In May 1945, the line between history and fiction appeared to be seriously blurred in the tumultuous atmosphere of Lisbon and Salazar's political narrative decisively contributed to that blurring.

Dissonances, institutional memory, structural amnesia

If the media – from the press to the film industry – constitute some sort of repository or archive where collective memory is kept and preserved (Luhmann, 2000; Gerd-Hanse, 2011; Erll, 2018), then it is apparently clear that Salazar's speeches of May 1945 are marked by a double dissonance in relation to the media landscape of the period. At an international level Salazar's narrative of a "collaborationist neutrality" with the Allies is received with a mix of mistrust, suspicion and incredulity. It is simply not congruent with the official mourning for Hitler declared by the Portuguese government on May 2, 1945, nor with the attitude of an authoritarian regime that patently sought and cultivated affinities with Franco's Spain, Mussolini's Italy or Hitler's Germany throughout the whole period. At a national level, on the other hand, Salazar's narrative also seems somewhat out of place. It does not completely fit in the Portuguese context of these first weeks of May 1945 and this is something that cannot pass unnoticed as well. This subtler dissonance is particularly noticeable in the address that Salazar delivered on VE Day (May 8, 1945) at the National Assembly in Lisbon.

It is a very brief homiletical speech given, as the Portuguese Premier puts it, at "such an exalted and almost sacred hour" (Salazar, 1945, p.10). Accordingly, Salazar assumes a solemn liturgical tone, he does not forget to "give a pious thought to President Roosevelt" (p.7), who had died on April 12, 1945, and his words are punctuated by a churchly chorus – "Let us welcome Peace!" (pp.8 and 9) – that develops in a crescendo and ends with a final "Let us welcome the Victory!" (p.10). The speech does not leave many doubts about the fact that his rejoicing over peace is sincere. As far as the Allied victory is concerned, the perspective is slightly different though, for Salazar appears to be much more interested in

recalling that "none amongst us ever ceased to look upon the national interest as bound up with the fate of Britain" and that during the war "Brazil was actively contributing" (p.9) to the victory of Britain and the United States. On the whole, this address on VE Day is symbolically important but not especially significant from a political point of view, since many of the ideas put forward in it would be much more deeply developed in the far longer address made on May 18 to the same audience. However, once you place Salazar's words on VE Day into their actual context at the National Assembly things change.

Besides being published by the Secretariat of National Propaganda, the speech was also printed in the proceedings of the National Assembly (Assembleia Nacional, 1945) and this version of the speech reveals important details about the mindset of Salazar's audience as well as about the outlook of the country's political elite. Before giving the floor to the Prime-Minister, the chairman of the National Assembly brings together a few thoughts regarding the end of the war in Europe. Echoing a well-known speech given by Churchill in 1940, he underscores the fact that the "victory of the United Nations" (sic) was achieved at the cost of "so much *blood*, so much *sweat* and so many *tears*". Unsurprisingly, England, "our old and firm ally", emerges from his words as the great victor of the war. Moreover, his introductory remarks are also generally imbued with the same liturgical tone that Salazar would use in his speech.

> The war in Europe has ended. After more than five years of horror and devastation, the fire that threatened to subvert all Western and Christian civilization, laboriously raised by the blood and heroism of martyrs and apostles, has finally ended.

And then, in a similar vein, the chairman goes further to envision a future post-war world, peaceful and… fascist: "The horizon is now illuminated by the consoling fasces [facho] of peace. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will" (Assembleia Nacional, 1945, p.426).

This projection of an illuminating fascist future openly unveils the horizon of the Portuguese political elite. It inevitably brings to mind a dispatch from the New York based Jewish Telegraphic Agency dated June 26, 1940 (*News from all over the world*. Jewish Telegraphic Agency, VII, No. 69, p.5) where the American-born wife of the assistant air attaché of the British Air Ministry that had just arrived from Lisbon is quoted as having said: "Portugal is infested with Nazis". And fascists, one might add.

The events that took place in Lisbon at the beginning of May 1945 created a wary and hostile international environment for the Portuguese regime and the "structure of [its] internationally available pasts" (Bachleitner, 2021, p.42) was not very helpful in this regard as it seemed to confirm the worst suspicions. Salazar's

voice and his (unusual) public visibility during these days – after the speech on VE Day the Portuguese Premier paid a personal visit to the British Ambassador (*Diário de Lisboa*, May 8, 1945, p.1) and on May 19 he addressed a crowd gathered at one of the biggest squares in Lisbon to thank him for keeping the country out of the war (*Diário de Lisboa*, May 20, 1945, p.1) – are part of an overwhelming effort to overcome this state of affairs. The country obviously needed a new memory of its recent past and a new diplomatic strategy for its future.

Salazar's language had to change and adapt. Although he does not abandon the use of ideology-laden terms like "authority" and "order", "fascism" and its cognates are words that he clearly avoids in May 1945. Furthermore, and in spite of his former condescending observations on democracy and liberalism, he goes so far as to declare himself a "true democrat" in his May 18 speech: "if democracy, in addition to its political significance, may have a social significance and foundation, then we are the true democrats" (Salazar, 1945, p.25).

Of course, the country's recent past also had to undergo similar changes and adjustments. Salazar selectively appropriates and rewrites the history of the period and reassesses Portugal's role in the conflict, thus putting forward the guidelines along which the Portuguese "institutional memory" (Lebow, 2006) of that time would be reenacted. Skillfully woven, Salazar's narrative builds upon "structural amnesia", that is to say, the Portuguese Premier "tends to remember only those links" to the past "that are socially important" (Connerton, 2008, p.64) for the present or for the future. It was, to put in the apt words of Tony Judt (1992), as if the past was another country. The narrative strategy paid off. Structural amnesia produces a state of mind that is politically convenient and useful, and at the same time mentally (and morally) comfortable. It is therefore not surprising that it lasted until the present day.

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