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■ **Photography and
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□ **Forum:
Transimperial History –
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**Photography and Dictatorships
in the Twentieth Century**

Edited by

Linda Conze, Ulrich Prehn and Michael Wildt

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Re-reading the Photographic Archive:
The Propagandistic Staging
of the Portuguese *Estado Novo*
in the Braga District

Portugal's authoritarian, corporatist and anti-liberal state gained its institutional form in 1933/34 at the same time as a network of doctrinal and propagandistic devices were used to legitimise the new socio-political order.¹ Despite its professed disdain for politics, the head of government Oliveira Salazar soon abandoned his opposition to the «wonders» of propaganda. In his view, the «political times» demanded redemptive measures in line with the new era that had begun in Europe and across the world.

The commitment to propaganda was a means to enter this new era. It was dictated by the urgent need to consolidate (both internally and externally) the emerging regime and to affirm its supremacy and authority. In any case, the Portuguese leader, a professor of law at Coimbra University, continued to advocate his own conception of politics, based on the distinction between «politics» and «politicians».

The term «politics» was used to designate a scientific understanding of the subject that consigned its exercise to the intellectual sphere, pre-supposing study, reflection and specialised knowledge. It thus represented a dignified form of governance, entrusted to educated and knowledgeable elites.² By contrast, the term «politician» referred to the praxis itself thought of as a field of struggle and confrontation, favourable to emotional and irrational passions and unfruitful outcomes.

1 For a comparative perspective, see A.C. Pinto (ed.), *Corporatism and Fascism: The Corporatist Wave in Europe*, London 2017; idem, «Elites, Single Parties and Political Decision-Making in Fascist-Era Dictatorships», in: *Contemporary European History* 11 (2002), 3, 429–54; J.J. Linz, *Authoritarian and Totalitarian Regimes*, Boulder, CO 2000. Among the most comprehensive studies are F. Rosas, *Salazar e o Poder. A Arte de Saber Durar*, Lisbon 2012; F. Rosas / A. Garrido (eds.), *Corporativismo, Fascismos, Estado Novo*, Coimbra 2012; L.R. Torgal, *Estados no-*

vos, Estado Novo, Coimbra 2009; M.B. da Cruz, *O Partido e o Estado no Salazarismo*, Lisbon 1988, and N. Domingos / V. Pereira, «Introdução», in: eadem (ed.), *O Estado Novo em Questão*, Lisbon 2010, 7–40, for a critical review of the Portuguese historiography.

2 A. de Oliveira Salazar, «Duas Palavras de Prefácio», in: *Discursos, Notas Políticas (1935–1937)*, vol. II, Coimbra 1959, XXII; A. Ferro, *SALAZAR – O Homem e a Sua Obra*, Lisbon 1933.

The image of the leader was thus forged according to this idea. This was then imbued with an ethos of monumentality and splendour, based on a distant relationship with the masses. In Portugal therefore, unlike Fascist Italy or Nazi Germany, the symbolic representation of authoritarian leadership relied upon the idea of the leader as a superior and simple being, of sullied holiness.³ On the other hand, the regime did not refrain from creating and fostering a so-called «politics of the spirit» (*política de espírito*) based on the values of «Salazarist» ideology (namely nationalism, authoritarianism, ruralism, corporatism and Catholicism). The introduction of such a politics indicated a symbolic rupture with the recent historical past, namely the long liberal cycle between 1834 and 1926, especially the republican regime between 1910 and 1926. This signalled the beginning of a new era represented by the *Estado Novo* which began with the opening clarion call of the National Revolution.⁴ This was mirrored by the propaganda that circulated in the early days of *Estado Novo* which emphasised the achievement of the Salazarist vision of «restoration» and «regeneration». In the eyes of its ideologues and mentors, it was to establish new ideological, political and social foundations based on the promise of restoring a vision of a triumphant past.

The formulation of a «politics of the spirit» was entrusted to António Ferro (1933–1949), the director and mentor of the National Propaganda Service (Secretariado Nacional de Propaganda, or SNP). Ferro, a writer and journalist, was responsible for creating an all-encompassing culture and worldview based on a visual, architectural and symbolic aesthetic aligned to the ideological foundations of the regime. The re-nationalisation of the collective consciousness and the effort to «Portugulise» the population went hand in hand with this extensive and multifaceted programme inspired by the Italian, Nazi and, to a lesser extent, Soviet examples. Photography's power to suggest ideas had already been explored under the previous republican regime, having played a significant part in the political propaganda and the press of the time.⁵ With Ferro the medium was subordinated to the requirements of the state, generating the first massive campaign that used photographic and moving images in the regime's propaganda. Ferro's interventions were decisive in the sense that the state began to commission works from photographers and photography became part of the regime's propaganda. Considering the Mussolini influence, it

3 See among others R.Griffiths, «Fascist or Conservative? Portugal, Spain and the French Connection», in: *Portuguese Studies*, 14 (1998), 138–151.

4 The official designation of the regime in Portugal between 1933 and 1974, translated as «New State», hereinafter maintained in the original. The National Revolution of 28 May 1926 put an end to the First Republic. It began in the northern city of Braga which, for this reason, was credited as the cradle of the regime.

5 See E.Tavares, «History of Portuguese Photography», in: V.Macek (ed.), *History of European Photography 1900–1938*, Vol. 1, Bratislava 2010, <https://pt.scribd.com/document/249574167/Eng-history-of-Portuguese-Photography-Vol-1>, and A.Sena, *História da Imagem Fotográfica em Portugal 1839–1997*, Porto 1988.

was only natural that he wanted to introduce a modernist aesthetic into the public sphere – an aesthetic at the service of the national regeneration programme with the ultimate goal of consolidating the power of the conservative-nationalist project of *Estado Novo*. The modernist aesthetic was consistent with the idea of creating something new, such as the «New State». In truth, when Ferro became the director of the propaganda service, he used his position to further the arts and literature by commissioning works from a younger generation of artists (Almada Negreiros, Jorge Barradas, Stuart de Carvalhais, Bernardo Marques, Emmérico Nunes, António Soares, Carlos Botelho, Eduardo Viana) who, despite opposing the regime, agreed to collaborate because it was, after all, paid work. The subordination of great photographers to state projects and propaganda was not restricted to Portugal. Dictatorships and democracies around the world used photographs in their propaganda, especially in the aftermath of the Great Depression, e.g. Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange and the Farm Security Administration. Here, however, the meaning of the modernist and revolutionary aesthetics was subverted by the presentation of a mystic, and clearly conservative, view of Portugal, evoking representational codes that were inspired by a «reactionary modernism» (Jeffrey Herf).⁶

Under the auspices of António Ferro, the SPN's propaganda programme⁷ sought to create and enforce a cultural code of aesthetics that could be applied to a variety of political and cultural events. This task was made complex by the difficulty in reconciling a national doctrine with local customs and cultures. The planned initiatives included different types of events such as exhibitions, festivals, public demonstrations, theatrical performances, film screenings, radio broadcasts, conferences and editorial productions and had to consider the nature of their target audience. The propaganda programme also involved a vast array of figures including those of official institutions: political, administrative and military authorities, leading elites of the ruling party, the National Union (União Nacional), delegates of the corporatist institutions such as the National Institute of Labour and Social Security (Instituto Nacional do Trabalho e Previdência), as well as other national or private organisations.

The coordinated direction of the SPN by António Ferro was plausibly one of the jewels in the crown of the Portuguese organisational propaganda model, which in turn was supervised by Oliveira Salazar.⁸ From the start, the successes of the SPN

6 See also M.V.Cabral. «The Aesthetics of Nationalism: Modernism and Authoritarianism in Early Twentieth-Century Portugal», in: *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 26 (1989) 1, 15–43; L.Trindade, *O Estranho Caso do Nacionalismo Português. O salazarismo entre a literatura e a política*, Lisbon 2008, and E.W.Sapega, *Consensus and Debate in Salazar's Portugal. Visual and Literary Negotiations of the National Text, 1933–1948*, University Park, PA 2008.

7 Later renamed the National Secretariat for Information, Popular Culture and Tourism (Secretariado Nacional da Informação, Cultura Popular e Turismo, SNI) in 1944.

8 G. Adinolfi, «The Institutionalization of Propaganda in the Fascist Era: The Cases of Germany, Portugal, and Italy», in: *The European Legacy*, 17 (2012) 5, 607–621.

were put towards the creation of a unified ideological vision which permeated different aspects of society to different extents.⁹ As a whole, this propaganda envisioned a kind of visual monumentalism that would internalise an attachment to the values of the emerging regime, similar to those policies used in European nation-building during the nineteenth century.¹⁰ This intention is revealed by the discursive narratives disseminated through different forms of media in the press.

To conclude our introduction we wish to highlight the analytical starting point of our article.

This study originated with the discovery of a photographic collection depicting political demonstrations in Braga¹¹ – an interesting opportunity given the scarcity of locally produced visual sources.¹² Such lack is extended to local newspapers whose use of photography was limited by material and technical hindrances. In time, however, the pages of local newspapers gradually became filled with photographic imagery fulfilling the propagandistic mission which was also received by readers with great enthusiasm. The comparison of this material with similar productions carried out by skilled experts of the National Propaganda Service and commissioned from photographers, film directors and artists reveals the heuristic potential of relocating the focus of the research on the production of cultural and political propaganda from a national to a local level.

The originality of some of the visual material evinced the potential of photography in terms of symbolic materialisation. The analysed images – either published in the local press or simply intended to circulate as glorifying images (figs. 1, 2) are hardly known and constitute therefore the aim of our case study in section 3. The material also demonstrated the propagandistic potential of spreading Salazarist political imaginary in local environments.

Having established the focus – namely the analysis of visual representations of the political imaginary in a local context in the early years of *Estado Novo* – it is important to define the theoretical and methodological scope. Within this context, the focus is placed on the processes of circulation and the reception of aesthetic and ar-

9 See J.R. do Ó, *Os Anos de Ferro. O dispositivo cultural durante a «Política do Espírito» 1933–1949*, Lisbon 1999, and M. Acciaiuoli, *António Ferro. A vertigem da Palavra. Retórica, Política e Propaganda no Estado Novo*, Lisbon 2013, further to the vast literature about the subject matter.

10 G. L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich*, New York 1974; E. Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, Cambridge 1996 and F. Catroga, «Ritualizações da História», in: L. Reis Torgal / J. M. Amado Mendes / F. Catroga (eds.), *História da História em Portugal sécs. XIX–XX*. Lisbon, 1996, 547–671.

11 The photographic archive of the Nogueira da Silva Museum is part of the Minho University. The collection corresponds to a non-organised series of photographic records documenting political meetings and events held in Braga in the period between the military dictatorship and the 1960s. It includes unpublished originals as well as photographs that were largely shown at the time.

12 The city has an important archive of historical photographs, the Museum of the Image (Museu da Imagem), which includes the archive of the Atelier Aliança, one of the most important photographic studios of the city.

tistic codes associated with the «politics of spirit», drawing particularly upon a thick description of photographic sources. The analysis takes into account processes for the conceptual, technical and visual creation and staging of the socio-political values of Salazarism.

The article is thus structured in three parts. The first part frames the propagandistic production in local political channels. In the second part, we present a detailed description of a specific local political event. The case study exemplifies the level of symbolic sophistication conveyed by the visual representation. The imagery clarifies the purposes of the local organisers, namely to incorporate the aesthetic and ideological language of the Salazarist authoritarianism in local political demonstrations, which was in stark contrast with the rudimentary nature of local events organised at the end of the military dictatorship. Section 3 (Salazarist imaginary, as perceived from a local perspective) addresses the complexity of its appropriation and dissemination as the title suggests. The selected visual material comes from the local press and specifically an extraordinary special edition published to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the National Revolution (28 May 1936), designed by the SPN. In doing so, the analysis demonstrates the distance from desired standards and reveals a form of resistance of a culture devoted to more traditional aesthetic codes. The selection of visual imagery and its graphical composition seem to reflect taste, rather than technical choices.

Therefore, it might be necessary to rethink the provincial aesthetic infused to local political demonstrations organised or supervised by the SPN in close collaboration with local agents as a choice that may have strengthened the reception of the message among local audiences, resistant to the intellectualised canon.

Finally, a few words regarding the choice of Braga as a case study. The city was the stage of the initial uprising that led to the establishment of the military dictatorship (1926–1933) – an episode which was subsequently transformed into the mythical event at the origins of the *Estado Novo*. This singular situation emphasises the type of devices mobilised to create sources of legitimation. Simultaneously, it highlights the need for them. It is therefore necessary to contextualise the study of such devices within the framework of the regime's propaganda praising the «small homelands» (*pequenas pátrias*) as one of the most substantial glorifying images of the ancestral and primal unity of the Portuguese nation.

1. The Propaganda Network in the Northern City of Braga in the 1930s

The acquisition of the daily newspaper *Correio do Minho* by the Braga district committee of the National Union in April 1934 exemplified the attempt to make the nation-wide «propaganda mission» comply with the government's design, as driven by the diligent actions of the SPN. The paper's first director, José Miranda da Rocha, was a prominent and enthusiastic militant of the defunct fascist National Syndicalist Movement (*Nacional Sindicalismo*) who was also the district delegate of the entity responsible for controlling and developing the country's corporate organisation (INTP). The newspaper was intended to fulfil a dual function.¹³ First, it was required to portray the day-to-day progress of the National Revolution under the leadership of the executive, praising the government's work and speaking highly of the guiding principles of the emergent regime. Secondly, it supported the city's efforts to integrate the Salazarist programme in order to make it a bastion of the new order.

The language used in the newspaper reflected the strong influence of the National Syndicalism doctrines.¹⁴ The official dissolution of the small but dynamic Portuguese fascist party at the end of 1934 did not affect the inflamed tone and rhetoric typically used in *Correio do Minho*. Quite the opposite, such a rhetoric mirrored the model of «relatively peaceful coexistence» which characterised relations between the local leaders of the two parties, National Union and the National Syndicalism Movement, specifically in the Braga district.¹⁵ The presence of representatives of the extinct party in the district committee of the National Union exemplifies the cohabitation of different and eclectic formations of the political right (Monarchists, Conservative Republicans, Integralists, Catholics and National Syndicalists) which later presided over the creation of the regime's party.¹⁶ Moreover, it is illustrative of the broad spectrum of ideologies that characterised the regime, both in the centre and periphery, under the leadership of Oliveira Salazar.

Braga, the district capital of the Minho region in the north-west demonstrated an enthusiastic and strategic commitment to the challenge of territorialising Salazar's political order. Such commitment was granted by the leadership of a united front formed by the local elites and politicians in the new National Union, as well as his Minister of the Interior, and the regional delegates or «Governadores Cívicos». The conceptual layout of the propaganda reveals the dominant influence of factions from

13 F.M. Ferreira / N. Pereira, «Propaganda e corporativização no terreno: Braga anos 30 e 40», in: F.M. Ferreira / F.A. Mendes / N. Pereira (eds.), *A Conquista Social do Território. Arquitetura e Corporativismo no Estado Novo Português*, Coimbra 2016, 13–40.

14 A.C. Pinto, *The Blue Shirts: Portuguese Fascists and the New State*, New York 2000.

15 *Ibid.*, 154.

16 See M.B. Cruz, *O Partido e o Estado no Salazarismo*, Lisbon 1988, 134–135.

National Syndicalism and reflects the «fighting spirit» and «diligent action» which animated the political agenda of the city.¹⁷ The official paper of the National Union in Braga emphatically invited its readers to fulfil the «pioneering spirit» of the National Revolution that was, supposedly, predestined. In fact, as the first city of the 28 May 1926 military coup, Braga distinguished itself nationally because of this extra symbolic significance, which was greatly exploited by the government and the ruling elites, and which further contributed to the mythical construction of this legacy as the founding moment of the National Revolution.¹⁸

Similarly to the Liberal period of the previous century, the socio-political and economic specificities of the region influenced the ongoing re-structuring of the political elites. This is understandable. The weak modernisation process which Portuguese society underwent in the period between the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century had repercussions in the Braga region, where a traditional, predominately rural and backward economy whose labour market was virtually stagnant persisted, as in other provinces of Portugal for that matter. The economy's ability to stimulate substantial changes in the social sphere was therefore insignificant – except for the two largest cities in the country: Lisbon and, to a lesser extent, Porto. Signs of modern associative and social practices, especially visible in provincial cities at the end of the nineteenth and first decades of the twentieth centuries proved to be fragile and inconsistent, preventing the rise of a society according to modern European standards on a nationwide scale. The rooting of a political culture based on the values of freedom, autonomy and democracy remained incipient for that very reason. The population was mostly illiterate and deprived of opportunities. For many, the only option was to emigrate in search of better quality of life. The vitality of the press was a solid indicator of the freedom of speech and a space for the dissemination of pluralistic public opinions. However, despite the visible hints of modernity the country remained enclosed under the power and influence of its elites, entangled in the persistence and practices of patronage which shaped the daily experience and regulated the oligarchic exercise of politics.¹⁹

In such an environment, it could be argued that the process of spreading the socio-political values of Salazarist ideology was considerably simplified, even if not

17 Ferreira / Pereira, *Propaganda*, 21–28.

18 For a comparison with the transitions experienced by other countries in Southern Europe, see G. Albanese, *Dittature mediterranee. Sovversioni fasciste e colpi di Stato in Italia, Spagna e Portogallo*, Rome, Bari 2016.

19 See A.C. Pinto / P.T. de Almeida, «On Liberalism and the Emergence of Civil Society in Portugal», in: N. Bermeo / P. Nord (eds.), *Civil Society before Democracy. Lessons from Nineteenth-Century Europe*,

Lanham, MD, et al. 2000, 3–21; P. Schmitter, *Portugal: do autoritarismo à democracia*, Lisbon 1999, especially chapter one; D.P. Cerezales, «Weak State and Civic Culture in Liberal Portugal (1851–1926)», in: L. Trindade (ed.), *The Making of Modern Portugal*, Newcastle upon Tyne 2013, 44–64; S. Piattoni (ed.), *Clientelism, Interests, and Democratic Representation: The European Experience in Historical and Comparative Perspective*, Cambridge 2001.



Figs. 1, 2: Banquet of the Nationalist Youth of the province of Douro e Minho, Circo Theatre, Braga, 9 June 1934

Source: Nogueira da Silva Museum, University of Minho, Photographic Archive.

totally free of tensions. With the support of the SPN, the political elites of the region had the task of attracting the collaboration of representatives of the region's social elites and of recruiting members among the motivated ranks of the right-wing parties, specifically those from National Syndicalism which had greater adherence in the region than elsewhere.²⁰ It was essentially a task of enticing rather than indoctrinating, given that there was already a general political consensus that provided a solid basis for the establishment of the authoritarian regime of the *Estado Novo*.²¹

2. The Symbolic Events in Local Political Propaganda

In the present section, we focus on the use of visual images as instruments for the representation of politics in the early days of Salazarism. We will analyse how the re-founding of politics in the new era was staged and delivered. In other words: how was Salazar's ideology embodied and presented? What was unique about the visual forms in the broader context of discursive formations in local propaganda?

Figures 1 and 2 depict a banquet,²² a get-together of the National Youth from the regions of Douro and Minho (9 June 1934). The event was intended to affirm the supremacy of Oliveira Salazar's authority at a time when his power within the civil dictatorship had not yet been fully secured. It was an eminently elitist event designed to gather enthusiastic ranks of the regime in a banquet to honour the nationalist youth of the Minho province. To attend, prior booking and payment at the party's headquarters was required. This would become a common practice in Salazarist political demonstrations held in indoor spaces. The ticket system served several purposes. First, it enabled organisers to immediately control and select the target audience, avoiding any undesirable attendees. Secondly, it was intended to demonstrate the socio-political significance of the regime's supporters in the Minho province whilst still trying to influence and capture undecided audiences. This was

20 Pinto, *The Blue Shirts*, 196–200.

21 It should be emphasised that the idea of a general political consensus among the social élite did not follow the process of establishing the corporatist organisation in the country which represented the second pillar of *Estado Novo* in the framework of the economic and social «restoration» of the country. The dissemination of the corporatist state was confronted with forms of resistance (open and/or passive) led by the social élite – once the opposition of organised trade unions had been suppressed and dismantled. See M. Lucena, *Evolução do Sistema Corporativo Português*, 2 vols., Lisbon 1976; F. Patriarca, *A Questão Social no Salazarismo, 1930–1947*, 2 vols., Lisbon 1995, and F. Rosas, «O corporativismo enquanto regime», in: idem, *Salazar e o Poder*, 281–317, among others.

22 Banquets were common in interwar Europe and not only limited to the field of politics. They were dictated by the purpose of promoting and cementing links and solidarities between particular groups, such as those organised within large companies. See the image for the sixtieth anniversary of the company Kabelwerk Reinshagen (1934), in: U. Prehn, «Framing Work: Visual Tropes and Narrative Paradigms in Private and Institutional Photo Albums from Nazi Germany», unpublished paper presented at the Conference «Photographing under Dictatorships of the Twentieth Century: Public Spheres and Photographic Practices», 26–28 October 2016, Humboldt University Berlin, 13, which represents an exemplary illustration of the affinities recorded by this type of event.

achieved by the unspoken threat of exclusion from the circle of core supporters. The names of attendees were published in the *Correio do Minho*.

The images enable us to reconstruct the event through a shot-countershot of the Teatro Circo, the biggest theatre in town. The photographer (unknown, but most likely a professional) was able to create a unique vision of the atmosphere. In terms of camera angle and perspective, the images highlight the purpose of alignment and emphasise the organiser's ideological message. *Correio do Minho*, the official press of the local National Union, the only political party authorised by the ascending regime, had a wide dissemination. To all intents and purposes, the visual construction of the images enhances the clarity of the message that was intended to be shared with the audience.

Visually the impressive nature of the event, defined by sobriety, discipline and the social ordering of the space, stresses the organisational effort of a balanced staging of certain selected scenic elements. The central perspective of the front room of the theatre (fig. 1) directs the gaze towards the portrait in the back, emphasising Salazar's supremacy. Hanging over the stage, the large-scale (approximately five-metre) portrait of Salazar dominated the hall.²³ In the central background, two raised banners joined together by a bouquet of flowers carry the names of the regime's two leaders: Óscar Carmona, President of the Republic, and Oliveira Salazar, President of the Council (the new designation corresponding to Prime Minister), symbolically conveying the harmonious unity of the two figures (fig. 2). The symmetry of the composition, which is not accompanied by any figurative representation of the two, reveals the immediate aim of the event: to contribute to the affirmation of power and hegemonic authority of the head of the government. In fact, the civil leader would eventually prevail over his military counterpart.

A second, alternative interpretation of image 1 is of a stage surrounded by a clean, painted, classical background frame from which the extensive table of honour protrudes in a display that evokes, subconsciously, the classic representation of the «last supper» in which the protagonists take part. Such an interpretation might seem exaggerated but one must bear in mind the strong religious imprint on Salazarist ideology and the close ties between the regime and the Catholic Church. The hierarchy of the space is extended to the seating area: seven rows of tables arranged perpendicular to the table of honour fill the hall to its entire length. Here, we see audience, exclusively of men, of different generations in a plausible heterogeneous composition. Politically, everything seems attuned to the sense of unity pursued by the National Union.

23 See J. Medina, «As imagens de Salazar: Estudo de iconologia histórica sobre as representações do Ditador português na caricatura, na escultura e na

pintura», in: J. Medina, *Salazar, Hitler e Franco. Estudos sobre Salazar e a Ditadura*, Lisbon 2000, 185–212.

The mass of individual attendees suggests that the local elite was in the process of being reconfigured, integrating representatives of the more traditional social strata as well as new figures (young people) who aspired to prominent positions in the new regime. Civilians predominate in the audience, punctuated here and there by the presence of military officers and priests. These three groups also represented in the organising committee, sponsored by the local commissions of the National Union party of the Entre Douro and Minho region.

Women are excluded from the banquet – strategically accommodated in the stalls, a privileged but physically and symbolically separate space from the core nucleus of the audience. In the upper galleries we see a mass of youth dressed in green belonging to the Vanguard School Action, the first organisations of fascist orientation and the predecessor of the Portuguese Youth and the Portuguese Legion.

The simplicity of decorative elements – white flags with the cross of the five wounds are intertwined with colourful regional shawls and floral arrangements which give the background a green tone – maximise the sober and prestigious ambience of the meeting. To a similar effect, other details revealed by the pictures also enhance the socially distinctive quality of the banquet, such as the orchestra, waiters and stewards.

Finally, it is worth mentioning some noticeable absences in the images. There are no posters or signs bearing slogans about the values of the regime, which dilutes the political nature of the event. Ultimately, one could doubt that we are looking at a political event at all, though the political nature of the event is revealed in the speeches of the organising committee with its military, political, administrative and religious components. These are important elements that characterised the cultural recasting of the country, one that re-created and mystified Portuguese national history and its vestiges by appropriating its ancient values (especially Catholicism) and the redemptive role of the army in the new era. Clearly this was an effort to rebuild and re-appropriate national values in order to embody «the restoration of the true popular representation».²⁴ The revolution had found two men who embodied the values of the new order: Salazar and Carmona.

As a concluding note, it could be said that the depicted event is a symbolic expression of the political imaginary pursued by Salazarism. The particular significance of the image can be seen in terms of its symbolic staging of power and the exercise of authority, especially when compared with photographs of other social events in Braga under the military dictatorship.²⁵ It should therefore be interpreted as a clear indication of how the official aesthetic language was to be disseminated

24 See speech of Father Basto, a member of the organizing committee in *Correio do Minho*, 10 June 1934: «The get-together of the National Youth from the Douro and Minho regions was held under great moral elegance thus revealing its

transcendent importance. Carmona, Salazar, the *Estado Novo* and the civil governor of Braga were vigorously acclaimed.»

25 Nogueira da Silva Museum, University of Minho, Photographic Archive.

among the mentors and agents of propaganda in local areas. Among these were senior officers of the National Union who were particularly indoctrinated and familiar with the contemporary political agendas spread throughout Europe which were taken as a role model and adapted to the Portuguese context.

Regarding the socio-political dynamics, the Salazarist symbolic event was intended to integrate and display the regime's supporters who embodied the noble and distinctive spirit of the political mission of the new era: the ruling and social elites which were called to lead the nation as a whole. This elite also included a broader segment of the regime's unconditional supporters in the local areas (executives, civil servants and representatives of the middle class) which guaranteed the necessary solidity and durability. The regime hoped that this segment would realise the desideratum of unity – the absence of political or ideological cleavages – which was considered the founding socio-political ideal of the *Estado Novo*. At the same time Salazarism also hoped to keep the population apolitical – in striking contradiction, it should be noted, to the wishes of some prominent figures in the regime who favoured a greater involvement of the masses in the structures and dynamics of the regime in line with the model of other totalitarian states in the interwar period.

Perhaps for this reason, part of the local propagandistic approach focused on praising the superior qualities of the political leadership in the province, which was believed to resemble the ruling elite of national politics. It was a matter of emphatically promoting the elitist hierarchical model that characterised politics, governance and the larger sphere of social relations. This was a societal model that advocated behaviour shaped by fidelity, obedience and respect for the current order and authority, which would ultimately foster a culture of subservience among a population that was traditionally more or less accustomed to dependency. In short, the propagandistic design aspired to fulfil the mission of consolidating consensus, reinforcing the subordinate connection of the parts to the whole, and thus re-establishing a new balance in the cult of the authoritarian dictatorship of the *Estado Novo* that glamorised its leader.

This was the representational model of power that was instituted in the long duration of Salazarism intended to create consensus in the local areas through the referential space of the symbolic event of the political spectacle. This is exemplified by the celebrations during the election programmes between 1934 and 1968. Tested and promoted since the creation of the regime, this model was reproduced in similar political assemblies or campaigns of greater magnitude organised in the region during the 1930s.²⁶ This is suggested by press reports that underlined the distinc-

26 Other examples include the «propaganda session» organised in the city for the first elections for the National Assembly on 2 December 1934 and the «political sessions» that were part of the Labour

Day festivities (1 May) – an initiative that Braga's district authorities promoted for five years without interruption in cities and towns throughout the region (1934–1939).

tive and warm atmosphere of the spectacles, reserved to a privileged audience of unconditional supporters of the *Estado Novo*. These assemblies were of particular importance when speakers included prominent national figures (ministers and councillors of the state), an increasingly standardised practice which aimed metaphorically to promote the idea of proximity between the centre and periphery.

The symbolic significance of the prominent public figures combined with the rhetoric narrative of their speeches sum up the essence of these events: the same self-congratulatory purpose of commemorating the symbolic and material achievements of the *Estado Novo* and to cement the spirit of the regime among its audiences, though this was not necessarily very large depending on the capacity of the venue.²⁷

The public was expected to listen to these interventions which often excelled in rhetorical and literary eloquence. The use of expressive visual images was commonplace, especially among speakers with greater educational and cultural understanding (ministers, directors of local cultural entities and members of the clergy). This emphasised the intention of painting vivid images of the leader and the march of the National Revolution: a practice that would encourage imaginative and emotional adherence to the regime as suggested by the reported enthusiastic applause that emanated from a duly disciplined audience between the long speeches.

The importance of these events was soon associated with the imaginary of radio broadcasts, even though these occurred sporadically and remained experimental. Radio broadcasts were intended to cover events of special grandeur (December 1934–May 1936)²⁸ contributing to enhance the status of the host city and the spectacle of the event. The official body of the National Union of Braga expressed appreciation for the radio service, seen as a paradigmatic extension of mass-advertising, most probably because of its immediacy and influence. However, following the decision of the head of government, the national broadcast did not become a widely used instrument for the political mobilisation of the masses throughout the 1930s.²⁹ Thus, the local press was able to keep its role of acting as a local mediator for the public to understand the constructed reality created by the regime.³⁰

The power of the written word remained pre-eminent in the local press, reinforced sporadically by photographic imagery. Their language was characterised by a markedly narrative register, punctuated by frequent comments and visual interjections that conferred tone and colour to the description of the events. Technological

27 It should be noted however that the scale of these events did not go unnoticed by the official paper of the regime which stressed the importance of quality over quantity.

28 See *Correio do Minho*, 11, 14, 15, 21, 27, 28, 29 and 30 November and 2, 4 December, 1934.

29 See L. R. Torgal, «A radiofonia ao serviço do Estado. Os inícios da Emissora Nacional», in: idem, *Estados novos* (149–174), 156.

30 It should be noted that, despite the active surveillance of the censor, there was a wide and competitive offering of newspapers (both national and regional) that circulated at the time which offered an alternative to the political-propagandistic narrative of the official newspapers or sympathisers of the «situation» (i.e. Salazar's regime).

and financial constraints explain the minimal use of photographic images in the provincial press, despite their obvious appraisal. In spite of the incipient quality of the photographic records, they were received with great enthusiasm by the audience. It is necessary to bear in mind, however, the general and largely unquestioned assumption among contemporaries that photographs were simply recordings of reality.

3. Salazarist Imaginary as Perceived from a Local Perspective

Inspired by other totalitarian regimes and, in particular, Italy, the country streamlined a propaganda model that was rich in visual images. Figures 3–5 are taken from a special issue of the *Correio do Minho*, an edition printed as part of the celebrations of the tenth anniversary of the National Revolution (28 May 1936). The event represented the first public celebration of the *Estado Novo*, praising both tradition and the present in a way typical of the totalitarian experiences of interwar Europe. Understood as a «monument» to the regime, the festivities were above all a paean to the new era and a glorification of its origins (that is, the military coup of 28 May 1926, initiated in Braga). The celebration also sought to represent a living embodiment of the idea of consensus, thus meeting Oliveira Salazar's aspiration to exhibit the spirit of «cohesion, unity, and homogeneity».³¹

The official programme targeted the capital city and imperial metropolis (Lisbon) and the cradle of the military revolution (Braga). Lisbon welcomed the most distinctive political and cultural demonstrations, among which the exhibition of the tenth anniversary of the National Revolution, which was the highlight of the celebrations. Meanwhile, Braga was the stage of mass demonstrations (military parades and civic processions) which sustained an unprecedented eloquence, particularly in organisational and symbolic terms.³²

Rather than focusing on the political and aesthetic dimensions of large-scale propaganda campaigns, exhibitions, and spectacles³³ shaped by the theories and

31 M. Acciaiuoli, *Exposições do Estado Novo, 1934–1940*, Lisbon 1998, 15.

32 As testified by the intense imagery produced to cover the mass spectacle in Braga, coverage commissioned by the SPN to be spread nationwide. The large-scale dissemination of visual (cinematographic and photographic) records transcended the event itself to the point where the images of Braga became, in the long experience of the *Estado Novo*, one of the greatest mythic devices of the regime's unanimity which supported the «unconscious» doctrinal and political message associated to the event. See, among others the documentary *Carmona e Salazar – Ídolos do Povo* (Carmona and Salazar – the people's idols) produced by the National Propaganda Service and directed

by Manuel Luís Vieira and José Nunes das Neves, available at: <http://www.cinematoteca.pt/Cinematoteca-Digital/Ficha.aspx?obraid=2585&type=Video> and particularly the feature film of 1937 *A Revolução de Maio* (The May Revolution), directed by António Lopes Ribeiro and based on the screenplay by António Lopes Ribeiro and António Ferro, also produced by the National Propaganda Service. Cf. L. R. Torgal (ed.), *O cinema sob o olhar de Salazar*, Lisbon 2011, 30–34.

33 See the study on the Italian case concerning C. Fogu, *The Historic Imaginary: Politics of History in Fascist Italy*, Toronto 2003, especially chapter one. See also M. Stone, «Staging Fascism: The Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution», in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 28 (1993) 2, 215–243.

practices of civic commemoration that characterised the nation-building process throughout the nineteenth century, we wish to explore the cultural mediation function of certain propagandistic accessory products. In doing so, we aim to expand the approach proposed by the Italian historian Maddalena Carli as applied to grand events (e.g. fascist exhibitions).³⁴ The special edition newspaper for the commemorations of the tenth anniversary of the National Revolution, issued by the national and local press, can be seen in this light. Intended to celebrate the event – as well as to publicise the exhibition commemorating its anniversary – the editions are presented as authentic, illustrated manuals of history for the general public.

It is worth making some analytical observations about the images included with this article (figs. 3–5) which refer to the *Correio do Minho* supplement. In our opinion, the hierarchy of scales, specifically in the relationship between the centre and periphery, reflect a common practice used in the organisation of big political events.

Overall, the supplement displays careful composition, ordering and selection of discursive forms that can be identified throughout its 23 pages (of a total of 34, given the immense space dedicated to advertising). The great variety of discursive resources (photos, diagrams, statistical illustrations, sketches and informative updates) testifies to an underlying desire to concretise a specific reality, one that is consistent with the symbolic language created and popularised by the *Estado Novo* in its attempt to impose an imaginary of totalising authoritativeness, thereby affirming the regime's truth. Such an abundance of discursive resources reveals the strong interaction between the state and private entities in making material available for the purpose of enriching the publication.³⁵

The richness of the local commemorative edition is further enhanced by the abundant use of colour that rhythmically highlights the symbols of the National Revolution: red, blue, lilac, pond green, black and white, a spectrum of colours that strengthens its collective impact. A similar structure is revealed in the most emblematic image-pages, indicating the coherence that the supplement intended to convey.³⁶

The titling of the pages is used as a foreground narrative element that gives the pages more readability which, to all intents and purposes, is presented as a single image.³⁷ Let us focus on the methodological strategies behind the titles attached to some of the most accomplished images: «For the Glory of the Empire» (fig. 3); «The men of the Revolution and their work in Braga» (fig. 4); and «*Estado Novo's* activities

34 M. Carli, «Par la volonté du Duce et par l'oeuvre du Parti», in: *Les Cahiers du Centre de Recherches Historiques* 31 (2003).

35 In particular, the organising committee of the tenth anniversary of the National Revolution, the SPN, and the photographic documentation provided by the newspaper *O Século*.

36 See W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*, Chicago 1994, 241.

37 L. Trindade, *Primeiras Páginas, O Século XX nos Jornais Portugueses*, Lisbon 2006, 26–28.



Fig. 3: «For the Glory of the Empire» (Front page of the local newspaper) *Correio do Minho*, 26 May 1936

in Braga» (fig. 5).³⁸ The meaning of the titles, either individually or as a whole, transcends the semantic meaning of the images that fill almost the entire page. The whole becomes a sign of a greater message: the «new era» as an incarnation of a kind of historical continuum without any ruptures or discontinuities between the past and the present. Between the two sub-periods of the Revolution (the military dictatorship and the *Estado Novo*) the glory of an abstract past (the empire and Portuguese architectural heritage) is transformed into present and future glory (finance, public works, education, assistance) of the «organic» nation.

Graphically, the structure of the pages unfolds into a single, simultaneously composite frame (figs. 3–5). The central image captures the gaze and organises the set of visual components that fill the page in a regular, albeit rough, order. The composition denounces neo-romantic taste, inscribing an expression of humanity onto public figures, enhanced by bourgeois frames, as seen in the graphic designs typical of illustrated magazines from the end of the nineteenth century. This is also shown in the pages relating to the biographies of the national leaders and local ruling elites (fig. 4), a composition that evokes the genealogical tree of distinguished families.

The dispersed (and apparently disordered) illustrations of achievements, great and small, are an expressive summary of the greatness of the nation-state. Similarly, the local authorities represented themselves using the same symbols, considered an extension of the national, provincial and municipal state body, as Fig. 5 denotes. Furthermore, the portraits of the local ruling elite, shown at the centre surrounded by physical monuments, contribute to enhance the brilliance of the *Estado Novo*. The public works built by the *Estado Novo* included not only governance and administration buildings, both national and local, to act as showpieces symbolising the country's history and culture, but also a variety of other structures that exemplify material progress and public well-being (e.g. courthouses, public libraries, wash houses, schools, bridges, and roads, as demonstrated by the caption of fig. 5).

The idea of progress that permeates several domains of daily life is to be understood throughout the different spheres of government activity (economy, communications and transportation, education and culture). The narrative plot that presided over Salazar's «politics of the spirit» from its beginning is clearly in evidence.

The illustrated supplement is an example of the recent history as forged by the official propaganda for the commemorations of the tenth anniversary of the National Revolution. It is also an intensely ornate copy, unparalleled by any previous local edition.

The special edition of the *Correio do Minho* demonstrates the effort of the local paper in associating itself to the commemorative programme, following the example of the other two nation-wide papers, *Correio da Manhã* and *O Século*.³⁹ Together,

38 *Correio do Minho*, 26 May, 1936.

39 Special issues, 28 May 1936.

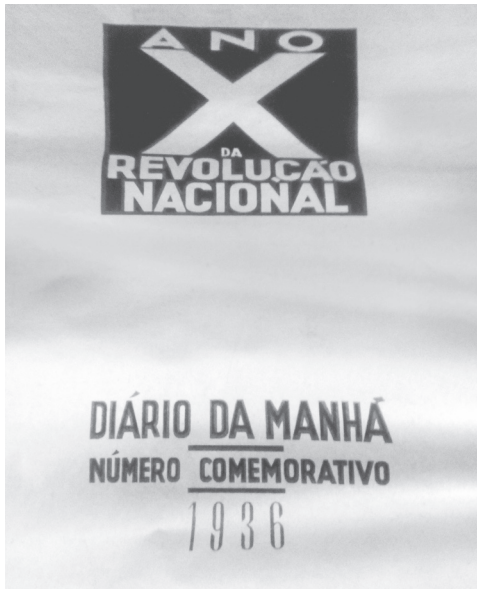


Fig. 6: Front page of the *Diário da Manhã*, 28 May 1936

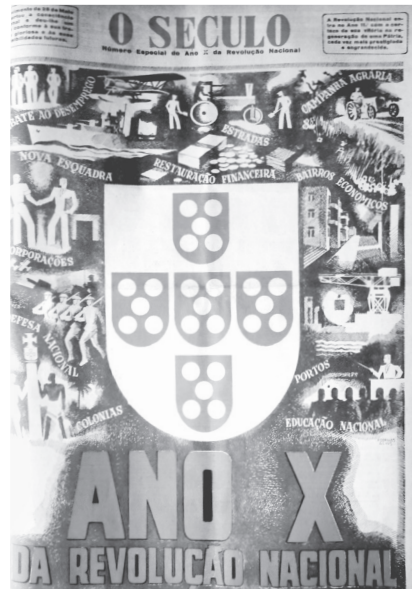


Fig. 7: Front page of *O Século*, 28 May 1936

the three newspapers came up with lavish editions dedicated to the celebrations in collaboration with the National Propaganda Service and the exhibition's Organising Committee of the tenth anniversary.

The abundance of photographic elements is common to the three editions and most take the form of portraits of leading figures or to isolated or composite pictures that exhibit the monumental action and work achieved by the National Revolution. The use of photo-montage, though incidental, does help magnify the promoted reality, as seen in some of the best examples, specifically certain pages of the supplement *O Século*. Photographic compositions are common to all three papers and, despite some obvious technical unevenness, what really stands out is the graphical expertise achieved in the *Correio da Manhã*. Of all the three, it was this which best succeeded in conveying the new era embodied by the *Estado Novo*. Throughout these pages, there are echoes of Italian fascist aesthetics, such as those seen just a short time earlier at the 1932–34 Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution (*Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista*).⁴⁰ As a whole, the graphic composition and language excels in the

40 V. Rocco, «Acting on the Visitor's Mind: Architectonic Photography at the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution Room, Rome, 1932», in: J. Ribalta (ed.),

Public Photographic Spaces: Propaganda Exhibitions from «Pressa» to «The Family of Man», 1928–55, Barcelona, 2010, 245–255.

clean, rational, rigorously balanced compositions, almost without decorative ornamentation. There is austere and symbolic use of fonts and colour: black and white against the silver background of the front and back covers; red for the maps representing the country's regions.

There is thus a striking contrast between the *Correio da Manhã's* supplement and the decorative realism used in *O Século* or the traditional graphic design of the *Correio do Minho* which denounced the province's disaffection for artistic or technical innovation (figs. 6, 7). It was not by chance that *Correio da Manhã* was the newspaper of the official party *União Nacional* and thus could justify generous investment in the creation of a visual language that would best express the regime's political modernity.⁴¹

4. Conclusion

Technical, aesthetic and artistic expertise become powerful instruments for enhancing the propagandistic message disseminated among the population with the purpose of territorialising the new era. The increasing use of imagery in the written press partially fulfilled this purpose. The full realisation of this implied that the visual *mise-en-scène* met a subliminal meaning, that is, the capacity to represent the symbolic contents of the regime. Showing the regime's activities copiously was not enough; it was also necessary to show the allegiance of the people. The former was achieved easily through the narrative resources of the written press but the latter presented other complexities. This is why the team of photographers and directors of the National Propaganda Service were entrusted with the task of capturing pictures of the masses during the celebrations that took place in the city of Braga (namely the military parade and civil procession). The level of mastery of this photographic record lay precisely in its capacity to capture individuals – men, women and children – and to make them stand out from the crowd.⁴² This was also the achievement of the documentary *Carmona e Salazar – Ídolos do Povo* (Carmona and Salazar: The People's Idols), produced by the National Propaganda Service. Here, the city, as the setting of the propaganda, itself metamorphosed into the object of propaganda.

41 *O Século* was at the time one of the most important mass-circulation newspapers in the capital city, Lisbon. The financial support by the National Propaganda Service for the production of its supplement for the commemoration suggests the intention of widening the propagandistic impact of the event, conquering potential readers oblivious to the official journalistic narrative. See N.F.M.P. Revez, «Os Álbuns *Portugal 1934* e *Portugal 1940*. Dois Retratos do País no Estado Novo», *Dissertação de Mestrado em História da Arte, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas/Universidade Nova de Lisboa*, 2012, 39.

42 F.M.Ferreira, «Construindo visualmente a utopia corporativa: Braga, anos 30 do século XX», (17/11/2016) unpublished paper presented at the International Conference «Other Places: utopias, dystopias, heterotopias», XVIII Autumn Colloquium, University of Minho /CEHUM, 17–18 November 2016.

ABSTRACT

**Re-reading the Photographic Archive:
The Propagandistic Staging
of the Portuguese *Estado Novo* in the Braga District**

The article focuses on visual representations of political propaganda in a local context in the early years of the *Estado Novo*. Braga, the city of the military coup of 28 May 1926, became nationally famous because of its symbolic value, profusely exploited by the government and the local elites. By means of thick description of iconographic material, this study analyses the use of photography in terms of symbolic materialisation, within the processes of circulation and reception of aesthetic and artistic codes fostered and spread by the «politics of spirit».

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