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Ismael Saz · Zira Box ·  
Toni Morant · Julián Sanz  
Editors

# Reactionary Nationalists, Fascists and Dictatorships in the Twentieth Century

*Against Democracy*

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*Editors*

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## The Portuguese “Blue Shirts” and Salazar’s “New State”

*António Costa Pinto*

In February 1932, a group of Portuguese fascist students in Lisbon founded an academic journal called *The Revolution (A Revolução)*. Most of the founding members belonged to the student section of Lusitanian Integralism (*Integralismo Lusitano*, IL). The latter was a radical right-wing monarchic movement that followed the example of French Action (*Action Française*, AF) created in the 1910s. A few months later, the group invited Francisco Rolão Preto to be the journal’s editor. He was a member of IL’s Central Committee, and his beliefs were similar to those professed by the group. In the summer of 1932, the National Syndicalist Movement (*Nacional Sindicalismo*, NS) was launched nationwide under Preto’s charismatic leadership (Costa Pinto 2000).<sup>1</sup>

NS was founded during the transition to authoritarianism and unified the “political family” which had played an important role in the crises and downfall of the Parliamentary Republic (1911–1926) but had been

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marginalized during the establishment of stable dictatorial rule under Salazar at the beginning of the 1930s.

NS belatedly unified fascist currents arising from the large but divided post-war radical right. It attracted the most radical members of the parties and ideological pressure groups created during the twilight years of the Parliamentary Republic. Before it was outlawed and its leaders exiled in the mid-1930's, NS had set up an organization that included a sizeable army sector and had organized several coup attempts against the Salazar regime.

Portuguese fascism was deeply influenced by the IL. Although many movements emerged during the post-war crisis that was not much influenced by Integralism, its impact on NS leaders and supporters was deep. The capacity of the IL to successfully legitimate a new reactionary ideology within Portuguese political culture with an obvious foreign ideological influence was decisive.

The ideological vitality of IL and its ability to permeate the elite conditioned the successful spread of fascism in Portugal. As stated by Hermínio Martins: "At the time when Italian Fascist and Nazi models assumed 'world-historical' importance, those most predisposed to learn and emulate them had all been grounded in the teachings and intellectual style of IL". Indeed, IL guided almost all attempts to create Fascist parties, which thus "pre-empted the ground from other influences and paradigms of the extreme right".

### ROLÃO PRETO AND INTEGRALISMO LUSITANO

Born in the Beira Baixa region in 1896, Francisco Rolão Preto was the youngest founding member of *Integralismo Lusitano*, an elitist study group created in the 1910s and inspired by Action Française (French Action). A 17-year-old monarchist émigré, he was the editor of the first Integralist newspaper, *Alma Portuguesa* (Portuguese Soul), which was published in Belgium in 1913 by young exiled monarchists, some of whom had taken part in the anti-republican incursions of 1911 and 1912. This was one of many publications created by young AF-influenced monarchist émigré students in France and Belgium. Preto was a frequent visitor to the Paris headquarters of the French movement, and he later recalled: "I was in Louvain before the war and visited Paris many times. I used to visit the offices of Action Française in the Rue de Rome, where I met Charles Maurras,

Bainville, Pujo and Léon Daudet ... I spent many evenings with them" (Medina 1977, pp. 185–86).

Maurras initially had a profound influence on IL, but this dissipated during the post-war period as others overshadowed his ascendancy over the Portuguese movement's political and intellectual formation (Dard 2013). During the 1920s, the proto-fascist dissident George Valois became Preto's new point of reference: indeed, Preto claimed he was inspired by two individuals from different generations and political circles whose paths had crossed during the first decade of the century: Georges Sorel and Georges Valois. Sorel was his true master. According to Preto, "it was he who made it all possible".<sup>2</sup> In his final interview, Preto claimed that "while the Integralists were disciples of Maurras, the National Syndicalists were not – they had cut their ties with Action Française ... Valois, well, he interested us: he had moved away from Maurras, he was Action Française's dissident" (Dard 2013). Preto's intellectual and political journey from Integralism to fascism did not make him an IL dissident, but his path is in many ways comparable to that of the founder of *Le Faisceau* (The Fasces). On the eve of the Sidónio Pais's dictatorship and, as the Integralists debated the transformation of IL from an ideological pressure group to a political movement, Preto returned to Portugal and became head of the group's social affairs section.

*Integralismo Lusitano* started life on the eve of the First World War as a club founded by a group of young monarchists who had been colleagues at Coimbra University prior to the Republican Revolution of 5 October 1910 that overthrew the constitutional monarchy (Da Cruz 1986). The group soon ceased to be a literary society, however, and became politically active. Some of the group's members participated in the first monarchist excursions launched from Spain against the recently established republican regime. During their brief exile in France and Belgium, they came into contact with AF, which became their key foreign ideological point of reference.

Following the passage of an amnesty law, the group returned to Portugal and founded IL. They began publishing a newspaper and entered the political and ideological battlefield. António Sardinha, IL's principal theorist, had never been exiled and only became a Catholic and monarchist after the Republican Revolution (Sardinha 2006). Other members of the organization, including its youngest leader, Rolão Preto, had experienced life in exile and were more open to the influence of AF. In 1916, after the republican regime took Portugal into the First World War on the side of the

Allies, IL became a political movement. It launched a daily newspaper that popularized its political programme, which was to ensure the restoration of an anti-liberal, decentralized and traditional corporatist monarchy.

Integralism left a profound intellectual mark on twentieth-century Portuguese culture. Although influenced by AF, it synthesized the ideals of a peculiarly Portuguese reactionary nationalism in a new and enduring way. It reinvented a medieval organic corporatist social “tradition”, which the liberalism “imported” by the republic allegedly sought to destroy (Lloyd-Jones 2003). To boost their ideas, they rehabilitated the nineteenth-century counter-revolutionary thought espoused by supporters of King Miguel. The first Integralists were rather dogmatic regarding the restoration of the monarchy. This complicated their relations with other anti-liberal forces, such as traditional Catholics and conservative republicans. Up until 1918, IL focused on promoting pro-monarchist coups, effectively eliminating any chance of forging a wider reactionary coalition—although it also worked enthusiastically with other anti-democratic forces.

The 1910 revolution caught the Integralists, who had absorbed “the thought of Renan and Taine ... and the heat of Action Française’s literature” by the time they finished their studies, somewhat by surprise (Raposo 1945, p. 27).<sup>3</sup> These were the years during which they read Le Bon, Barrès, Maurras and, through them, came to know the main proponents of *fin-de-siècle* nationalism. As Sardinha later recalled: “Charles Maurras once said ‘our writing has led us to politics ... but our nationalism is essentially aesthetic (*les lettres nous ont conduit à la politique... mais notre nationalisme commence par être esthétique*).’ As I reflect on our literary origins ... I recognise that literature also led us to politics” (Sardinha 1925, p. 147). The proclamation of the republic had a formative ideological impact on Integralism, for which the republic was a “crowd democracy” that led urban social groups to the political arena. Already imbued with traditional nationalism, their intellectual background railed against the republic that represented the “principles of 1789”. Yet, as noted by a founding member, at this time the Integralists still lacked “the strong armour of a system” (Raposo 1945, p. 27).

The Republican Revolution physically separated the group, with some supporting pro-monarchist revolts and participated in volunteer battalions that carried out insurgent attacks from Galicia in 1911 and 1912. Following the defeat of these incursions, some went into self-imposed exile in France and Belgium. Their letters bear witness to the influence of AF.

While its ideology was already known, the French movement now became the model to emulate (Sardinha 2009). When the group returned to Portugal immediately before the war, they created IL, which was formally inaugurated in 1914. In a letter to a friend, Sardinha, who was then newly converted to Catholicism and a monarchist, explained the link between his literature and ideological projects. Writing his book, *O Valor da Raça* (The Value of the Race, 1915), he said he wanted to denounce and undermine “the enemy’s interpretation of our history”. In his view, the “historical crisis affecting our country makes imperious demands of what, under other circumstances, could be a psychologically peaceful and cultured youth”. As he prepared the Integralist programme, Sardinha explained the ideological and political principles that should guide IL:

Monarchists, and the king himself, must be taught what a monarchy is. We have a precedent: the discredited Miguelist literature. It must be rehabilitated, and with the popularisation of the doctrines of Action Française, which are completely unknown among us, we must create a counter-revolutionary theory that can teach these people that democracy is a socially inferior form of government, which implies the rejection of all the selective criteria that only a monarchy can offer.<sup>4</sup>

Most of the founding members of IL were dedicated to promoting the ideals of a traditional, decentralized, corporatist and anti-liberal monarchy as a way of historically legitimating Integralist nationalism. Young supporters, on the other hand, were shaped by prolonged exile and the adventures of war, which brought them into close contact with French intellectual “proto-fascism” and Italian nationalism. Preto was decisively influenced by the neo-nationalism espoused by Corradini in his *Idea Nazionale* (National Idea) and by the words and deeds of the Italian nationalist writer Gabriele D’Annunzio.

The main themes of Preto’s writing in the Integralist press following his return to Portugal were war, the nation, socialism and organic syndicalism. If some IL leaders sought a return to a rural society and worried about how to end the chaotic industrialization that they believed had brought with it the evils of urbanization, Preto, on the other hand, combined the ideas of Sorel and Valois in a nationalist response to the crisis of liberalism and to a potential revolutionary threat.

The nationalism espoused by Preto and the Integralists never deviated from the traditions of Latin culture, which given its dominant influence

among the Portuguese cultural elite, was initially French. German nationalism and Nazism influenced Preto's activities in the 1930s, but they never overly impressed him: indeed, he was quite late in discovering National Socialism. Rather, Preto combined the French neo-nationalism of the pre-war period with the mystique and action of Italian nationalism. His admiration for the French led him to state: "France is the centre of the world, it is the light that becomes the intense and radiant Latin light". In the same article, he praised the achievements of *Idea Nazionale* and used an expression that became famous at his fascist rallies in the 1930s: "By God, this shall come to pass!" Such statements were rare among the Integralist cohort, which was always concerned with finding national roots for its ideas.<sup>5</sup>

In a letter to Corradini published in 1920, Preto revealed his belief in the rebirth of the anti-democratic nationalism that would usher in a new classical epoch in the Latin countries. He felt it was necessary to "believe in the triumph of the Latin order, the classical order that embraces and makes brothers of all people who are heirs to Roman civilization – France, Spain, Italy and Portugal" (Preto 1920, p. 3). Preto remained faithful to Latin neo-nationalism as he was profoundly marked by the imperialist and civilizing myths of the "Latins" as discoverers of the world, "warriors and colonisers". His first articles for *A Monarquia*, however, were more concerned with the present. During the war, he sought a reaffirmation of an authoritarian nationalism as the only way to confront the post-war era.

Preto founded the union section of the Integralist movement inspired by AF's brief pre-war flirtation with the working class. Integralism was inspired by the *Cercle Proudhon* (Proudhon Circle), as well as by the Sorelian and monarchist tract influenced by Valois, *La Monarchie et la Classe Ouvrière* (The Monarchy and the Working Class), both of which were tempered by a form of "integral corporatism".<sup>6</sup>

The new utopia presented by the Integralists was that of an "organic society" that could dignify the nation. IL's anti-capitalism was partly developed to counter the growing "denationalisation" of a capitalism that disregarded national frontiers and threatened to destroy the nation.

Preto's national syndicalist programme and his allusions to national myths were influenced by the Italian nationalism of both Corradini and Rocco. Their decisive influence is apparent in the articles Preto published in *A Monarquia*; in his 1920 book, *A Monarquia é a Restauração da Inteligência* (The Monarchy Is the Restoration of Intelligence), and in some of the texts that served as the basis for his unpublished book, *A Monarquia Social*

(The Social Monarchy) (Preto 2015). This early influence counteracted the disillusion Preto felt as a result of the marginalization of Valois's syndicalism by AF leaders.

By 1919, Preto was seeking themes for mobilization from those he regarded "Italian Integralists", those who were nationalists working "outside the system" and who had broken with liberalism in 1914. These were themes the reactionary AF was only reluctantly willing to accept. Rocco's call for "national syndicalism" through which to subordinate the masses to a state constructed after the death of democracy was a more important source of inspiration for *Sindicalismo Nacional* than Corradini's mystical nationalism.<sup>7</sup> As the Italian historian Emilio Gentile notes: "unlike the reactionaries and traditional conservatives, Rocco accepted the presence of the masses in contemporary society and thought that, in a mass society, state absolutism should use unions to control and dominate this new protagonist of the modern world" (Gentile 1982, p. 190). The post-war crisis convinced Preto of this and brought him closer to the Italian nationalists. This showed Preto was less concerned than other Portuguese Integralists with the traditional pro-restoration stance of AF.

Although he supported the traditionalism of IL and AF, Rocco inspired Preto to organize "producers". Preto's corporatist project involved the creation of a vast web of workers' and employers' unions on a regional and industry-by-industry basis, complemented by syndicalist chambers that would regulate wages, arbitrate labour conflicts and represent each sector. Initially vague and very schematic, the project was often reviewed during the 1920s until it became the programme that was at the core of National Syndicalism during the 1930s. From the end of the First World War on, the programme served as agitation propaganda. It gave Integralism a new language that replaced the aristocratic elitism with anti-capitalism and which radicalized the anti-plutocratic themes.

## THE BREAKDOWN OF THE REPUBLIC AND THE MINOR ROLE OF FASCISTS

The most salient characteristics of the emergence of fascism in Portuguese post-war society were the precocious adoption of the paradigm of Italian fascism, on the one hand, and its weak and fragmented party political expression, on the other.

The first political reference to fascism appeared during the brief dictatorship of Sidónio Pais. An officer and university professor who had converted

to politics, a member of a conservative Republican Party, a deputy, and former ambassador to Berlin, Sidónio Pais had a straightforward goal: to get Portugal out of the war. After initial programmatic hesitations, he opted for a populist presidentialism. He limited Republican Party political activity, established universal suffrage and held a plebiscite to declare himself president. Sidónio Pais presented a national plan for the creation of a corporatist state inspired by Integralism. He attempted to unite several conservative parties into a single entity and allowed the independent existence only of the monarchists and of a small Catholic Party.

Sidónio Pais's political discourse was anti-plutocratic during the period of war shortages, directed against the party oligarchies, and espousing a messianic nationalism. He managed to unite monarchists and conservative republicans. In all this, he made full use of his charismatic strengths. He surrounded himself with a group of young army officers who accompanied him and participated in his rallies. After his assassination by a rural union militant at the end of 1918, the monarchists rose in the north, leading the republicans to mobilize in the urban centres. With large numbers of military units declaring themselves neutral, the way was left open for the victory of the Democrats and a return to constitutional normality.

Sidonism became a point of reference for post-war Portuguese fascists, particularly for right-wing republican junior officers, intellectuals and students, who went on to create several parties that increasingly cited Mussolini's party as their model. Many cannot be characterized as fascist in any strict sense. Radical right is the most appropriate label given their perception of the nature of fascism (and Mussolini's party) and the hodgepodge of ideological elements present within the groups. Some were heirs of Sidonism and united intellectuals, students and junior officers who were republican and laic. Others emerged from Integralism. The growing participation of army officers in these organizations was especially notable.

The crisis of democracy in Portugal highlights the problem of interpreting the complex links between fascism and the various political families within conservatism in the first half of the twentieth century. The rise of fascism was only possible as part of a coalition encompassing various ideologies, interest groups and parts of the electorate until then represented by various conservative parties. This fact does not help one to understand what was unique and innovative about the phenomenon, however. As noted by Blinkhorn: "it cannot seriously be denied that as movements, parties and political ideologies, conservatism and fascism occupy very different posi-

tions within the early and mid-twentieth century European right converging at some points and conflicting at others" (Blinkhorn 1990, p. 13).

The fascists were divided and merely junior partners in the large coalition that brought down Portuguese liberalism. They represented a minority among the groups most affected by radical republicanism. The independent organizations founded during the 1920s were not strong, merely a few among the many groups appealing for a military coup. NS was only a small and lately formed part of the fascist current within the vast anti-liberal coalition that sustained the Military Dictatorship. It was deeply influenced by the cultural forces shaping Integralism. NS was programmatically committed to an ideology of reaction against modernization. It evolved in an authoritarian political context in which its main enemies already lacked a wide margin for manoeuvre. The Portuguese fascists were a by-product of the institutionalization of the Military Dictatorship. They gained strength because they were able to mobilize and garner the support of junior officers at a time when the republican parties were suspended and the dictatorship hesitated over the creation of new institutions.

#### NATIONAL SYNDICALISM: A TYPICAL FASCIST MOVEMENTS OF THE 1930S

Paradoxically, it was the Military Dictatorship established in 1926 that permitted the organization of a fascist movement in Portugal. As with other processes of transition to authoritarianism during the 1930s, one of the challenges facing the institutionalization from above of the New State came from below and from the right. In 1932, Rolão Preto succeeded in unifying the radical right within a clearly fascist organization—the National Syndicalist movement, NS—that was to become one of Salazar's main rivals at the beginning of the 1930s (Costa Pinto 2006).

The first steps in organizing NS took place during the summer of 1932. By the end of that year, it had been fully established, although for tactical reasons its leaders denied this. The organization's statutes, which Preto signed, were published in 1933. The organization model NS adopted was similar to that of many other European fascist parties. Preto had studied closely the structure of several of these parties, including the early Fascist movement in Italy, Valois' *Faisceau* (Fasces) and the Spanish *Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista* (Unions of the National-Syndicalist Offensive, JONS). Preto's NS was constructed around the charismatic figure that brought together the pre-existing groups previously dominated by Inte-

gralism. The formation of this fascist party is an example of the penetration model of party organization, in which the party was created around an individual, a small core of “political entrepreneurs” he associated with and the local groups established or reorganized to ensure loyalty to his leadership.

The European wave of new fascist movements was also an element of political identity, and Preto was at the forefront of this: in fact, NS propaganda was marked by its clear identification with European fascism. It was at the heart of the movement’s identity and distinguished it from Salazarism and other political ideologies and forces. International developments were followed closely and became a point of reference for NS political activity and propaganda. Reference to international events was particularly important given that Portugal was progressing towards the consolidation of a still-contested authoritarian order.

When asked about NS identification with Italian fascism in a United Press interview, Preto prudently replied:

They are evidently similar movements, sons of the same social anguish, of the same collective necessity. In each country, however, the revolutionary wave breaks and extends in a different way and has unique characteristics and rhythms. Fascism, Hitlerism are totalitarianisms that deify the Caesarist state, others seek to find in the Christian traditions of the Portuguese people the formula that permits the harmonisation of the undisputed sovereignty of national interest with our dignity as free men, as living spiritual beings.<sup>8</sup>

This interview was often cited when other authoritarian groups, particularly the Catholics, accused him of being a mere follower of international phenomena.

Despite this demarcation, fascist conquests in Europe were a central element of NS propaganda. Identification with fascism was a structural component of NS political activity, helping mobilize sectors of the political and cultural elite that identified with it and that lacked organizational expression. There were two key aspects to NS references to international events. The movement identified with regimes where fascism had won the day, which were held up as positive examples of the “revolution”. It also noted the solidarity among fascist movements, particularly those which were ideologically close to NS or which emphasized “social” and “corporatist” concerns. Almost all NS leaders wrote articles and participated in debates about fascism. Attitudes to National Socialism ranged from reserved to uncon-

ditional support, but Italian fascism and the movements close to it were identified with completely.

NS saw itself as an integral part of the fascist wave that seemed ready to dominate the political fortunes of Europe after Hitler’s rise to power. NS newspapers, and Preto’s editorials in particular, followed Hitler’s rise and his initial state reforms with enthusiasm. Part of the conservative press, particularly the Catholic press, criticized Nazism. NS responded to all attacks by defending Nazification measures and was only more moderate regarding racist policies, although the persecution of the Jews was excused by many writing for the fascist press.

For Preto, Hitler’s ascendancy represented “the new cadence of the national revolution in progress” embodying the “strong edifice of the new state” throughout Europe. He supported Hitler’s “revolutionary” strategy and expressed doubts about the German dictator’s surrender to electoral principles—a move he believed could “compromise his position”. He preferred to see Hitler “free from political compromises, armed, vigilant and determined” to redeem Germany.<sup>9</sup> Preto was certain that neither the “*Centrum* nor the violence of liberal reaction – nothing – could hold back the breaking wave of Germany’s national instinct”, and he felt Hitler “owned the era”.<sup>10</sup> Younger NS leaders were even more unconditional in their support for Hitler and expressed fewer reservations about Nazism than did Preto. They saw it as the great ideological movement of their generation. Hence, the following statement in the first edition of *O Nacional Sindicalista* (The National Syndicalist):

Hitler, great animator of the multitudes [is the] perfect incarnation of a generation that loves and wants to fight, that ardently seeks to destroy the myths and sophisms of the past and to replace them with the magnificent realities of nationalism.<sup>11</sup>

The instrumental nature of Preto’s editorials on Nazi Germany was particularly evident when he commented on the tensions between conservative authoritarians and fascists resolved in favour of the latter. Preto always stressed the similarities between Salazarism and the Dollfuss regime and criticized the conservative authoritarian mistrust of fascist movements. Nazism’s “social” and “anti-plutocratic” tendencies were held up as a model to follow while the racist dimension was ignored. The fascist press criticized those who saw the persecution of the Jews as the dominant issue. It stressed “the Nazi’s slow and methodical battle to conquer the state,

the liquidation of the opposition parties, the absorption of similar currents of opinion and the extermination of the only two forces that seriously oppose them – Jewish capitalism and Marxism”.<sup>12</sup> Although closer to Italian fascism, NS ignored the initial tensions between Italian fascism and Nazism and portrayed the Nazi dictatorship as heroic. NS criticized the “conservative” non-fascist dictatorship in Lisbon and promoted itself as the alternative force that would create and consolidate a real New State.

Solidarity with sister movements was greater when the framework was closer to NS ideologically and culturally. This was the case with the JONS and the Falange in Spain (Payne 1999; Thomàs 2011). The activities of Brazilian fascists, such as Severino Sombra’s *Legião do Trabalho* (Labour League, LT) and Plínio Salgado’s AIB, were followed enthusiastically. Sombra spent two years in exile in Lisbon between 1932 and 1934 and took part in some NS rallies. After the foundation of AIB, which incorporated Sombra’s movement, the Portuguese fascists supported Salgado, who was also in exile in Portugal (Bertonha 2014). As noted in an article of January 1933: “our Brazilian comrades also want our principles, adapted more or less to suit their circumstances, to proliferate exuberantly on the other side of the Atlantic”.<sup>13</sup> Relations with the Falange were intense and became particularly important after Preto was exiled to Spain. These were the movements and “comrades” with which NS was most closely associated.

### SALAZAR AND THE PORTUGUESE VERSION OF “EUROPEAN FASCISM”

The activities of fascist movements and the support they received from fascist regimes contrasted with Salazar’s “prudence” and “lack of combativeness and modernism”.<sup>14</sup> However, NS condemned the extremist myths and violence of some Eastern European movements, such as the Romanian Iron Guard (Sandu 2014).

Ever attentive to Portuguese political events, the British Embassy was a careful observer of the development of National Syndicalism. By July 1933, British diplomats feared that Salazar’s position was in danger of being undermined by its unprecedented growth “in numbers and in strength”. By the summer of 1933, however, NS faced a dilemma. NS internal correspondence reveals that from early 1933 the movement had unsuccessfully tried to reach an agreement with the regime. It wanted to play a leading role in the creation of new corporations and to participate in the creation of a new order with the institutionalization of its militias. While it for-

mally recognized Salazar’s success in improving state finances, NS opposed his increasing monopoly on political power. Thus, they rejected his new constitution, claiming that it represented the victory of liberal principles over integral corporatism. As a result, NS began to oppose the UN and became increasingly involved in military-led anti-Salazar conspiracies. The promulgation of corporatist legislation in the summer of 1933 had an enormous impact on NS, given that the creation of a corporatist state was one of its main aims and propaganda themes. The National Labour Statute (*Estatuto Nacional do Trabalho*, ENT) declared the corporatist principles of the New State and was largely inspired by the Italian *Carta del Lavoro*, although tempered by the regime’s Catholicism. The promulgation of the ENT provoked tensions within NS because it “stole [their] thunder”. The corporatism of the Constitution of 1933 had not given organic elements the monopoly on political representation desired by the Fascists. It conciliated liberal and corporatist principles of representation. The President and National Assembly were elected by direct universal suffrage, although the latter, as well as the Corporatist Chamber (*Câmara Corporativa*) seldom met and had few real powers beyond rubber-stamping executive decisions.

### TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS

The Portuguese fascist élite originated with the radical right, emerging from a youthful group that challenged the reactionary traditionalism and pro-restoration dogma of IL. The emergence of this fascist élite under an authoritarian political order allowed them to use IL provincial network as well as those of other fascistic parties created at the end of the 1920s.

Socially, NS had two particularly notable characteristics. First, its influence among young army officers and, second, a high number of working-class members. The support of a significant number of junior officers gave NS the capacity to mobilize the actors who had played a central role in bringing down the Republic in the 1920s, particularly during the unstable years of the Military Dictatorship. NS upset the chain of command, as lower-ranking officers took up government and local administration posts, and the top brass found it very difficult to restore the hierarchy the first years of the dictatorship.

The fascists organized themselves as a political party, which claimed to be the faithful repository of the spirit of the “revolution of 28 May”. They supported military values and a radical turnover in the conservative political élite to allow for the rise of the young civilians and military officers who

had participated in the 1926 coup. The fascists exalted the “*tenentismo*” of the 28 May League for some years, as it expressed resistance to stabilization and the concomitant re-establishment of the chain of command.

The high number of working-class supporters should be assessed in context, as it is not indicative of a particularly significant fascist “working class” success or of a fascist alternative within the union movement. The fascist movement developed under a dictatorial regime that severely limited the scope of action of free unions. The movement aimed to create an embryo corporatist system while remaining flexible in terms of its ability to mobilize and form support groups in the unions of the service sector in particular, which later became a part of Salazar’s corporatist “national unions”.

The fascist strategy, however, was overtaken by the “constitutional pacts” between the military élite and Salazar, which joined conservative groups within the UN, and put down fascist groups through violent and administrative repression. The conflict between the fascists and other authoritarian pressure groups that dominated Salazarism was expressive of a conflict that it’s typical of the majority of transitions to authoritarianism undertaken in the presence of weak fascist movements. Its rapid resolution in favour of Salazarism and the concomitant defeat of the recalcitrant fascists can be summarily explained as follows.

Since 1910, there had been competing political movements and ideologies able to work with the military chiefs of the dictatorship, which did not threaten the position and values of the military. Juan Linz points out that even if its younger members sympathized with the fascists, in a transition to authoritarian rule the military tends to seek out bureaucratic élites and conservative parties rather than fascists. This was certainly the case with the Military Dictatorship established in 1926.

The “constitutionalization” and gradual civilianization of the dictatorship were negotiated according to a government initiative involving part of the civilian élite, mostly law professors, led by the then young Finance Minister, António de Oliveira Salazar. The fascists had a “negligible influence” over these processes, as they were blocked by the existence of an authoritarian right, which was supported by powerful institutions such as the Church, most military officers, as well as landowning and industrial groups.

When the Portuguese dictator decided to dissolve National Syndicalism and repress its leaders, he also stressed that “foreign” fascist identity. On 29 July 1934 Salazar formally announced the prohibition and break-up of NS. He said that the movement was “inspired by certain foreign models in terms

of ideology and political activity” and that it “exalted the value of youth, the cult of violence through direct action, the principle of the superiority of political power in social life” and demonstrated a “propensity to group the masses” behind a leader. He said NS constituted “the circle of an arc that unites the commonly held and confused aspirations of the Portuguese political extreme” and noted it wanted to be “the party that [controlled] the destiny of the revolution”. For him, the creation of a militia could only cause “worries – unnecessary worries – given the responsibilities of the army”. He also felt that rather than contributing to order, NS was “a perturbing and disintegrating element within the nationalist forces of the New State”.<sup>15</sup>

In September 1935, some national Syndicalists in alliance with several other groups opposed to Salazar rose up in an ultimately unsuccessful coup against the regime. This failure marked the end of organized fascism in Portugal, with many former National Syndicalists joining the regime, especially following the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, when Salazarism adopted a certain fascist choreography. Nevertheless, this process of integrating former fascists into Salazar’s New State was deliberately weak and bore all the hallmarks of the regime elite’s bureaucratic caution.

The regime institutionalized by Salazar was admired by many on the fringes of the European radical right, but above all by those of Maurrasian and traditional Catholic extraction, given its cultural origin. Salazarism was based on blend radical right-wing and anti-liberal social Catholicism. The New State meant the hegemony of a traditionalist, Catholic and anti-democratic right. Social Catholicism and the Church hierarchy constituted important instruments limiting the fascistization of the Salazar regime. In other words, these elements constituted the axis of a “functional alternative” to the role that fascism played in other countries in consolidating a new authoritarian order in the 1930s.

## NOTES

1. Some works of Rolão Preto were republished recently: Rolão Preto (2015).
2. Ibid. The literature on Sorel is vast. For a general introduction, see Jennings (1985).
3. About Barrès, see Sternhell (1972).
4. *O Valor da Raça*: 432–33.
5. Rolão Preto, “A vaga nacionalista”. *A Monarquia*, 9 December 1919, p. 1.
6. The inspiration of both the Cercle Proudhon’s output and Valois’s writings, especially the text quoted (Paris, 1914), are clearly visible in Preto’s ear-

- lier writings. On the Cercle Proudhon and Valois's first phase, see Guchet (1990, pp. 11–106), Sternhell (1978, pp. 348–400), and Mazgaj (1979).
7. Especially Rocco's manifesto, published in *Política* in 1918, as well as his interventions at the Nationalist Congress in Rome in April 1919. See Vivarelli (1991, pp. 291–98) and the reproduction of the manifesto, pp. 594–607.
  8. *Revolução*, 10 January 1933, p. 2.
  9. Rolão Preto, "A hora de Hitler," *Revolução*, 23 March 1932, pp. 1, 4.
  10. Rolão Preto, "Não!", *Revolução*, 26 April 1932, p. 1.
  11. *O Nacional Sindicalista*, Faro, no. 1, 18 December 1932.
  12. *Alcácer*, 21 May 1933, p. 2.
  13. *União Nacional*, Leiria, 14 January 1934.
  14. *União Nacional*, Leiria, 28 January 1934.
  15. Official notice, *Diário de Notícias*, 29 July 1934, p. 1.

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