

**Pinto, António Costa. *Os Camisas Azuis e Salazar. Rolão Preto e o fascismo em Portugal*, Lisbon, Edições 70, 2015, 363 pp. ISBN: 978-972-44-1872-8 [republished Pinto, António Costa. *Os camisas azuis. Rolão Preto e o fascismo em Portugal*. Porto Alegre: EDIPUCRS - Editora Universitária da PUCRS; EDUPE, 2016, 390 pp. ISBN:978-85-397-0740-9]**

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António Costa Pinto has already published two books based on his PhD thesis on the National Syndicalist Movement (NS) in Portugal, which was presented at the European University Institute in Florence. The first of these is entitled *O Salazarismo e o Fascismo Europeu: problemas de interpretação nas ciências sociais*, and it seeks to include the Salazarist regime in the debates on the various fascist regimes in Europe. The second, *Os Camisas Azuis. Ideologia, elites e movimentos fascistas em Portugal (1914-1945)*, deals with the history of the NS, the brief and somewhat belated fascist movement led by Francisco Rolão Preto.<sup>2</sup>

It is this latter book that, freshly revised and updated, has recently been published in two new editions, one in Portugal and the other in Brazil.<sup>3</sup> Incorporating new documentation and paying heed to the more recently produced literature on the subject, the book raises new questions about both the authoritarian ideologies in Portugal and the various authoritarian regimes that came into being between the beginning of the First World War and the end of the Second.

António Costa Pinto seeks to make a comprehensive analysis of the “Blue Shirts” from their origin in the *Integralismo Lusitano* (IL) movement until their own formation as a movement and their subsequent decline in the mid-1940s. To a large extent, the author maintains the theses that he had previously put forward: both IL and NS are understood to have been elite movements that created a corpus of right-wing doctrine that was largely influenced by the conservative and reactionary winds of Europe, with the *Action Française* at the forefront. Not only this, but also the fascist radical right and the conservative Catholic thinking.

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<sup>3</sup> For quotation purposes, I used the Brazilian edition.

The author begins with an analysis of the genesis of fascist ideology and its accompanying movements in Portugal. From the first decades of the twentieth century onwards, conservative and traditionalist currents in Portugal were opposed to the growing secularization of Portuguese society. The journal entitled *Integralismo Lusitano*, founded by young monarchists on the eve of the outbreak of the First World War, was thus the result of the conflict that occurred, initially in the field of ideas, not only with the Republic that had been established with the Republican Revolution of October 5, 1910 (the “extended reproduction of the principles of 1789”, p. 20), but also with liberalism and rationalism, which were regarded as values that should be eliminated. Within a short time, the ideological dispute proved to be insufficient, so that the IL transformed into a political movement, with a program based on the restoration of the monarchy and an anti-liberalist ideology. Presenting itself as a revolutionary strand of the Portuguese radical right, it sought to consolidate its position in the midst of the constant crises of the First Republic. But it was in the 1920s, following the authoritarian and protocorporatist experiments of Sidónio Pais and the failure of the Portuguese involvement in the War, that several groups became radicalized and began to draw up projects designed to cause a complete break with the Republic. Among these groups were the Lusitanian Nationalism (*Nacionalismo Lusitano*) movement and the Dom Nuno Álvares Pereira National Crusade.

At the same time, the triumph of anti-democratic movements in Europe, especially in Italy, mobilized the hearts and minds of the Portuguese radical right. The overthrow of liberalism, in 1926, was not led by the fascist movement. On the contrary, it had as its main actor an army that had become increasingly politicized after Portugal’s tragic involvement in the world conflict and the brief dictatorship of Sidónio Pais.

As Manuel Villaverde Cabral wrote: “If the question of Portugal’s participation in the war was of extreme importance to the parties and other political forces, it was absolutely decisive as regards the evolution of the armed forces and their ever greater intervention in the political life of the country.”<sup>4</sup> This was a politicization that was largely marked by Caesarian models. It was as a result of this heterogeneous shift to the right that fascism was born in Portugal. The Fascists imagined the possibility of a transformation taking place “inside” the regime, however, without having a clear definition of purpose or an organizational model. Gradually, Salazar’s leadership and the creation of the União Nacional (National Union) party sought to lead the dictatorship in an increasingly

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<sup>4</sup> Cabral, M. V., A Grande Guerra e o sidonismo (esboço interpretativo). In P. Lains and N. E. Pereira (eds.). *Portugal em análise: Antologia*. Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2017: 75-95.

conservative direction based on traditional values. Here, Costa Pinto points to the problems arising from the fact that the Salazarist regime simultaneously drew closer to and distanced itself from the vast European ‘fascist family’. On the one hand, it is true that, as was also the case in Italy and Spain, a liberal secular regime was overthrown in Portugal; on the other hand, it was a country with a very small “bourgeois” elite that was similarly not very “cosmopolitan”. Therefore, the birth of the Portuguese authoritarian regime did not arise from the “nefarious hyperdemocracy,” as Ortega y Gasset<sup>5</sup> put it, as was the case in Italy and Germany. At the same time, it can be said that, sociologically, the Portuguese case resembles the Spanish one, whose regime still retains the indelible and ineradicable marks of fascism. That is why Portugal did not have a civil war, as Spain did. This lack of a civil war avoided the large-scale mobilization of a single party which, contrary to what was the case in the fascist countries, was regarded as more of a complement to the State than a device that was designed to stir up tensions within it (pp. 54-104). Following this more comprehensive analysis, the book seeks to clarify the formation of the NS movement, which was typically considered to be the main fascist movement in Portugal. Founded by young student leaders linked to the IL journal and movement, it no longer practiced politics in a traditional sense. After all, it was war that was responsible for training the great leaders who were capable of protecting the nations from the evils of democracy.

It was the Great War that produced Mussolini, the “Bonaparte of the Counter-Revolution” (p. 106). Already, therefore, completely attuned to fascism, the NS movement gradually began to organize itself effectively as a party. And, in this context, just like its European counterparts, the party/movement was organized around the undisputed leadership of Francisco Rolão Preto, the youngest of the leaders of the Junta Central do Integralismo Lusitano (Central Junta of Lusitanian Integralism) when it was formed. As far as the reasons that explain the formation of the NS movement are concerned, two in particular deserve to be emphasized: the need to go beyond the reactive profile of IL in order to found a movement that was genuinely proactive; and Salazar’s refusal to accept a radical movement within the dictatorship. Thus, Portuguese fascism, a latecomer from an organizational point of view, was also born through its confrontation with another type of anti-liberalism, one that was more conservative and more traditionalist. At the same time, the text compares the NS movement with the other fascist movements equally influenced by the Italian experience, such as the Spanish FET-JONS (Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista – Traditionalist Spanish

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<sup>5</sup> Ortega y Gasset, José. *A rebelião das massas*. Lisbon: Relógio D’Água, 2007: 81-88.

Phalanx of the Committees of the National Syndicalist Offensive) and the AIB (Ação Integralista Brasileira – Brazilian Integralist Action), the Brazilian fascist movement led by Plínio Salgado. The organizational structure of the NS movement is treated in such a way as to illustrate its strictly vertical character, centered on the figure of the chief and reaching down to its municipal bases. This was a model that was strongly influenced by other European fascist parties, not only the Italian one, but also the *Faïxceaux de Valois* in France and the aforementioned JONS from neighboring Spain. It produced a structure that is said to have been preoccupied with the recruitment of workers in order to constitute a corporate project, to the extent that it was more efficient in recruiting workers from branches of services than in training workers themselves. Besides, of course, intellectuals and Young officers trained in anti-republican struggles. A party, in short, that was created predominantly from the middle class and the urban strata of society. When Salazar led the transition from the Military Dictatorship to the *Estado Novo*, he created the National Union as a way of bringing together the various and heterogeneous right-wing groups that supported the regime. The republican parties were consequently dissolved; even the Catholic Center Party itself, of which Salazar himself had been a member. In this way, the National Union established itself as a unique vector of party participation, although it was, in fact, a “non-party”, in the words of Salazar. The National Union imposed itself as an institutional structure without the need for large-scale mass mobilizations, such as were common among the fascist parties that were organized from “below”.

Resulting from the various clashes that had taken place between the different right-wing factions active during the dictatorship, these groups continued to coexist for a while in order to dispute the same political threats. As Marc Bloch points out, António Costa Pinto also makes an “inventory of differences”, seeking to compare the two political organizations.<sup>6</sup> Who were their leaders, what socio-economic profile did they have, what was their organizational structure, etc.? In this context, the author also compares the formation and functioning of the European fascist parties, especially in Italy and Spain. Given equal importance in this part of the book is the fact that, albeit not without some tensions, members of the NS movement even participated in the local and regional structures of the National Union. This was not exactly a contradiction, given the intention of the governing party to co-opt the local elites that were in favor of the dictatorship. The gradual institutionalization of the *Estado Novo* therefore highlighted how the impossibility of turning the regime into a strictly fascist structure brought the NS movement and Salazar

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<sup>6</sup> Bloch, Marc. *História e historiadores*. Lisbon: Teorema, 1998:109-174.

into collision with one another, primarily as a result of the critical observations made by foreign allies (and in particular the United Kingdom), who were concerned about the threat of the radicalization of the regime going beyond what was considered desirable.

Furthermore, internally, the NS movement carried with it a somewhat radical, “plebeian” stigma which was not very much to the liking of the Portuguese elites, nor even of the Portuguese in general. Above all, it was far removed from the model of the regime that was being orchestrated by Salazar. Similarly, the Catholic offensive against the NS movement weakened its internal support. It was thus a Catholic movement without the support of the Catholic Church.

All of this gave Salazar room to isolate the movement and then counterattack, firstly, through the introduction of corporatist legislation, and then, secondly, with repressive measures designed to strengthen the institutional unification around the National Union. For some, the choice was to seek membership in the National Union, as was the case, in the 1920s, with young supporters of the magazine *Ordem Nova*, such as Pedro Teotónio Pereira and Marcello Caetano. For others, the solution was exile and clandestine opposition.

In his “Final Thoughts”, António Costa Pinto reaffirms that, since it was a regime that came into being in the “era of fascism”, the *Estado Novo* was always more conservative and therefore based more on the support of the elites and the Church, rather than originating from new “mass” movements. Nevertheless, it did incorporate clear elements of the fascist universe, “creating an entire apparatus of cultural socialization that was directly inspired by Italian fascism” (365).

Despite exhibiting some fascist traits and participating in the field of corporate dictatorships, albeit at a distance from the NS movement, the configuration of the *Estado Novo* was closer to that of other European dictatorships that did not completely follow the Italian and German models. The author does not seek to state peremptorily that the *Estado Novo* was not a fascist regime, being more concerned with including it among the regimes of the “Era of Fascism”. António Costa Pinto recognizes nuances and differences that illustrate both the importance and the complexity of the theme. For those who did not read the first edition, this is a book, as Juan Lins says, that is fundamental for “those studying authoritarian politics and fascist movements.” For those of us interested in the first of these themes, it is very important to read a work such as *Os Camisas Azuis*, that is updated and shows the modern-day relevance of studies about the radical right, as well as the changes that have been taking place in this area, and not only in Europe.