

The Franco–Salazar Meetings: Foreign policy and Iberian relations during the Dictatorships (1942-1963)

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Abstract

The bibliography available about Iberian relations in the 20th century is already a very extensive one. However, curiously, the meetings held between Franco and Salazar have been successively relegated to a position of secondary importance, if not actually overlooked altogether. The search for an explanation for this fact led us to revisit these moments in an attempt to afford them their real dimension and impact.

Keywords

Iberian relations, Francisco Franco, Oliveira Salazar, Iberian dictatorships, diplomacy

Resumo

É já extensa a bibliografia disponível sobre as relações peninsulares no século XX. No entanto, e curiosamente, os encontros entre Franco e Salazar têm sido sucessivamente relegados para um lugar secundário, quando não mesmo esquecidos. A procura de uma explicação para este facto levou-nos a visitar esses momentos, numa tentativa de lhes conferir a sua real dimensão e impacto.

Palavras-chaves

relações peninsulares – Francisco Franco – Oliveira Salazar – Ditaduras Ibéricas - diplomacia

After decades of tensions and divergences, Franco's victory in the Spanish Civil War brought with it the beginning of a new stage in Iberian relations, formally opened with the signing of the Portuguese-Spanish Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression (3/17/1939). Despite the scanty attention that has been paid to them by historians, the meetings between the Spanish head of state and the President of the Portuguese Council of Ministers, Oliveira Salazar, represented a fundamental expression of this new relationship and proved to be of enormous importance not only for the evolution of the respective regimes, but also, and above all, for their international political strategies.

It is truly surprising that, despite his being in the habit of noting down and recording all important conversations, Oliveira Salazar wrote nothing at all about his meetings with the Spanish head of state. According to the ambassador Franco Nogueira, Salazar's official biographer, "Salazar used to write down all his important conversations; but I never came across any documents relating to this matter [the meetings with Franco]. All that we will ever know about these meetings are the inferences that can be drawn from other documents. From some research that I carried out on the Spanish side, I was able to conclude that Franco also behaved in a similar fashion. Why?"¹

At a time when the bibliography relating to Iberian relations in the contemporary period is already quite abundant, how can one explain the silence that still surrounds this subject even today? Is this the result of a lack of information or even of a lack of interest in these meetings?

It is with these disturbing questions in mind that we now revisit this subject, seeking to reach a clearer understanding of the contents, significance and impact of the meetings between Francisco Franco and the President of the Portuguese Council of Ministers, Oliveira Salazar. In this way, we hope to contribute towards opening up new perspectives for investigation into the history of the foreign policy of the two Iberian states, as well as discovering more about the profile of their dictators.

1. The Meetings In Contemporary Historiography

Although they have never been afforded the attention they deserve, the bibliography available about Iberian relations in the 20th century is already a very extensive one. The expression that has traditionally been used to characterize the history of relations between Portugal and Spain—"with their backs turned to one another"—does not apply in this case.

Hipólito de La Torre Gómez is probably one of the scholars who has paid most attention to the detailed analysis of this theme, to which he has dedicated various studies, systematically exploring the period from 1910 to 1936 at some length.²

In Portugal, it was above all the period of the 1930s, coinciding with the institutionalization of the Salazarist New State and the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, which began to arouse the attention of the academic community. In particular, despite the silence of Spanish historiographers upon this question, Oliveira Salazar's support for Franco's cause during the Spanish Civil War has been the subject of some very interesting studies by Iva Delgado³ and César de Oliveira, the latter also being the author of an essay on the years of the 2nd Republic.⁴ Seen from another perspective, a reference should also be made to Manuel Loff, whose research has centered on a comparative study of the institutional and political aspects of the Iberian dictatorships of 1930-1940.⁵

Taking a broader view of the subject, José Medeiros Ferreira, Carlos Gaspar, Ana Vicente and António Pedro Vicente have been leading figures in Portuguese historiography with their syntheses and reflections on Portuguese-Spanish relations in the 20th century.⁶

¹ Franco Nogueira, *Salazar*, vol. IV, *O ataque (1945-1958)*. Porto: Civilização Editora, 1986 (3rd ed.), p. 464.

² *Conspiração contra Portugal (1910-1912)*. Lisbon: Livros Horizonte, 1978; *Na Encruzilhada da Grande Guerra. Portugal – Espanha 1913-1919*. Lisbon: Editorial Estampa, 1980; *Do "Perigo Espanhol" à amizade Peninsular. Portugal – Espanha 1919-1930*. Lisbon: Editorial Estampa, 1985; *A Relação Peninsular na Antecâmara da Guerra Civil de Espanha (1931-36)*. Lisbon: Edições Cosmos, 1998.

³ Iva Delgado, *Portugal e a Guerra Civil de Espanha*. Lisbon: Publicações Europa-América, s.d.

⁴ César de Oliveira, *Portugal e a II República de Espanha (1931-1936)*. Lisbon: Perspectivas e Realidades, 1985; *Idem, Salazar e a Guerra Civil de Espanha*. Lisbon: O Jornal, 1987. See also, by the same author, *Cem anos nas relações luso-espanholas*. Lisbon: Cosmos, 1995.

⁵ Manuel Loff, *Salazarismo e Franquismo na Época de Hitler*. Porto: Campo das Letras, 1996; *Idem, «O nosso século é fascista»*. *O Mundo visto por Salazar e Franco (1936-1945)*. Porto: Campo das Letras, 2008.

⁶ By way of example, we draw attention to the following studies: José Medeiros Ferreira, *Um Século de Problemas. As relações luso-espanholas da União Ibérica à Comunidade Europeia*. Lisbon. Livros Horizonte, 1989; Ana Vicente, *Portugal visto pela Espanha. Correspondência diplomática 1939-1960*. Lisbon, Assírio e Alvim, 1992; Carlos Gaspar, "Espanha, relações com a" in *Dicionário de História de Portugal*, coordinated by António Barreto and Maria Filomena Mónica, vol. 7, suplemento A/E. Porto, Figueirinhas, 1999, pp. 648-657; António Pedro Vicente, *Espanha e Portugal. Um olhar sobre as relações Peninsulares no séc. XX*. Lisbon, Tribuna, 2003.

Finally, it is essential to mention two highly regarded historians who, through their research, have made an extraordinary contribution to the advancement of studies on Iberian relations, particularly in the period after the Second World War: António Telo and Juan Carlos Jimenez Redondo.⁷

Far from claiming to be exhaustive, this bibliographical summary highlights the interest and abundant historiographical production about Portuguese-Spanish relations on either side of the border. This history is undergoing constant revision, subject to reinterpretations in the light of the new documents that are progressively revealed, but in which, curiously, the meetings between the two dictators have always been afforded a secondary role. The only specific work on the issue is the one by Ana Vicente.⁸ The references that we have found in other works are either marginal or unenlightening, if not, in fact, purely and simply absent, with the only exception being the sparse lines dedicated to the Seville meetings and Franco's visit to Lisbon in 1949.

2. A New Page is Turned in Iberian Relations

After decades of meetings and divergences, the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression (the Iberian Pact), just a few days before the end of the Spanish Civil War (3/17/1939), marked the beginning of a new phase in Iberian relations, in which the meetings between Franco and Salazar played a fundamental part. At a time when the two dictatorships were seeking to consolidate their internal position, and against the backdrop of the storm clouds heralding the approach of a new world war, the Iberian states agreed to respect each other's borders and territories, as well as not to lend help to a possible aggressor of the other party.

Originally planned to remain in force for 10 years, the advantages that the agreement might bring were obvious. Besides the border question, which has not always been a peaceful matter in Iberian history, it was crucial for Franco to attempt to draw closer to a country that enjoyed a privileged relationship with Great Britain and could therefore act as a potential mediator in relations with the Allies. As far as Portugal was concerned, the essential requirement was to guarantee that, in the forthcoming dispute, Spain did not remain confined to the area of influence of the Axis, as had been the case until then. Kept informed of the negotiation process, Great Britain did not raise any objection to the two countries seeking to draw closer together, remaining hopeful that Portugal might play a moderating role in tempering Franco's warlike pro-Nazi leanings. In this context, it is easier to understand the stress that F. Nogueira laid on the fact that this was not a political and ideological alliance arising from the affinities between the two regimes.⁹ This explanation also reinforces the predominant argument that what was at stake was the guarantee of Iberian neutrality during the course of the War.¹⁰ The climate of friendship and cordiality that was enshrined in this agreement, together with the commitment expressed to maintaining the Iberian relationship and its subsequent enhancement, heralded the development of a series of mutual benefits and compensations over the following two decades, albeit in the form of a link that was not always free of ambiguities. Paradigmatic, in this particular respect, is the fact that immediately after the agreement was signed, Franco also signed the anti-Comintern Pact, simultaneously seeking to encourage his new Iberian partner to join with him in this venture.

The outbreak of the Second World War also caused a dangerous disturbance to the *modus vivendi* established by the Iberian Pact. While Spain's main concern was with understanding the stance that its ally would take in the conflict, given its privileged relations with Great Britain, the Portuguese fears of a Spanish-German invasion grew stronger as Hitler's troops advanced westwards. The relations between the two countries ended up being developed within the context of a complex management of the pressures

⁷ Juan Carlos Jimenez Redondo, *Franco e Salazar: as relações luso-espanholas durante a Guerra Fria*. Lisbon: Assírio e Alvim, 1995; *idem*, *El ocaso de la amistad entre las Dictaduras ibéricas (1955-1968)*. Mérida: UNED, 1996.

⁸ Ana Vicente, "Os encontros entre Salazar e Franco" in *Portugal visto pela Espanha. Correspondência diplomática 1939-1960*. Lisbon: Assírio e Alvim, 1992, pp. 70-78.

⁹ Cf. Franco Nogueira, *Salazar, Salazar*, vol. III, *As grandes crises (1936-45)*. Porto: Civilização, 1986, p. 587.

¹⁰ See, for example, Manuel Ros Agudo, *La guerra secreta de Franco (1939-1945)*. Barcelona: Crítica, 2002, p. 33; Stanley Payne, *Franco y Hitler. España, Alemania, La Segunda Guerra Mundial y el Holocausto*. Madrid, Esfera de los libros, 2008, p. 123.

being exerted upon them by the belligerent parties, resulting in a constant search for an equilibrium that would satisfy both their individual and common interests.

The limits and fragility of Spanish neutrality would, however, soon be revealed. Despite the guarantees given to Teotónio Pereira, just a few days before the fall of Paris, that this neutrality would be maintained, Spain nonetheless took on the status of a non-belligerent power (6/12/1940) and invaded Tangiers.

Due to the pressures exerted by Serrano Suñer in his attempt to encourage Portugal to establish a secret military alliance with Spain (which, in the final analysis, would signify its drawing closer to the Axis), Salazar counter-attacked with an additional Protocol to the 1939 Treaty. The new agreement, signed in July 1940, reinforced the previous one, making it compulsory for there to be consultation and a synchronization of strategies in order to safeguard common interests.

This strengthening of the Iberian alliance did not, however, mean that Portugal could afford to lower its guard, all the more so because in October 1940 Serrano Suñer, known for his strong sympathy for the German regime, took over as Foreign Minister.

It was against this background that the first attempts were made to establish direct and personal contacts between Franco and Salazar.

3. Two Decades of Meetings

Meetings between Franco and Salazar began in 1942 (with the Seville meeting) and continued for two decades (until the Mérida meeting in 1963). Seven conferences within the space of twenty-one years, held in quite different contexts and with diverse aims, but nonetheless exhibiting some common characteristics. First of all, the two statesmen were personally committed to the holding of these meetings because of the importance that was attached to them. Contrary to what happened in regard to other aspects of their foreign policy, Franco and Salazar were personally involved in the preparations for these conferences, which led directly, without any interlocutors, to an atmosphere of some informality. Albeit apparently marginal, there is one aspect that should not be overlooked in our reassessment of the importance of these meetings: except for a trip that he had made to France and Belgium in 1927, these were the only times when Salazar travelled outside Portugal. The spirit and mission with which the President of the Council of Ministers regarded these meetings was made clearly evident at the last few of them. By way of example, we need only think of some of the private comments that he made at the time of the Mérida meeting in 1960, referring to “the sacrifice that a trip to Spain represented for him,” how much he “detested sleeping away from home,” the “shaking of the car,” and the “horror” that he had “of the Spanish tea and toast.”¹¹ These were well-founded fears, judging by the comments he made on his return journey:

I couldn't sleep at all. They gave me the best room, undoubtedly, but it was a corner room with two windows, and underneath these was an intersection of two cobbled streets. Well, gentlemen, it seemed to me that the iron wheels of every cart in Spain spent the night rolling beneath my windows. All night long! Sheer hell.¹²

This was because, as a second point of continuity, most of the meetings took place in border areas, but on Spanish territory: Seville (1942), Pazo de Meirás (1950), Ciudad Rodrigo (1952 and 1957) and Mérida (1960 and 1963). The exceptions to this rule were the continuation of the meeting at Pazo de Meirás in Porto and, above all, the visit that the Generalíssimo paid to Portugal in 1949. This last meeting had another particularity: it was a state visit, celebrated with great pomp and circumstance, which contrasted with the informal and relaxed nature that the other meetings apparently had. Anyway, the affability and proximity between the two dictators is confirmed by pictures and comments, especially as far as Franco was concerned, being portrayed as “vigorous,” “cheerful,” and “effusive” in the way he greeted Salazar.¹³ Despite the widespread coverage given to these summits and the great interest shown by the press from all over the world, there was always some secrecy to be noted. The press releases were brief and somewhat enigmatic, forcing observers to indulge in endless bouts of “guesswork.” And even those who were closest

¹¹ Franco Nogueira, *Salazar* vol. V. Porto: Civilização, 1988, p. 143.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 147.

¹³ *Ibidem*, pp. 146/7.

to the participants were frequently not told the full details of the conversations. This was, for example, what happened in the case of the meeting in Ciudad Rodrigo, to which Salazar only made a brief reference at the Council of Ministers, “mysteriously” leaving his collaborators “in complete ignorance about what had gone on.”¹⁴ Even though they each travelled to the neighboring country in the company of their respective foreign ministers and ambassadors, the essential core of the conversations took place directly between the two statesmen, which made it impossible for there to be any leaks of information.

Forming a fundamental part of Iberian relations and the foreign policy of the two countries, at central moments in their history, the summits further confirmed their effective and greatly desired cooperation. But this may not necessarily have been their sole objective.

Finally, with regard to their actual importance, there were certainly a number of aspects that helped to differentiate between them.

The first meeting, held in Seville from February 11 to 13, 1942, was, in our opinion, the most important and the only one for which the initiative had come from Portugal. The idea had been put forward by Teotónio Pereira, following pressures from British diplomacy for direct action to be exerted in order to moderate Spain’s pro-Axis inclinations.¹⁵ Franco, who at that time was abundantly engaged in this practice (holding meetings with Hitler, Mussolini and Pétain), immediately agreed. There were no further developments in the process for roughly a year, until Salazar returned to the subject after the invasion of Timor by Australian and Dutch forces and new threats of a German incursion westwards. His fragility in the international order called for determined measures.

The summit was inevitably dominated by the theme of the war, which was continuing and gradually taking on an international complexion. Nothing was yet clear as to who might be the eventual winner, so that it was essential to guarantee the greatest possible flexibility in terms of foreign policy.

Apart from the disturbing question of supplies, discussion centered largely on strategic matters. The idea of a defensive alliance was brought up again, but in the end the fundamental aspect of the agreement reached was the strengthening of Iberian ties, with it being established that it was impossible for either Portugal or Spain to enter into any political agreement without first consulting the other.

Salazar left Seville in a confident mood: Franco “did not envisage accepting any initiative that would result in the loss of the Peninsula’s neutrality.” His policy of “maintaining the *zone of peace* and withstanding outside pressures” had been reinforced.¹⁶ London reacted in identical fashion¹⁷ and, if there still remained any doubt as to the scope and importance of the meeting, the written message from Washington to Halifax is enlightening, completely rejecting the fears that some of the American press were harboring as to whether or not the meeting could have been sponsored by the Axis:¹⁸

“Although some reports suggest that the Franco-Salazar meeting has drawn Portugal closer to the Axis, our conclusion on the available information, is that the meeting accomplished little and was only a qualified success. One of Salazar’s main objects was, no doubt, to strengthen the neutrality of the Peninsula, and it is known that he hopes to extend this neutral bloc to include France, in the hope that the three Catholic and Latin countries will have a voice in the postwar settlement.”¹⁹

¹⁴ *Idem, Ibidem*, vol. IV, p. 255.

¹⁵ In regard to this matter, see the testimonies of the then Portuguese ambassador in London, Armindo Monteiro, as well as those of Franco Nogueira – *Armindo Monteiro e Oliveira Salazar. Correspondência política (1926-1955)*. Coordinated by Fernando Rosas (...), p. 150; Franco Nogueira, *Salazar*, vol. III, (*Op. Cit.*), p. 306. Sir Samuel Hoare referred to the meeting at Hendaye of October 23, 1940.

¹⁶ Franco Nogueira, *Salazar*, vol. III, (*Op. Cit.*), p. 375. But, Franco Nogueira adds, was such a policy sustainable in the context of a world war, whose final outcome could not be foreseen? A week after the Seville meeting, Salazar’s optimism was brought down to earth with a bang when, on February 19, he was informed about the Japanese intervention in Timor.

¹⁷ 2/15/1942: telegram from Campbell, Sir R. (British Embassy in Lisbon) – PRO, CAB 79/57/40 – War Cabinet and Cabinet: Chiefs of Staff Committee: Minutes - FO 371/31164, 4.

¹⁸ According to the *New York Times* of 2/13/1942, “nothing good for democracies” could emerge from the meeting.

¹⁹ 2/23/1942: telegram from the War Cabinet to Lord Halifax (Washington) – CAB 79/57/40 – War Cabinet and Cabinet: Chiefs of Staff Committee: Minutes.

The Axis, whose main expectation seemed to be that of guaranteeing Portuguese neutrality, also interpreted the meeting as a victory.²⁰ It was Serrano Suñer who personally informed his ambassadors about the content of the conversations, emphasizing the idea that Madrid was attempting to draw Portugal away from the allies. In conversation with the German ambassador in Madrid, Von Stohrer, he intimated:

“let it be understood that the two statesmen had been in agreement about joining forces to resist to the utmost the pressures (...) from Anglo-Saxons and Germans to carry out the occupation of the Peninsula and, to this end, they agreed to create a joint committee to study commercial and political exchanges. So that in both parties a turning point had been reached, freeing them from their undertakings with the belligerent parties in order to re-establish close cooperation”²¹

Suñer went further and revealed that in Seville it had been agreed that, in the event of an allied landing in the Azores, Portugal and, for obvious reasons, Spain, would enter into the war on the side of the Axis. And, falling into evident falsehood, he gave Stohrer to understand that the 1940 Additional Protocol contained a secret clause whereby Portugal could have recourse to Spanish military aid in the event of a British landing. In short, the conclusion that can be drawn is a surprising one: what the Spanish diplomats told the Axis about Seville is practically the opposite of what was conveyed by the Portuguese diplomacy to the allied representatives.

The ambiguity of this particular moment was made even worse when, before leaving Seville, Franco delivered a speech to his garrison in which he presented Germany as the last bastion of defense for western civilization against the Soviet threat. He would therefore be joining forces with the Germans in this crusade: “if there were a moment of danger, if the road to Berlin were open, it would not be a Division of Spanish volunteers making their way there, but instead a million Spaniards.”²² A public declaration in support of the Axis, with which Franco sought to reinforce the favorable impression that the meeting had caused in Germany.

To add to all this contradictory information, little is known about what actually happened in Seville. And yet, however, it is easy to suppose that, besides the reaffirmation of Iberian ties, a policy of neutrality towards the war was agreed, as well as the formation of an “Iberian Bloc” (which presupposed the existence of “mutual friendship and everlasting peace” between the two countries). The evidence and signs that serve to confirm these hypotheses proliferated over the months following the summit. Two examples can be given: Spain’s return to neutrality (September, 1942) and the return of Count Jordana to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This latter measure, interpreted by some of Franco’s biographers as yet another sign of his political caution, signified the removal from “a key post of the man who heads the policy in favor of the Axis” and ran counter to the idea of drawing closer to Portugal; and, furthermore, it meant his replacement “by someone who, for a long time, has not concealed his fondness for the western allies and Portuguese policy.”²³ According to the British ambassador in Lisbon, Ronald Campbell, Portuguese public opinion was favorably impressed by the change in government, particularly as far as the loss of influence of the Falangists and their pan-Iberian designs were concerned.²⁴ The publication by the press of September 22 of an official statement from the Spanish Council of Ministers made a decisive contribution towards the strengthening of this optimism, by reaffirming “Spain’s close friendship with Portugal and Spain’s historical solidarity with the Spanish American countries.”²⁵

²⁰ On January 17, Ribbentrop had informed Stohrer that Germany was only asking Spain to guarantee Portuguese neutrality, promising German support in the event of an allied incursion – cf. Payne, 254.

²¹ Cf. Telegram from Von Stohrer of February 19, quoted in Luiz Suárez, *Franco*. Madrid: Ariel, 2005, p. 210.

²² In *Palabras de Caudillo*, Madrid, 1943, p. 204, quoted in *Ibidem*, p. 211.

²³ Franco Nogueira, *Salazar*, vol. III, (*Op. Cit.*), p. 402.

²⁴ Telegram of 9/5/1942, from the British ambassador Campbell - PRO, FO 371/31164, 25.

²⁵ *Diário Popular*, 9/22/1942. Another passage from the press statement: Internally, because of recent events, the government has decided to consolidate and strengthen the spiritual unity of all Spaniards, imposing the strictest possible discipline upon them. The government will inexorably suppress from the outset each and every attempt at agitation or division and will apply sanctions to all acts of violence directed against the authority and prestige of the State. At the same time, the government has approved various measures for improving the distribution of supplies.”

Salazar hastened to send a telegram to Jordana showing his delight with the importance given to Spain's friendship with Portugal,²⁶ while Campbell, always attentive and painstaking in his comments, sent a note to London:

“In no other field has Dr. Salazar's political genius been more successfully demonstrated than in the tact with which, without prejudice to the independence of Portugal in other areas, he has patiently striven to fulfill the task that he set himself to place relations with an inflexible and largely unpredictable neighbor on a footing that could guarantee fruitful collaboration.”²⁷

Spain appears to have publicly acknowledged its distancing from the Axis and its determination to consolidate the Iberian alliance, at a time when the war was also changing in direction. Finally, in December, this strategy was formalized with the formation of the Iberian Bloc being made public during Jordana's visit to Lisbon (December 18 to 22, 1942). In short, Seville was the formal expression of the Iberian relationship during the war: years spent drawing closer together and strengthening the ties between the two states, but also revealing some ambiguity on the part of the two statesmen, whose ultimate concern was to be correctly positioned when the war ended.

It was another seven years before Franco and Salazar were to meet again. A meeting that, as has already been said, was to have different and quite unique characteristics, taking place under an equally diverse set of circumstances that marked the dawning of a new period in the history of Iberian relations. And this was the case because, once the tumultuous times of the immediate postwar period had passed, the two states were to adapt to the new order in quite distinct ways: while Portugal was quickly incorporated into the orbit of western and North American influence, Spain remained ostracized from the international community for another decade.

Signs of the integration of the Portuguese regime, largely arising from its geostrategic position and from the agreements signed about the use of its bases in the Azores, became more and more evident: Portugal was one of the founding members of the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC, 4/16/1948), took part in the negotiations and discussions about Marshall aid to Europe, and was a founding member of the Atlantic Pact (NATO, 4/4/1949). Diplomatically isolated and the subject of a condemnation issued by the UNO (December, 1946), without the capacity to undertake any important action outside the country, Franco's regime saw a fundamental strategic partner in Portugal.

After some initial hesitation, and after overcoming fears that the condemnation of Franco's regime might extend to Portugal, Salazar returned to his traditional strategy and “cautiously” committed himself to maintaining Franco in power. Besides their political affinities, what was at stake was both the peace and the defense of the Iberian Peninsula, and Franco presented himself to Salazar as a guarantee of a solid and stable government. Although its efforts had no practical result whatsoever, Portuguese diplomacy developed various initiatives in an attempt to make it possible for Spain to participate in the Marshall funds. After this came the negotiations for the renewal of the Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression and the triumphant visit of Franco to Portugal, the significance of which was unequivocal.

Once again, Spain was the country that set the process in motion: it was essential that, in view of the new international state of affairs, the renewal of the Iberian Pact should not be tacit and automatic,²⁸ but, instead, that its terms should be strengthened and, if possible, the event should be accompanied by a ceremony that would create a major impact. It was not therefore surprising that Spanish diplomacy should insist on the renewal of the Iberian Pact coinciding with a state visit by Franco to Portugal.

Salazar was resolutely opposed to the idea, defending the “preliminary separation of the two facts, in order to increase the value and importance of each of them, particularly in order to enhance the importance of the visit of Generalissimo Franco in return for the one that Marechal Carmona had paid to Spain in 1929.”²⁹ Although he could understand Spain's interest in this matter—“the isolation to which it has been

²⁶ 9/23/1942: Telegram from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the representations of Portugal in Spain, with a copy being sent to General Jordana - AHD/MNE, M178 A48 Proc. N.º 33,21 1936-1948 2º Piso Caixa 1 Subpasta 9.

²⁷ Franco Nogueira *Salazar*, vol. III, (*Op. Cit.*), p. 403.

²⁸ AMAE, 3372-22.

²⁹ This information was taken from the summarized record of the conversation held in Lisbon, on July 14, between Salazar, Carneiro Pacheco and Nicolás Franco about the renewal of the Iberian Pact – cf. 10/6/1948: Report by

condemned by most countries has caused it to seek out, reinforce or multiply the occasions it has for asserting that it is not alone"³⁰—the extension of the Treaty was the main priority.

The process was delayed due to the Spanish resistance to the separation and individualization of the two events. Only in September, after some controversy, did negotiations begin to follow a definite route and Caeiro da Matta and Nicolás Franco extended the Iberian Pact for a further 10 years (9/20/1948), at a celebration that represented an astounding success for Spanish diplomacy. Besides acting as a brake on future Portuguese initiatives, with a view to obtaining new allies, the Iberian union was also revitalized. This victory was exploited to the full by Spain, in an attempt to show the world that it was not alone.³¹ In this context, it is easier to understand the tension that surrounded Portugal's becoming a member of NATO³² and the Spanish accusation that it had failed to comply with the existing agreements.

Franco's visit to Portugal in 1949, the first that he had made to a foreign state since his rise to power, was painstakingly prepared. The mobilization of the regime was directed by Salazar, who personally took charge of every detail. Regardless of the speculations about his motives and some diplomatic embarrassments, such as those arising from the non-appearance of the British ambassador at the ceremonies, by welcoming the Spanish head of state so sumptuously, Portugal not only offered to strengthen its ties of friendship with Spain, but also provided a direct response to its international situation. However, in practice, no new undertaking was made by Lisbon.

Once this exceptional moment had passed, the "summits" returned to their initial characteristics: Franco and Salazar met in an informal atmosphere, at central moments of the national and international situation, without allowing too many details to be revealed about the actual content of their conversations.

This was the case, for example, with their meeting at the end of the summer in 1950, at Pazo de Meirás (the summer residence of the Franco family), with its curious "tourist extension" in the north of Portugal. Some of the subjects that were discussed at that time (NATO, Spain's international situation and its contacts with North American diplomacy, the plan for common defense and Iberian cooperation, new European and international organizations, etc.) were once again taken up and developed further at subsequent meetings (Ciudad Rodrigo, 1952 and 1957).

Despite this apparent thematic continuity, new data substantially changed the impact and significance of the meetings at Mérida in 1960 and 1963. While it had already been clear in 1957 that Spain's international situation was developing along new lines (a bilateral agreement with the USA, membership of the UNO, ...), from 1960 onwards, it was above all the position of Portugal that was at stake. The colonial question had been placed definitively on the agenda, decisively changing the relationship of forces with an obvious disadvantage for Portugal. While until the mid-1950s, the positions of Portugal and Spain towards the colonial problem had largely coincided with one another—resistance to independence and an interpretation of decolonization as an instrument of the USSR—after this date, their paths were to separate and diverge. In contrast to what had previously happened until then, the interests and concerns

Carneiro Pacheco on his activities with the Spanish authorities - IAN/TT, AOS/CO/NE-2B2, Pasta 7, fls 137-141.

³⁰ 8/6/1948: Letter from Oliveira Salazar to the Portuguese Embassy in London - IAN/TT, AOS/CO/NE-2B2, Pasta 7, fls 82-85.

³¹ As far as this matter is concerned, the article published in the newsletter of the Spanish Embassy in Washington about the relations between Portugal and Spain is paradigmatic. Dated 11/7/1948, it provides a historical review of the relations between the two dictatorships, emphasizing the words of the Portuguese president, Óscar Carmona, on the Treaty of Friendship between Portugal and Spain and its additional protocol: these are "the cornerstones of cooperation between the two Peninsular nations, which are as beneficial for them as they are for Europe" - AHD/MNE, M178 A48 Proc. N.º 33,21 1936-1948 2º Piso Caixa 2 Subpasta 4.

This article was harshly criticized by the Portuguese Embassy in Washington: "As you will see, once again it can be seen that the Spanish only invoke these documents when they are interested in taking full and lasting advantage of them, in the way that most suits them. On this occasion, even the treaty of friendship and non-aggression is given the name of a treaty of friendship and solidarity... All for the benefit of the Iberian bloc and the edification of the good American public." - Official letter of the Portuguese Embassy in Washington to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (11/23/1948) - AHD/MNE, M178 A48 Proc. N.º 33,21 1936-1948 2º Piso Caixa 2 Subpasta 4.

³² On the negotiating process for membership, see, for example, Jimenez Redondo, *Franco e Salazar...* (*Op. Cit.*), pp. 163-179.

of the two dictators were now somewhat different.

For Salazar, the essential question was to preserve the colonial empire, and, with this aim in mind, he sought to convince Franco that they were the victims of a vast international conspiracy. Union and solidarity between their two countries were the only paths that could be followed.

Franco already had other concerns, despite his initial displays of solidarity with his Iberian partner, namely in terms of the two countries' relations with the UNO or the majestic reception that he had offered to the Portuguese head of state in 1962. Determined to improve his international image, Franco chose to follow the resolutions taken on decolonization and adjusted to the new winds of change in history. In 1956, following on from the French decolonization of Morocco, he granted independence to the Spanish protectorate of Morocco, a strategy that afforded him a wide range of advantages: good relations with the Arab countries, drawing closer to the Iberian-American nations in terms of foreign policy, and an enhanced reputation and recognition at the UNO. It was also in this same year that, to the great disappointment of its Iberian partner, Spain established diplomatic relations with the Indian Union.³³ This move was followed by the granting of independence to Spanish Guinea and Fernando Po, revealing Spain's lack of interest in attempting to withstand international pressures.

Despite the warm words of the Foreign Minister Castiella—"The meeting went off excellently. Agreement was complete and, as was said, it could not have proceeded more satisfactorily"³⁴—the 1963 meeting had as its backdrop and driving force this strategic divergence between the two Iberian states. An empty conference, without any great practical consequences, from which Salazar emerged with just one certainty: Franco had ceased to be a useful partner for the great struggles that he was waging in the international arena in an impromptu crusade to maintain Portugal "united and indivisible, from Minho to Timor."

Franco and Salazar never met again. Perhaps that was in fact what they had wished. But the actual course of events decided that this would be so: in September 1968, after suffering a stroke, Oliveira Salazar was forced to retire from active political life.

4. Beyond Iberian Friendship

There are many different conclusions that can be drawn from this series of meetings which took place between the two Iberian dictators over the space of two decades.

Above all, there is the question of their frequency: the summits did not follow a previously established timetable, being held at irregular intervals, as determined by the conveniences of the two parties.

Next, contrary to the hypothesis formulated at the beginning, it should be stressed that these were not merely simple formal demonstrations of the good relationship and cordiality existing between Portugal and Spain or, at a personal level, between their leaders. The meetings had a broad scope, particularly with regard to the foreign policy strategies adopted by the two Iberian states.

Some data may lead us to relativize this conclusion. Except for the first meeting, all of the summits were called at the initiative of the Spanish side, being a suggestion that was more or less "shared" by Portugal. If this particular characteristic seems natural in the case of the first meetings, from 1960 onwards it took on another significance—Spain no longer "needed" Portugal, but it still maintained the initiative, being committed to achieving a certain consensus in the two countries' strategies and publicly asserting its proximity to Portugal. This strategy did, however, extend beyond simple friendship, in a western world that was already dominated by democratic regimes. The cohesion of the Iberian Peninsula was essential for the survival of the two Iberian regimes. As a barometer, but also as a driving force of Iberian relations and a fundamental strategic element in Portuguese and Spanish foreign policy, the meetings had a widespread impact on the internal cohesion of the two regimes.

It should be noted that regardless of the different sets of circumstances, trends and the correlation of forces in the Iberian and international scenarios, Iberian relations were essentially marked by the question of convenience. Openly acknowledged and shared, this strategy ensured that, at practically all moments,

³³ This stance was taken without any prior consultation with Portugal and did, in fact, run contrary to its interests (since 1953, Portugal had severed its diplomatic relations with that country) – it was in this context that Salazar made his personal remarks to José Nosolini – Franco Nogueira, *Op. Cit.*, vol. IV, p. 413.

³⁴ *Diário de Notícias*, 5/16/1963.

there were two sides to the same coin. While the advantages to one partner may have been obvious, it was equally obvious that the other could reap dividends from the good understanding and Iberian peace that was thus encouraged.

Finally, one last note should be added: while it is relatively easy to detect signs of mutual help and solidarity at some of the most critical moments in the history of each of the states, we can also very quickly make out their limits. Determined not to be held hostage by a series of agreements and friendships, the two dictators used an ambiguous skill and ingenuity that, in the final analysis, ended up condemning their strategy to long-term failure.

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