

# The Memory of the Portuguese First Republic throughout the Twentieth Century

José Miguel Sardica<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The Portuguese First Republic (1910-1926) is still today a historical period marked by the controversies it generated. Despite its overall failure as an attempt to democratize and modernize the country, the regime left a powerful legacy in the collective memory, acritically glorified or condemned, depending on whether it fueled the apologetic and proselytic view of the utopia-to-be or, in contrast, the devilish view of a close-to-anarchy and Jacobin-like experience. This text analyzes the way in which the First Republic's memory became a topic for heated debate, marking out positions and projecting them onto the appreciations that successive Portuguese generations were to make on this matter throughout the twentieth century.

## Keywords

First Republic; republicanism; memory; historiography; commemoration

## Resumo

A Primeira República Portuguesa (1910-1926) é ainda hoje um período histórico marcado pelas controvérsias que suscitou. Apesar do seu fracasso geral, como tentativa de democratização e modernização do país, ela deixou um poderoso legado na memória colectiva, acriticamente glorificado ou condenado, consoante alimentou a visão apologetica e proselitista da utopia tentada ou, em contraste, a visão demoníaca de uma experiência anárquica e jacobina. Este texto analisa a forma como a memória da Primeira República se tornou um tópico de acesa discussão, extremando posições e projectando-as na própria leitura que gerações sucessivas de portugueses foram fazendo dela ao longo do século XX.

## Palavras-chave

Primeira República; republicanismo; memória; historiografia; comemoração

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<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Human Sciences. Portuguese Catholic University. *E-mail:* [jsardica@fch.lisboa.ucp.pt](mailto:jsardica@fch.lisboa.ucp.pt)

## 1. **The Republic and republicanism: between “idea,” regime and memory.**

1910 was the year in which Portugal underwent the most significant regime change in the course of its national history, ceasing to be a Monarchy, as the country had always been since its foundation in the middle of the twelfth century, and becoming a republic. October 5, the key date of that year of turmoil, was the day on which a small number of military units, acting on behalf of a civilian cultural elite, implemented a minimum program backed by a maximum support. In 1910, almost everybody who had a (public) opinion was united against a deadlocked monarchy, run, as it was, by unstable governments and a rather inconsequential king. What remained to be defined was the kind of collective future that the new republican regime was to bring about, and whether that future would be one of progress and democratization, living up to what the republican propaganda had long announced.

This opened up a wide-ranging and ongoing debate as to what Portuguese republican life should be like, fueling large parts of the Portuguese political, social and cultural history during the last one hundred years and throughout the course of its different existing republics. The recent centennial commemorations of October 5, in 2010, showed the great variety of different reasonings invoked in relation to what a Republican Portugal is or should be, even if the regime’s institutional form is not questioned. Consequently, those commemorations served as a starting point, or a pretext, to revisit the 1910-1926 republican experience and assess the impact that it had had on national life. For the past one hundred years, the First Republic has been a constitutive element of recent national memory, envisaged here both as a set of collective discourses made up of the sum of individual recollections, and also as a set of representations echoed by press and historiography and displayed as “official” portraits—with or without implicit political militancy—of that important twentieth-century time slice.

What triumphed in Portugal in the early hours of 5 October 1910, was not so much an idea, a new political culture or a unified party project, but rather a radical and armed vanguard of the so-called PRP (*Partido Republicano Português*, or Portuguese Republican Party). Not that there did not exist an idea, or a republican political culture. In fact, republicanism did pre-exist the political regime inaugurated in 1910, and even outlived it after 1926, serving as a basic and underlying collective reference for the period of Portuguese modernity from the constitutional monarchy to the last years of the “New State” regime. It was the ideological stance (and hope) of republicanism that drove so many

republicans to struggle for power as a means to an end, and not as an end in itself: to educate and mobilize the nation towards an intellectual adulthood that would, in turn, redefine and re-root a new, accountable, and broadly participated citizenship. That is to say that, until 1910, republicanism sought to promote within the *shape* of the prevailing regime an *essence* (a substance) that was “republican” in its classical imagery of a collective soul and a civic virtue inspiring the “good” governance of the *Polis* (Catroga 1991, and Ramos 2001: 349-375).

Building a Republic was therefore much more than just ensuring the simple victory of an elected state leadership, rather than an hereditary one; instead, it meant achieving a national community founded upon equality, reason, patriotism, independence, participation and commitment, in which the quality of democratic life would be measured by the sociological and geographical dimension of its members’ dialogue and self-government, both in terms of the ideas held and in the material achievements realized on behalf of the common good. In this specific sense, republicanism, as an encompassing “culture” or mental mode, was larger than the monopoly of those few men who seized power in October 1910; it had previously been the call of many monarchists seeking to democratize the regime while retaining the throne, and it would also become the prevailing attitude of a vast intelligentsia that, in one way or another, found itself divorced from the regime of 1910, whose common denominator—from *Renascença Portuguesa* to *Integralismo Lusitano*, passing through modernism and *Seara Nova*—was the goal of redeeming Portugal through the reconciling construction of a strong and self-conscious collective community (Ramos 2001: 292-296, and 1992: 234-239).

In the light of this situation, one of the first aspects to be singled out in the historical course of the brief political experience that began in 1910 and ended in 1926 is the ever growing distance that developed between the ideal and the reality, between theory and everyday practice, between the promise and the outcome, the inspiring initial utopia and the rather monolithic façade that stifled and hindered the Republic’s chances of survival. What republicanism had sought to be and to create in Portugal was far more grandiose than the actual achievements that saw the light of day between 1910 and 1926. The problem was underlined as early as 1912 by Carlos Malheiro Dias when he wrote: “Portugal is, nowadays, a Republic with few republicans, just as ten years ago it was a Monarchy lacking monarchists” (Dias 1912: 18). What Malheiro Dias meant was that, just as the Monarchy had ended up being deserted by monarchists—after the strenuous years of João Franco’s government, the assassination of king Dom Carlos and the reign of his ill-

fated son, Dom Manuel II—so the regime implemented after October 5 was yet to become (and would prove unable to do so) a Republic truly backed by republicans, inasmuch as it chose to be a monopoly in the hands of the few, and also because its more generous promoters came up against all kinds of obstacles in the hard task of “manufacturing” republican citizens in a country where material poverty and an overwhelming illiteracy (c. 70% in 1910) were harsh realities.

The risk of establishing a distance between the “idea” and the reality had led to a permanent state of tension in the history of republicanism as it unfolded in Portugal in the last decades of the nineteenth century. In several of his civic interventions dating back to the 1870s—almost forty years before the triumphant coup of 1910—Antero de Quental, the leading spokesman for the highly acclaimed “Generation of the 70s,” used to show prudence and some skepticism towards what he contemptuously referred to as “*de facto* republics,” always appealing to his co-citizens to focus on the much higher search for an “ideal republic.” The former were regimes attainable by means of a simple institutional change, but they were “no more than just a political arrangement; they do not represent any social renewal; they do not open a new age,” being limited as they were to continuing “the governmental traditions of the constitutional monarchy.” The latter form of republic was a superior civic stage in terms of citizenship, participation and shared responsibilities, only attainable through a healthy renewal of habits and mentalities, serving as a shining beacon lighting the path towards full social and cultural reconstruction. Consequently, only the fulfillment of the “idea”—Antero admitting this should not happen “in just a single day”—would prevent the coming Republic from being no more than “a mere continuation of the Monarchy with a different name,” or “the Monarchy minus the monarch” (Quental 1982 [1873]: 389-394). Had Antero de Quental lived until 1926, he would not have been surprised by the May 28 coup d’état that ousted the Portuguese First Republic; and he would probably have concluded that the republic he and other “founding fathers” of the “idea” had dreamed of had never actually existed in Portugal.

The bottom line is that Portuguese republicans were faced with one impossibility that is inherent in all cases of fracturing radicalism enacted on a socio-ideological stage that isn’t radical: prior to revolution there are no literate multitudes, without which no true democracy can be achieved, nor is any broad development possible; but, without the prior education of those multitudes, no revolution once in power can put down roots and turn itself into a consolidated, inclusive and stable regime (Catroga 1991: 455). Hence the siege mentality and the constant leaps forward taken by the republicans in their day-to-day

policies, the anti-democratic style of a republican regime that was closed in on itself, and the overall unstable and conflicting atmosphere in which it lived, until 1917, and in which it was deemed to survive, after the First World War, until 28 May 1926. Key numbers of the First Republic bear witness to this fact: 45 governments (an average life-span of 4 months each), 30 different prime-ministers, a similar number of military or civilian conspiracies and failed coups of various political shades, 7 parliaments (4 of which were dismissed due to military intervention), and 8 Presidents, of whom only one, António José de Almeida, managed to complete his four-year term, between 1919 and 1923.

As current historiography maintains today, the shortest and most unstable contemporary Portuguese regime was also one of the unruliest in the Europe of those times—a sort of a “Latin Weimar Republic,” the consequence being the paving of the way for the victory of the Military Dictatorship in 1926 and, more importantly, the coming of the longstanding “New State” regime. In many ways then, Salazarism was not the executioner but rather the undertaker of Portuguese liberty and democracy—supposing, and not everybody accepts this analysis, that these two conditions did exist until 1926, under the ruling empire of the PRP (Valente 1997: 129-130, and 1999: 251-252; Ramos 2004: 24-34). It is indeed impossible to fully understand the transition between the First Republic and the coming authoritarianism, without noticing how, within a few years, large parts of the key economic forces, intellectuals, opinion-makers and middle classes changed from left to right, trading the unfulfilled utopia of a developing and civic republicanism for notions of “order,” “stability” and “security.” For many who had helped, supported or simply cheered the Republic in 1910, hoping that the new political situation would repair the monarchy’s flaws (government instability, financial crisis, economic backwardness and civic anomie), the conclusion to be drawn, in the 1920s, was that the remedy for national maladies called for much more than the simple removal of the king.

## **2. Readings of the First Republic: between idealization and condemnation.**

Demiurgic in the revolutionary marketing through which it had climbed to power, the First Republic collapsed and died as a result of the confrontation between raised hopes and meager deeds. That is the reason why the 1910-1926 regime is still today a contemporary historical period very much marked by the controversies it generated, favoring mischievous interpretations of its actual reality, alongside completely unbiased attempts to understand it. There have always been far too many ideological interpretations

made of the Republic and most of its more prominent figures, expressing the prejudices of those propounding these explanations and creating as many discourses as there are “Republics” that each author either believes in or finds best suited to match a given political-historiographic reading. Furthermore, even if lively and controversial images were not the natural outcome of the circumstances and the legacy of the first Portuguese experience of that kind of regime, they would still be the result of the multifarious meanings attached to the very word “republic” (Catroga 1991: 167), in the diverse understandings that history, political science, philosophy or law have afforded to this subject (Sardica 2009: 10-11).

Whatever the interpretation of the First Republic may be, what is crucial is that it should be deep-rooted and founded on serious scientific study. There is nothing wrong with choosing a particular analytical focus or angle in order to issue an informed (i.e., critically historical) opinion (which can indeed be an ethical stance), so long as it is empirically grounded and intellectually honest. What obscures history is the propounding of slogan-based and loosely worded opinions, drawn directly from, or mingled with, political or ideological prejudices. In order to gain a full knowledge of the First Republic, it is essential to situate it in the context of the time, the space and the men who actually built the regime and lived under it. Only by doing this will it be possible to reach an accurate understanding of what its underlying project was, how it came about and how it evolved, how it triumphed, lived and persisted, what adversaries it encountered, what crises had to be dealt with, what mistakes were made, what positive and negative features it showed. In short, to discover how much the Republic resulted from the specific conjuncture existing at the time of its implantation, and what is left of it as a symbolic, cultural, social or political legacy. The historical debate about the First Republic, and in a broader sense about Portuguese republicanism, should go beyond the 1910-1926 regime to evaluate the complexity and modernity of the republican idea, as well as the shock resulting from its comparison with the “real country” that Portugal was at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. This is the only way to afford the Republic the amount of substance and specialty that will prevent it from withering away and being seen either as an incomprehensible epilogue of nineteenth-century liberalism or as an anarchic antechamber of the Salazarism to come.

Despite its overall failure, the First Republic endowed twentieth-century Portugal with an insurpassable and enduring legacy—a renewed civil law, the basis for an educational revolution, the principle of separation between State and Church, the overseas

empire (only brought to an end in 1975), and a strong symbolic culture whose materializations (the national flag, the national anthem and the naming of streets) nobody has dared to alter and which still define the present-day collective identity of the Portuguese. The Republic's prime legacy was indeed that of memory. Acritically glorified or condemned, depending on whether it fueled the apologetic and proselytic view of the intellectual and democratic utopia-to-be or, in contrast, the devilish view of a close-to-anarchy and Jacobin-like political experience, the memory of the First Republic became a topic for heated debate, marking out positions and projecting them onto the judgments that successive Portuguese generations were to make on this matter, and also, since they followed the Republic, on the "New State" and on the democratic regime that Portugal now lives in.

Naturally, the somewhat automatic repetition of commonplace opinions has rendered that historical memory more and more reductive, turning it into one that simplifies and freezes a vivid reality that was, in its heyday, dynamic and multifarious. The final result was a highly Manichaeist dichotomy that further undermined any possibility of conducting a well-grounded comparison between memory and history, out of which a richer and more dispassionate reading could emerge. On the one hand, candid admirers openly recall the political experience of 1910-1926 as nothing less than the struggle and triumph of truly democratic visionaries, who heroically fought against an archaic Monarchy, and who, incorruptible and misunderstood, ended up being politically executed by reactionary traitors and "temple peddlers.." On the other hand, in sharp contrast to these, we find the critics who have always insisted that the Republic was nothing more than an exceptional and permanently revolutionary stage, resulting in a context that fostered an endemic civil war, lacking legitimacy and, in many aspects, legality (inasmuch as some of its acts were contrary to written laws), in which a vanguard of radicals practiced a partisan dictatorship, forcing the country to live in a far less pluralistic regime than under the ousted Monarchy, for which Portugal would be paying the price for many decades to come in political, economic and social terms.

For the former, the Republic was the creator of a modernity that was suddenly interrupted by the Military Dictatorship and enduringly repressed by the "New State;" the coup d'état of April 25 1974 then initiated the history of a Second Republic whose original embryo had to be traced back (at least sentimentally) to the First Republic, as if, despite being separated by half a century, those two regimes were united by a common search for democracy. For the latter, it would be better to forget the time "slice" of 1910-1926, either

because the ensuing regime afforded the Portuguese much more than the alleged “democracy” of the PRP, or because April 25 1974 marked the beginning of the history of a Third (not a Second) Republic—a new one, that paid no tribute to either the Second Republic (the “New State”<sup>2</sup>) or to the old First Republic, apart from maintaining the institutional form of the state that was inaugurated in 1910. It was once said that “a memory is what is left when something happens and does not completely unhappen.”<sup>3</sup> This saying fits very well with the Portuguese First Republic: it happened for 16 years, but never ceased to “happen” *after* those 16 years, throughout the decades—until the 1970s. During this period, it was more frequently used in a practical sense rather than simply studied, being subject to the different conjunctures and agendas of those who had the interest and/or the power to remember it, in whatever sense.

### 3. The uses of memory: republicanism during the First Republic, the “*revirinho*” and the “New State.”

Even before 1910, the memory of republicanism was already an essential ingredient in the formation of all those who strove to bring about a new regime, affording the PRP’s militants the popular aura of having reached a final stage within a larger revolutionary tradition. That tradition was the enlightened path opened up decades before by the patriarchs of “*Vintismo*,” the first liberal experience in Portugal (1820-1823). It had then been continued by the “Septembrists” (the nineteenth-century liberal left), and by the theoretical reasoning of the founding generation of republicans led by Henriques Nogueira, back in 1848. It was all of this that reinforced the accusations directed against the Constitutional Charter and the Crown, leading revolutionaries to declare these to be the main culprits responsible for the cultural “darkness” and socio-economic backwardness that so deeply afflicted the nation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

It was after 1910 in particular that the memory of everything for which the events of October 5 had paved the way began to be put to a series of different and recurrent uses.

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<sup>2</sup> This particular matter is not at all consensual. For many, the simple fact that the “New State” was a dictatorship invalidates any comparison with the First Republic, and even more so the labeling of it as a “republic.” But, in the same way that there are, or were, dictatorships operating under different *formulas* in terms of their regimes, so the republics also allowed for different *substances* in terms of their regimes, both institutionally and socially, some of them being barely or not at all democratic. One should also bear in mind that, from a strictly juridical viewpoint, article 5 of the 1933 Constitution, which governed the “New State,” established that Portugal was a Republic in a very similar way to article 1 of the 1911 Constitution and, later on in the century, article 1 of the 1976 Constitution.

<sup>3</sup> The saying belongs to the physician and international thinker Edward de Bono (b. 1933).



First of all, the republican memory was used, until 1926, by all the politicians who held power, choosing to steep themselves in it, claiming that they alone were the sole “true” and “pure” defenders of the Republic, and in many ways ostracizing all those who differed from them and rallied in political opposition. Such politicians acted in keeping with the popular slogan that the Republic could only belong to the militants and servants of the hegemonic Democratic Party—Afonso Costa’s institutional machinery during the “Old Republic” (1910-1917)—which was handed over to his successor, António Maria da Silva, in the later stages of the regime (1919-1926). This type of memory, or the resulting monopoly of its representation in a single political grouping (riddled with internal factionalism as the Democratic Party always was), maintained (among other factors) that, in 1926, the “real country” was not so greatly interested in defending its continuation against the military commanded by General Gomes da Costa. When he marched from Braga (in the North of Portugal) in order to enter Lisbon, and bring an end to the so-called “*antónio-maria-da-silvismo*” (António Maria da Silva’s government), very few actually mourned the loss of *that* particular Republic.

It is true that, from 1927 to 1931 (with some minor dying throes still to be noted as late as 1936), many took up arms against the Military Dictatorship and in defense of parliamentarianism and freedom, in the so-called opposition movement of the “*revirálho*” (i.e., all those seeking to “revert” or to return to a full Republican *status quo*). It so happens that the Republic that those “*revirálhistas*” wished to reinstate in order to deter Gomes da Costa, Carmona, and later the emerging and fast rising Salazar, was the “ideal” Republic—a project of genuine democratic government, enlightened citizenship and overall development—and not the regime that had been in place between 1910 and 1926. The very basic problem of “*revirálhismo*” was that the “ideal” Republic had never existed, and that it was instead what really had existed that people recalled. Hence, what all those longing for a “lost” Republic contested from 1926 onwards was not so much the overthrow of “democracy” or the burial of “liberty” that the military forces had supposedly brought about, but the fact that, within the burgeoning Military Dictatorship, the political space was closing in on those attempting to reconstruct the original and unfulfilled calling of the reformist, democratic and liberal movement.

The first major historical work focusing on Republicanism and the 1910 regime was simultaneously a tribute and a nostalgic farewell. Entitled *História do Regímen Republicano em Portugal* and edited by Luís de Montalvor, the first of its two volumes was published in 1930. On the “Editor’s Advice” that served as a general preface, Montalvor began by lamenting

that the regime's history was still unwritten, two decades after its triumph in Portugal. But he also lamented much more, revealing his deep nostalgia. The Republic, he considered, had had, and still had, in 1930, men who "always acted with the loftiest and noblest ideals, exempt from common errors," and who had been "victims of a deliquescent and unruly atmosphere," and also of an "opinion formed from ill will." The instability that had undermined the republican state did not afford enough room for "a calm recollection of facts," eluding "the dividing line that separates the fraught ground of sectarianism from the bright ground of tolerant and fair opinion." Montalvor and his co-authors noticed that the 1910 regime was, by then, already being accused of "every prejudice and every supposed aggression that the Portuguese nation has suffered." This showed the "premeditated tactics of the enemy" (unnamed), seeking "just one target, and using men to achieve it: Democracy." It was to Democracy (with a capital "D") that, "whether the enemy accepts it or not," the Portuguese owed "the hard-earned assets of a common liberty" that it was "useless to diminish or to deny" (Montalvor 1930: I, 6-8).

The political transition of 1926, the failure of the "*revirallibista*" resistance, and the enhancement of the Republic's negative reputation due to the radicalism of the Spanish Republic (triumphant as from 1931), all served to place the Portuguese at some distance from Montalvor's praises and to crystallize the type of use that both the Military Dictatorship and the "New State" would make of the memory of the Portuguese Republic. From the beginning of the 1930s, when Salazarism finally became entrenched in a position of power, that memory became the irrefutable evidence that the Portuguese "democracy" had not been, and could never be, much more than a quasi-Bolshevik demagogy, a demoliberalism, and that it would be better for the Portuguese to live peacefully under the authority, common order and national union proposed by the "New State." Salazar's strategy was always to invoke the First Republic as a self-legitimizing counter-example, underlining how history showed the Portuguese incapacity to live within open boundaries of political freedom, and this argument rapidly found echoes in the anti-republicanism of the emerging pro-dictatorial press.<sup>4</sup> The brief period of 1910-1926 thus became a pretext for a broader re-analysis of Portuguese history, viewed in terms of apogee, decadence, quasi-apocalypse and regeneration/restoration (Rosas 2002: 99-103). That was the ruling

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<sup>4</sup> Amidst all the newly-founded newspapers supportive of the emerging Salazarism, the chief one was *Diário da Manhã*, created in 1931 as the official organ of the National Union. In its first issue, published on April 4 of that year, an editorial condemned the republican past prior to 1926, explicitly stating on the front page that "*Diário da Manhã* does not uphold as a program the intention of resorting to the conflicting processes that over many years have transformed the country's public life into something like a tribal African disorder."

orthodoxy that prevailed in the golden years of Salazarism—the 1940s—and was still echoed in October 1960, at the official commemorations of the Republic’s 50th anniversary.

Various contributions can be seen as an example and a summary of how the republican “black legend” was to become firmly cemented during the “New State.” João Ameal, one of the regime’s leading historians and intellectuals, was one of the key names in that Salazarist anti-republican crusade. Ameal reckoned that the writing of History ought to be, simultaneously, a matter of science, art and ethics, based on a “firm and honest” study that allowed for an “examination of the collective conscience” (Ameal 1940: IX-X).<sup>5</sup> However, in actual fact, his historical studies came much closer to pamphleteering than to scientific (i.e. objective) research, because the moral lessons to be extracted from history were always embedded within the ideological parameters that the “New State” employed to bluntly condemn the memory of the previous regime.

In an interpretation that was highly traditionalist, Catholic-based and rooted in an “integralist” approach, Ameal considered, from the outset, that 5 October 1910 had been the unfortunate day when “the Devil, cut loose ninety years before” (i.e. at the beginning of the Portuguese liberal revolution) had “taken control of national destiny” (Ameal 1940: 756). This could have been avoided if only the Monarchy had not sunk into “cowardice, treason and desertion” in a “shroud of shame and misery,” paving the way for the “ruthless euphoria of naval petty officers and the mob” (Ameal 1946: 139).<sup>6</sup> Renouncing all scientific objectivity and seeking only to employ a condemnatory ethical discourse, Ameal’s historic “art” was largely based on the use of adjectives. The whole First Republic had been nothing more than a “bloody mess,” during which “the people, inebriated by the sudden conquest of ruling positions,” had spread everywhere “an exalted Jacobin atmosphere” (Ameal 1940: 759-760, 763). Portuguese society had then suffered a “profound crisis,” born of “fear, insecurity, unstoppable conspiracies, the splintering of political parties, obsessive personal hatreds, administrative chaos, anti-clerical and anti-monarchist violence,” everything culminating in a “growing and unbearable uneasiness” (Ameal 1940: 766). The Republican regime had resulted from the actions of “adventurers, iconoclasts and parasites,”

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<sup>5</sup> Ameal’s book was an official publication of the regime’s commemorations held in 1940, taking advantage of the “Portuguese World Exhibition” to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the country’s foundation and the 300th anniversary of Portugal’s regaining of its independence from Spain. It was a best-seller, with multiple editions being published, and soon became a sort of official historical narrative, sponsored by Salazar’s “New State.”

<sup>6</sup> This other book was originally published in French, since it was intended for international circulation, under the auspices of the SNI (*Secretariado Nacional de Informação*, the National Information Secretariat).

dragging itself “through bloody disturbances, sterile improvisations and noisy scandals, taking place in an atmosphere of instability, incompetence, fratricide and disorder.” In short, the Republic was in a state of “perpetual distress” that “hid in every corner and surface[d] in every conscience” (Ameal 1946: 140, and 1940: 772).

Redemption had finally arrived in the second half of the 1920s. In the “chaotic maelstrom” of the postwar period, with “strikes breaking out on every street” and governments replacing one another “at meteoric speed,” the nation grew “tired” and expressed “one single wish: tranquility” (Ameal 1940: 777, 779). In that “ailing country” (a famous expression uttered by General Óscar Carmona in 1925, significantly quoted by Ameal), the coup d’état of 28 May 1926 had been nothing less than the “rebirth” of Portugal: the nation had become reconciled “with itself” and was finally able to “progress towards the rebuilding of its lost unity” (Ameal 1940: 780, and 1946: 141). That was the sign for the downfall, “like a castle built of cards,” of that “dreadful and lingering Masonic and Jacobin-like Republic” (Ameal 1940: 784). Ameal’s overall evaluation of the 1910-1926 regime was much more akin to the damning speech of a prosecutor in court than a historian’s cold judgment: “One could venture to say that, during these sixteen years, the Portuguese historical line was almost imperceptible. The ideological aberrations, the leaders, and the mobs were such that the old imperial and Christian Portugal, whose evolution had taken place over centuries, seemed to have been erased” (Ameal 1940: 781). For him, it was a matter of loss and recovery: after a “painful and miserable” century—the whole period of the liberal revolution, the nineteenth-century constitutional Monarchy and the First Republic—the nation had only “awakened and returned with Salazar;” “there we all have it, resurrected again, pure and mighty as History intended” (Ameal 1940: 796-797)<sup>7</sup>. And, as for Salazar, Ameal portrayed him in sharp contrast with the previous republican politicians, as “the silent and wise statesman, undertaking an enormous and patriotic task: that of resuming a broken line of History—broken more than a hundred years ago” (Ameal 1940: 796).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> This Salazarist anti-republican propaganda would be denounced in 1947 in a book by José Lopes d’Oliveira on the republican propaganda during the Constitutional Monarchy. Oliveira’s study did not go beyond 1910, rooting that “democratic victory” in the old tradition of “*Vintismo*” (the liberal experience of 1820-1823); but in the midst of his meanderings through nineteenth-century history, the author never forgot the political and intellectual moment in which he was writing (i.e. 1947): “what should have been taught in our schools after 1910 was not [...] and hence we have reached a point where this incredible interpretation has become official—the salvation of Portugal requires the cleansing of one century of history, more than one actually; all of its life since 1820” (Oliveira, 1947: 19-20).

<sup>8</sup> One of the most interesting and surprising features of Ameal’s interpretation of history is the way in which Afonso Costa (the leading statesman of the First Republic) is portrayed. Rather than demonizing

Along with João Ameal, to whom the “New State” afforded significant international publicity, Jesús Pabón and Artur Ribeiro Lopes were two other names who also played a leading role in formulating the regime’s official memory of the 1910-1926 Republic, both of them publishing books in foreign languages that are showcases of how Salazarism wished to be looked at by European public opinion and how it fostered foreign critics against the recent Portuguese past.

Jesús Pabón, a full professor of History at the University of Madrid, wrote two volumes in Spanish entitled *La Revolución Portuguesa*, the first one in 1941 and the second in 1945.<sup>9</sup> A staunch supporter of Francoism, Pabón explained in his prologue that he was writing for those Spanish-speaking people who only knew about Portugal because of its golden century of the Discoveries. He thus set out to “improve knowledge of the Portuguese case with a normal desire for history teaching” (Pabón 1941: 6). He denied that he was writing what others would consider an “impartial” history, because “taking sides” was not the same as “previously renouncing true knowledge, but rather researching it with rectitude and standing firmly by its side” (Pabón 1945: 7). Hence, his work was not an “impartial” one and he was quite clear in stating that he took “the side of King Dom Carlos against Afonso Costa, the side of Sidónio Pais against Bernardino Machado and, definitively, the side of the ‘New State’ against the demo-liberal regime”: that was his “underlying motive,” his “political thesis,” aimed at showing “the truth” behind many little “truths” (Pabón 1941: 7).

The two volumes were a narrative of Portuguese history from the crisis of the constitutional Monarchy right up to Salazar’s triumph, divided into “three acts” that he considered to be the backbone of the “Portuguese revolution”: the “old order,” embodied in King Dom Carlos’ reformist efforts; the “disorder” of the whole 1910-1926 regime; and finally the “new order” built by Salazar and the “New State” (Pabón 1941: 5). Jesús Pabón rooted the “national disorder” that had triumphed in 1910 in the vicious intellectual

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him, in keeping with the main Salazarist stance, as the head of the republican policies that he attacked so critically, Ameal could not resist stressing his “intelligence,” “determination,” “vigorous personality,” “strength of character,” “positive line of thinking” and “systematic endeavor.” This is justified because Afonso Costa had proven to be “energetic” and “authoritarian” and because, despite his “abstract ideology” and his “brutal reformism,” he had managed to achieve something that loosely resembled Salazar—the introduction of “order” and “some economy” into public finances (Ameal, 1940: 768-769). Consequently, everything that otherwise made Afonso Costa appear unsympathetic seemed to be mitigated by the one thing that made him worthy of consideration—though naturally at a distance, when compared with all of Ameal’s other heroes, chiefly Sidónio Pais (the brief leader of the dictatorial interregnum in 1918) and, above all, Salazar (Ameal: 1940: 776).

<sup>9</sup> Jesús Pabón’s book received the “Camões Prize” in Portugal. It was translated into Portuguese and published in a single volume, under the title *A Revolução Portuguesa*, by Editorial Aster, in Lisbon, in 1951.

influence of a group of three authors—Antero de Quental, the poet who had “cursed life,” Teófilo Braga, the philosopher who had “denied faith,” and Oliveira Martins, the historian who had “denied history.” Thereafter, decadence, skepticism, doubt, turmoil and crises had ensued, plunging the country into a very “dark and painful” period, turned, for the worse, into a “bloody mess” (an expression already used by Ameal) with the republican victory of 1910 (Pabón 1941: 7, 9 and 111). After the attempts to bring about a national regeneration, made firstly by Pimenta de Castro’s dictatorship in 1915, and later by Sidónio Pais’ dictatorship in 1918, Carmona’s rise to power had been “the third attempt to overcome disorder,” this time with a “triumphant outcome”: “Salazar’s New State” (Pabón 1941: 5, and 1945: 255). It was the latter’s consolidation of power that had finally allowed for a complete break with “a past with no grandeur,” full of “violent episodes.” There were no less than 208 of these, including political demonstrations, conspiracies, strikes, bombings and persecutions, which the author quoted from a lengthy list published in *O Século* on February 7 1934 (Pabón 1941: 112-113).

If Jesús Pabón was addressing a Spanish audience, Artur Ribeiro Lopes—a lawyer, writer and deputy of the National Assembly between 1938 and 1945—was writing in order to enlighten the French, with his *Histoire de la République Portugaise*, published in Paris in 1939. The analytical framework that he used was very similar to Pabón’s, based on a more incisive and legal discourse. 5 October 1910 had created “an illegitimate form of power occupation” in which every one of the constitutional monarchy’s defects had been “reinforced and aggravated by republican intolerance” (Lopes 1939: 169 and 171). The new regime—in itself an “essentially passionate” and “regularly seditious” one—had lived in an “atmosphere of permanent hatred and blood,” instilling a “general fear,” especially during those moments when Afonso Costa—openly defined as the “devilish incarnation of every evil”—ruled over a “truly personal dictatorship” (Lopes 1939: 174 and 181-182). After the World War, “wounded in its heart,” the Republic had endured “an agony of ten more years” (Lopes 1939: 197). It had ended up rejected by the nation and above all by the Portuguese youth, tired of an everyday life made up of “political quarrels, skepticism and despair” and anxious to find what Salazar would eventually grant to everyone—“morality,” “internal order” and “external security” (Lopes 1939: 217 and 228-230).

#### 4. The politicized commemoration: the Republic’s 50th anniversary (1960).

Throughout half a century of dictatorship, the assessment of the Republic's significance and memory became more a topic for elite conversation and the discussion of historians than a subject for open debate in the press or at popular civic acts. The exception occurred in October 1960, with the commemorations of the regime's 50th anniversary. It was common knowledge that the democratic opposition was seeking to solemnize the date and the government feared that the republican memory of 1910-1926 would come to be a rock that could be thrown against Salazarism. This led the installed regime to take over the organization of those commemorations, seeking to silence the opposition's discourse, although it did so in a rather reluctant manner that was in sharp contrast to the splendor and commitment displayed in the commemorations of Prince Henry the Navigator's 500th anniversary, which took place in that same year of 1960.

The official program included some civic acts in Lisbon and a few in Porto, all held on October 5: in the morning, there was a state mass at the Jerónimos Monastery, "in honor of all those who sacrificed themselves for their country between 1910 and 1960," the laying of a wreath at the tomb of Manuel de Arriaga, and the hoisting of the national flag with military honors on the balcony of Lisbon Town Hall; during the afternoon, the "Committee for the Organization of the Official Commemorations" paid a visit to the President, Admiral Américo Tomás; in the evening, there was a solemn session, at the Portuguese Geographical Society, held by the National Parliament, along with several music concerts, the hoisting of flags on ships anchored in the River Tagus, and the illumination of public buildings in Lisbon and other cities.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, the pro-regime press dedicated its front pages and editorials to the commemoration of the event, all centered upon a history lesson that pointed out the differences between the republican past and the Salazarist present, extracting information from the former teachings in order to strengthen the latter.

Among the various newspapers, the prestigious *Diário de Notícias* recalled the difficult moment in Europe when the republican regime had triumphed in Portugal, stressing how much "the incidents and passions of those bygone years had influenced and disturbed national life." Fifty years later, it was therefore possible to be magnanimous and to render some "justice to the men of 1910, many of whom were unfortunately caught in a

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<sup>10</sup> See the program of the official commemorations in *Diário de Notícias*, October 4 1960, p. 1, or in *O Século*, October 5 1960, p. 1. The newspapers also reported on some spontaneous popular celebrations, held by republican groups or small local and working associations, although they suppressed any mention of the fact that such actions had been repressed by the authorities, in some cases through police action.

web of factious and contradictory ideologies, rendered senseless in the light of the human crises and universal knowledge that have been produced ever since.” The republican regime had lived under various “misapprehensions” that had “disturbed Portuguese life, shaken by repeated dissidences.” That had been the case until “political facts led to a consolidation of authority and power, permitting the economic and financial resurrection that the country now owes to Salazar.” Instead of making accusations or heaping praise upon the event, the prime aim of *Diário de Notícias* was one of reconciliation: “Remembering the Dead and celebrating the Living, the same national vows should unite us all in a collective and unbreakable future spirit, setting the unity of all our wills and hearts above all divisions and discordances [...], inspired by the sole goal that is to be served—our Country.”<sup>11</sup>

The recollection of the republican memory at the regime’s 50th anniversary should therefore be an instrument for promoting national unity. This was the main conclusion to be drawn from all the celebrations: the struggles that took place during the First Republic only underlined that, within the Salazarist republic, “the time was not for divisions.”<sup>12</sup> The “unwarrantable need to achieve national unity” pushed the newspaper to adopt a harsher tone and to remember those who were more reluctant to accept the current situation: “Even the most fanatical opponent of the present regime, as set out in the 1933 Republican Constitution, cannot avoid acknowledging the advantages that the country has enjoyed since 1928 [...] [when] a situation of order was established, allowing space for internal confidence and external prestige, which had been long sacrificed and lost during those times of Monarchy and Republic that were filled with intransigence, hatred and division.” It should not be forgotten—the newspaper went on—that “some of those who now place themselves within the so-called opposition did exhibit the same intransigence that they show today in fighting the regime that existed before 1926.” Those who did not wish to slip back into the unstable republicanism of the 1910s and 1920s simply had to agree to support the sound and regenerated form of republicanism that had now replaced the previous one. The First Republic had therefore contained a valuable lesson for all remaining oppositions—namely that “stubbornness in politics is a dead-end attitude.” In other words, “if those who stand in opposition consider that the national political problem remains unsolved because they are deprived of power, then they ought to recognize that it will similarly not be solved immediately on the day they conquer power and oust the

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<sup>11</sup> *Diário de Notícias*, October 5 1960, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> *Diário de Notícias*, October 8 1960, p. 1.



present-day government.”<sup>13</sup> In short, rather than commemorating October 5 or the time period of 1910-1926, the celebration should be about the 50 years of the Republic, based on the patriotic principle that the Republic only granted collective happiness after 1926, when the Portuguese gathered together under the “new” republic called the “New State.”

In support of the *Diário de Notícias*, the *Diário da Manhã*, the traditional organ of the National Union (Salazar’s single party), also invoked the memory of the Republic to uphold and call for national union and for an intensification of the ruling “situation.” “Seen from the precise hindsight of the historical perspective,” said the paper, October 5 had been “a perfectly logical step” in a “broader process that had begun much earlier, when a foreign institutional system had proved to be incompatible with the necessities, interests, qualities and even flaws of the Portuguese nation.” This reading, very much based on J. P. Oliveira Martins’ organicism and, in particular, on the rejection of the nineteenth-century liberal model defended by the traditionalist current of “Lusitanian Integralism,” served *Diário da Manhã*’s purpose to promote the fertile situation of 1926, as a reaction against the sterile situation of 1910: “included in the same trajectory of reaction is the May 28 movement which, in overcoming a whole century of disorder [i.e. the Constitutional Monarchy and the First Republic], was fortunate enough to find a man of genius who fully realized that the problem was not one of adopting formulas from exterior systems, but rather one of ensuring the adaptation and adequacy of the system’s structures to the very soul, interests and destinies of the nation.” 1910 had changed formulas, proving unable to improve the essence, or the inner substance, of the regime; Salazar, in contrast, wisely dispensed with the conflict over formulas, keeping the republican shape of the regime, and earning recognition for finally taking care of the substance of the regime. A “lesson from history” should therefore be acknowledged—namely “the incentive for gathering all the Portuguese together around the figure of the Head of State and around the national flag.”<sup>14</sup>

Linked with a moderate opposition to the “New State” were two other influential daily newspapers, *O Século* and *República*. The impending censorship removed all possibilities of radical preaching. But not so much as to prevent (more in the pages of the latter than in the pages of the former) the promotion of an alternative use of the republican memory. That alternative use was its appropriation as a driving force and a more or less

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<sup>13</sup> *Diário de Notícias*, October 8 1960, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Diário de Notícias*, October 5 1960, p. 1. President Américo Tomás had urged exactly the same idea in his official speech: “Nothing better, on this day, than to appeal to every Portuguese to unite and stand up for their country, so that the nation can be passed on to our children in as well preserved a state as we ourselves inherited it from our forefathers before” (see *Diário de Notícias*, October 6 1960, p. 1).

politicized slogan to define the “New State” as a backlash barring the way to modernity and democratization. The actual printed texts did not go this far, but that was the underlying message expressed by the opposing press.

Strictly speaking, *O Século* was placed halfway between the “situation” and the opposition. Its commemorative editorial stated, with a sense of loss and nostalgia, that “the regime change of 1910 had given rise to a wave of hope, a high tide of promises and concerns about renewal.” The Republic had dawned as “the guarantee of a new era of social progress,” as “a necessary condition for a national updating.” “Heroically,” the regime had endured, and should not be held responsible for every “vicissitude,” “vice” and “failure” of various politicians. Taking everything into account, the Republic had surprisingly shown “a sufficient degree of institutionalization, enough to allow it to go unchallenged.” Consequently, the most profound political change of the twentieth century was not—for *O Século*—the one that had been founded upon the ruins of the First Republic by Salazar’s rise to power, but that of 1910, which had paved the way for a consensus about the republican formula among the “Portuguese family.” That had been its undeniable significance, its prime merit, which was to be saluted—one that “is not under discussion.”<sup>15</sup>

The Republic’s “golden wedding anniversary” led the newspaper *República* to organize a special issue, made up from pages of history, interviews and random evocations. The general tone was friendly and sympathetic in describing the way in which the republican culture had put down roots “increasingly embedded in the national soul,” from 1910 to 1960, despite some “isolated wishes for the restoration of the monarchy.” What the newspaper regretted, without any further naming of names, was the insistent strategy of “staining, denigrating and detracting from the true meaning of history,” permitting new generations to be educated in “the mistaken belief that the victory of 1910 had been accidental.” The lesson to be drawn from the October 5 coup d’état, inasmuch as it had “clarified and expanded public awareness,” was that it had made “our people more aware of their rights,” because any republic was nothing more than “the expression of democracy” and the “true vehicle of progress.” The explicit use of the word “democracy” revealed what the *República*, as a daily paper, stood for—all the more so since, on that very same page, a short testimony written by Ramada Curto (a well-known democratic adversary of Salazar)

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<sup>15</sup> *O Século*, October 5 1960, p. 1.

contrasted the “joyful enthusiasm” of 1910 with the “uncertain future” that lay before the Portuguese fifty years later.<sup>16</sup>

The strategy adopted by this newspaper was to interweave anodyne articles with more politicized and militant ones, where the republican memory was used much more as an important component of the opposition’s ongoing struggle. In a column written by César Nogueira, the author asked: “Did the 1910 Republic commit errors and misinterpretations of its basic social and political orientations? No doubt about that; one cannot counter it [...] But it is also undeniable that it produced results that still live on. It is easy to accuse, but hard to prove. It is always this way!”<sup>17</sup> In another column, signed by the young José Carlos de Vasconcelos, appeals were made to ensure that, in a “severe, lucid and courageous manner,” the Republic’s anniversary would be dealt with “in all its grandeur and significance,” notwithstanding “all the voices that attempt to diminish its work, and the failures we ourselves can honestly point out.” If the First Republic had finally collapsed, that unfortunate outcome was not its fault, since the history of the 1910-1926 period was filled with “self-sacrifice, patriotism and a love for just causes,” and their leaders were to be considered “men of good intentions,” “worthy preoccupations” and “dignifying behavior.”<sup>18</sup>

The 1960s were a turning point in the overall atmosphere of the “New State,” affording room for a controlled mental openness that paved the way for a new series of much more laudatory publications on the regime and the work of the period from 1910 to 1926. One of the most notable of these was the monumental *História da República*, published as a commemorative edition of the 50th anniversary of the regime, by the *Século* publishing house, in that very same year of 1960. In the preface explaining the book’s general aim, the authors stressed the “unspeakable enthusiasm” and the “impressive display of national unity” that the Portuguese had offered to the world in October 1910. That was why the Republic should be vindicated as “a title of honor and as sound proof of its vitality,” especially when placed at the service of the “democratic ideal” (*História da República* [1960]: preface).

Carlos Ferrão’s books were to prove more significant. In his most highly acclaimed work—*Em Defesa da República*, published in 1963—Ferrão openly declared that defending the Republic was “a civic imperative,” and engaged in a frontal attack on the historiography that tended to “denigrate its grandeur and generosity.” “For three decades,” i.e., from 1930

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<sup>16</sup> *República*, October 4 1960, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> *República*, October 4 1960, p. 69.

<sup>18</sup> *República*, October 4 1960, p. 60.

to 1960, “complicities among the Republic’s enemies have allowed them to pursue that censurable task unpunished;” besides “burying the Republic by coercion,” its detractors had deformed “the rectitude of its intentions, lampooned by a broken pencil turned into an acclaimed and regular method of historical writing” (Ferrão 1963: 9-10). Armed with “the sense of self-impunity and the certainty of an alternative silence,” many had stained with “lies” the memory of all those who had “fought heroically” (Ferrão 1963: 12). The result of this had been “a mechanism of intentional deformation, producing a falsified image of the Republic, one that the public conscience rejected in a silent but all too-eloquent protest” (Ferrão 1963: 10). Echoing the ideological lines of Luís de Montalvor’s *História do Regímen Republicano em Portugal*, Ferrão was the spokesperson for all those silent admirers of the regime toppled in 1926. In his view, the First Republic had been “the unavoidable and courageous manifestation of the people’s civic awareness,” and its enemies were to be accused of never “letting the Republic blossom in a peaceful environment, and produce all the necessary fruits that it had promised for national reconstruction.” Carlos Ferrão’s book was simply aimed at “reaffirming the truth,” restating the “generous thought presiding over the Republic” and the great relevance of its triumph in 1910 (Ferrão 1963: 14-16; see also Ferrão 1966).

As the Salazarist and Marcelist regime drew towards its end, more and more voices started to revisit the First Republic as a kind of “lost symbol of state liberty” (Matos 2010: 138), swelling the numbers of those who drew from such study the energy and inspiration needed to fight the ruling dictatorship.<sup>19</sup> It is true, however, that historic republicans, the masonry and the socialists were much keener on recalling its memory than the communists (whose political party had been founded in 1921, and had always exhibited a tense relationship with “bourgeois” republicanism), or the progressive Catholics (for whom the First Republic had simply been a matter of excessive laicism).

## 5. October 5 1910 in the “spirit of April.”

After being used by the supporters of the “New State” and also, to a lesser extent, by several of those who opposed Salazar and Marcelo Caetano, the memory of the First

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<sup>19</sup> In the mid 1960s, Joel Serrão wrote an article for the *Dicionário de História de Portugal* that he coordinated on “Republicanism”—but not on the “First Republic.” This text can be read as a philosophical appraisal of the political and social promise arising from the republican ideal, even if he concluded that many civic obstacles had, in fact, prevented the practical realization of such a utopia (Serrão, 1984 [1965], V, 285-294).

Republic could not avoid being appropriated as an ingredient of the “spirit of April”—i.e. the toppling of the “New State” regime on April 25 1974, which reinstated democracy in Portuguese life. It is fairly interesting to note that, generally speaking, the use that was made of this memory did not arise out of any acritical encomium or a desire for anti-authoritarian revenge, but, perhaps for the first time in the century, out of a critical and carefully pondered reconsideration of the subject. Perhaps this is why, in the preface to the second edition of *A Primeira República. Alguns aspectos estruturais*, published in 1975, the historian Oliveira Marques denounced the difficult position in which those studying the 1910-1926 regime found themselves when attempting to write just plain history. According to him, writing impartially and in a spirit of “non-alignment” was what set the historians “apart from the ‘dialectical’ extremisms of our sad times and our poor country,” producing books that could not “be waved as a flag by political parties or be used as white or red ‘bibles’ by small conflicting factions” (Marques 1975: 9).<sup>20</sup> Oliveira Marques’ remark was a sign that, within the context of the “Hot Summer” of 1975, the First Republic’s history was still, for many, a fairly political affair, a memory that could be used all too easily for conflicting purposes, and not just a simple historical matter. Nonetheless, going beyond the possibility of eventual disputes, that memory was of use to the political decision-makers of the so-called PREC (*Processo Revolucionário em Curso*, i.e. the Ongoing Revolutionary Process)—especially to Mário Soares’ Socialist Party and the Constituent Assemblies of 1975—more as a reminder of past errors to be avoided than as a repository of possible solutions to be repeated.<sup>21</sup> Two examples of such prudence can be seen in the steps taken not to (re)open any “religious question” with the Catholic hierarchy, and in the enshrinement in the Constitution of a semi-presidential system, instead of the parliamentarianism that was voted for in the drawing up of the 1911 Constitution.

The restoration of freedom in 1974, and especially the democratic normality attained in 1976 when the PREC came to an end, allowed the First Republic to enter academic circles as a subject of study to be dissected by the new historiography, which,

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<sup>20</sup> Oliveira Marques was not completely unbiased, however, seeking as he did to rehabilitate the republican regime and, within it, Afonso Costa, and stating that “the history of the *Democratic Republic*” was still “pretty much unwritten” (Marques 1975: 9, the capital letters are in the original, the italics are mine).

<sup>21</sup> As Manuel Braga da Cruz recently stated, “the failure of the First Republic greatly overshadowed the beginning of our present-day democratic regime, implanted in 1974-1976. There was, therefore, a deep concern with avoiding the systemic errors, the institutional and constitutional errors and the political errors committed in relation to the important social actors whom the First Republic had neglected or persecuted [...] I would say that Afonso Costa was never present, except in a negative way, in the definition of the 1974 regime” (Cruz, 2009: 184-185).

although not totally impartial, was not overly interested in either sanctifying or demonizing the 1910 regime. In the second half of the 1970s, the first major synthesis began to appear of the basic structures, social dynamics, class divisions, economic restraints, institutional aspects, cultural ingredients and the political and partisan conflicts of 1910-1926, through a generation of historians that included, among others, the founding names of David Ferreira, A. H. de Oliveira Marques, Fernando Medeiros, Manuel Villaverde Cabral, Armando de Castro, Fernando Catroga and Vasco Pulido Valente. Each and every one of these contributors opened up new fields of research and produced discourses about the First Republic that were different in themselves, but which all remained above the adoption of acritically laudatory or accusatory moral judgments (Sardica 2009: 11-12).

The progressive democratic normalization cooled the “temperature” of the appreciations that were made of the 1910 regime—so much so that, in 1985, the commemorations of the “diamond wedding” of the republican regime (its 75th anniversary) passed almost unnoticed. There were a few civic acts, but nothing similar to what had happened in 1960 or to what would happen later, in 2010, with the program for the centenary commemorations (100th anniversary) of the Republic. In October 1985, Portugal was living through a very particular period, calling more for a look into the future than for a re-observation, whether critical or nostalgic, of the past. The country had just freed itself from the financial dire straits of the so-called “Central Bloc” government (1983-1985), and signed the Treaty of Accession to the EEC, the Economic European Community; it stood then at the threshold of full European integration and at the beginning of a new political cycle. As Dinis de Abreu rejoiced in *Diário de Notícias*, the overall national situation was “quite favorable: the dollar has dropped, the price of gold is up, oil prices have stabilized and the EEC millions will help to reduce future problems.”<sup>22</sup> There was, furthermore, the particular circumstance that, in 1985, October 5 was also the day before the holding of a general election—a Saturday of reflection, on the eve of the first victory of Cavaco Silva’s Social Democratic Party. In a small note published on one of the inside pages of the daily newspaper *Correio da Manhã*, a journalist remarked upon this fact: “With fifteen Presidents and three Constitutions, the Portuguese Republic today celebrates its ‘diamond wedding’ in silence. And it celebrates it in silence because its 75th

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<sup>22</sup> *Diário de Notícias*, October 5 1985, p. 2.

anniversary coincides with the day of political reflection preceding tomorrow's election, on October 6."<sup>23</sup>

Of the country's leading newspapers in 1985, *Diário de Notícias* was the only one to dedicate an editorial to the celebration of the event. It began by asserting the ritualization of its memory: "Every year, October 5 1910 is remembered in newspaper articles, interviews and radio programs, fueling official ceremonies organized with greater or lesser pomp and circumstance, generally displaying a nostalgic and bitterly disenchanting tone. If the truth be told, once the day has passed and the commemorations have ended, everything returns to a state of forgetfulness—until the next year." The paper continued with a summary of the 75 years of the Republic: "it was born enveloped in an aura of popular hope and enthusiasm, supporting lofty ideals of justice, fraternity and equality for all citizens;" sixteen years later, it had collapsed, "diverted from its original intentions," at the hands of the rising military power; there had then appeared "a Second Republic—inheriting only the anthem and the flag from the first one." For half a century, "democratic ideals, generosity and tolerance had been strongly countered, in the name of a superior national interest," acting as "a convenient alibi for every form of arbitrary and totalitarian practices." Consequently, younger generations—those born after 1926—had never been given "a correct knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the republican victory and those first sixteen years of its existence."

When April 25 came and restored liberty and democracy, October 5 had again become "more than a simple circumstantial reference, a lively and popular commemoration, warmly embraced by the common man." The problem lay in the extent of awareness that the common man, living in the pro-European democracy of the 1980s, was able to develop so many decades later: "eleven years after April 25," the newspaper asked, at the end of the article, "can we, as a people, still grasp the exact notion of what the republican revolution was and meant—and, more importantly than that, can we have a clear notion of every mistake that was made, leading to the downfall of its ideals, which remained silenced for 50 long years?"<sup>24</sup> Apparently, one was forced to answer 'no', as the meager commemorations of 1985 seemed to show.

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<sup>23</sup> *Correio da Manhã*, October 5 1985, p. 20. In the edition of the most influential weekly newspaper *Expresso* published on that very same day, not a single reference was made to the Republic's 75th anniversary.

<sup>24</sup> *Diário de Notícias*, October 5 1985, p. 6. The article was not signed, but it can reasonably be assumed that its author was the editor of the newspaper at that time, Mário Mesquita.

Despite having been relegated to a secondary position by the younger academics' preferences for studying the history of the "New State," the historiography of the First Republic has nevertheless gained a new vitality in the last 15 to 20 years, both in the recently published *Histórias de Portugal* or in dozens of specialist studies, most of which have been presented in the form of MA or PhD dissertations. Many other names have now appeared to be added to those of the pioneering historians, bringing about a genuine intermingling of generations, largely and healthily free of "ideological priorities," thus avoiding both the pitfalls of a "Masonic-Republican acritical glorifying orthodoxy" and the "rough sketches of a terroristic and persecutory anarchy" (Rosas and Rollo 2009: 10).

## 6. The Republic and republicanism: past, present and future.

All of this does not, of course, prevent the continuing use that is made of the First Republic, on a level somewhere between history and politics, in order to support different left or right-wing stances, as was made clear by the recent commemorations in 2010 of the 100th anniversary of the implantation of the Republic on October 5, 1910. In October 2010, there were some who wanted to celebrate and others who wished to denigrate the regime inaugurated a century earlier: the former were perhaps expecting to convince the Portuguese that right-wing policies have had a continuously prejudicial effect on national life, while the latter were perhaps expecting to use the occasion to underline how Portugal always veers in the wrong direction whenever left-wing politicians secure power. Happily enough for history, most of those who noted the event just did so with a plain and impartial glance, converging around a realistic and pluralistic view of the 1910-1926 regime—i.e. seeing it as an attempt to modernize and democratize the country, one that proved to be ill-fated because of its own faults (the prime one being the gap between the republican "ideal" and its political materialization) and those of others (the prime one being the Great War of 1914-1918, which "mortgaged" the Republic and undermined every effort made to refound it between 1918 and 1926). This realistic and pluralistic view had actually been presented as the main goal to be achieved by the CNCCR (*Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações do Centenário da República*, the National Commission for the Commemoration of the Centenary of the Republic). In the words of its President, Artur Santos Silva, the CNCCR's multifarious activities were aimed at bringing together "researchers from every disciplinary area," promoting "a broad debate among experts on matters relating to the theme of the First Republic, welcoming all manner of different



insights and approaches, allowing for the emergence of new data and stimulating comparisons between different opinions on both the historical significance and the present-day relevance of the republican ideals” (Silva 2010: 6).

Perhaps the crisis facing people in 2010 had a calming effect on the commemorations that were held, and the harsh reality of present-day Portugal helped to clarify the collective memory about the past. Calling for introspection, self-criticism and a sense of moderation, the lesson to be learned from the centenary celebrations was that, if not dealt with in a timely and proper manner, national problems (cyclical as they proved to be in the twentieth century—occurring in 1910, 1926 and 1974), can lead to the erosion of regimes and mark the beginning of turmoil, paving the way for radical breaks with the past. It was this simple lesson that the 100th anniversary of the Republic brought to the common citizen’s awareness through the media, the ever larger bibliographical output and the official commemoration program. And, for all those who consider that the true Republic—the “ideal” one that Antero de Quental once dreamed of—still remains to be fulfilled, evoking the memory of the First Republic continues to be a useful task, providing that the stimulus provided by such activity is also used to improve the present-day democracy, thus responding to the well-intentioned and generous wishes that once moved the romantic revolutionaries of 1910.

Since any history is, by definition, a rethinkable past, a century after the implantation of the Portuguese First Republic, there is a possibility that the same shrewd prudence shown by Zhou-en-Lai (the former Prime Minister of Communist China) can similarly be applied to its analysis: asked once, in the middle of the twentieth century, what he thought the consequences of the French Revolution were, Zhou-en-Lai simply replied that he considered it was too early to say. In the Portuguese case, any historical, political or civic judgment of the regime inaugurated in 1910 will always be intermingled with another overall judgment—on the ideological promises and practical achievements of republican democracy in the present and in the future. One hundred years later (and still counting), what the First Republic set out to be, what it actually was, or ended up being unable to become—a turning point of modernization afflicted by various limits and accidents—still remains valid not only as a deeply relevant historical case-study, but also as an important challenge of political understanding, civic self-reflection and a broader development of citizenship.

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