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Sacred Union or Radical Republic? The Dilemmas of Wartime Propaganda in Portugal, 1916–1917

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Participation in the European War that began in 1914 offered Portugal's Republican leadership a unique opportunity to consolidate the regime that it had unveiled in October 1910. The support of the whole nation might be harnessed if a propaganda campaign managed to demonstrate clearly the need for unity in the face of a common and mortal danger; if, in other words, the Portuguese were led by the government to overcome their political, religious and economic differences in order to act as one, and thus emerge triumphant from the conflict (Teixeira 1996). Participation in the European conflict also offered up the possibility of demonstrating in a practical form, intelligible to all, the strength and virtue of the Republican creed: if all had to face the same wartime dangers, serving in the ranks of the army wherever it may be sent, and to endure the same sacrifices—rationing, military requisitions, taxes on war profits—then the virtues of equality, a mainstay of Republican political discourse, would be made clear to the whole country. In order to demand such sacrifices, the government would have to explain the reasons for Portugal's participation in the conflict, and this process would bring it closer to the 6 million Portuguese, the majority of whom lay, because of restrictions on the franchise, outside the realm of politics. Portugal might not be strong enough to tip the military balance in favour of the Western Allies, but the young Republic could benefit enormously from active participation, in so far as it would be able to rally the country's population for the first time in its 6-year life, thereby neutralising the influence of its enemies over the rural population. For this gamble to pay off, it was imperative that the war be seen by the Portuguese as a national conflict, and not one desired by the Republicans for partisan advantage: the primary task of war propaganda would be to make sure that the desired interpretation of the motives for Portugal's participation in the war became clear to all. The aim of this article is to describe the propaganda campaign carried out in 1916 and 1917, demonstrating its shortcomings, advancing some reasons for those shortcomings, and establishing the link between the failure of the campaign and the overthrow of the Republican government in December 1917.

All countries that participated in the First World War were aware of the importance of propaganda as a tool to keep their respective civilian populations willing to face, with confidence in a final victory, the doubts and sacrifices typical of the wartime situation. The mass civilian armies which fought in the trenches were cumbersome tools: educated and politicised, they needed to

understand the reasons for their sacrifice, and the same could be said of the civilians who participated in the war effort behind the lines. It took time, however, for the propaganda machines of each country to develop. In fact, it has become clear that in the first years of the conflict the belligerent governments, concentrating all their energies on the military and economic aspects of the war, played what was merely a secondary role in the internal propaganda battle, leaving the brunt of the work to self-mobilising agencies—the press, patriotic leagues, churches, unions, feminist and intellectual organisations, etc. It was only around 1917 that, in the Allied countries, the respective governments began to assume coordinating functions (Horne 1997: 1–17). These conditions did not apply to the Portuguese government, which was not fighting a total war: in 1916 the Portuguese army was defending Mozambique from German forces in German East Africa, and the decision to send a Portuguese Expeditionary Corps to the Western Front was made that year by the Allies, acting on a request from the Portuguese government. Portugal was free to establish the scale of its military participation in the war, unlike its Allies, for whom immediate survival depended on sending every available man to the front. Moreover, the Republic had not managed to forge a popular consensus of approval in its short existence: entrusting wartime propaganda to forces outside the government might lead to an undesired transformation of the contents of the propaganda message. All wartime propaganda rested on an idealised vision of the post-war country. Therefore, participation in the propaganda campaign by the Catholic Church or the unions might lead to a different vision of a victorious Portugal being promoted, a vision at odds with the Republicans' conception of their country's future. In other words, if Portugal was at war so that the Republic could consolidate itself, then wartime propaganda had to remain in the hands of trusted Republicans. Accordingly, the help of non-Republican self-mobilising groups was never sought. This was reflected even at the political level, where the so-called Sacred Union government was in fact a coalition composed of two of the three Republican parties, with no Socialist, Catholic or monarchist representation (the first Sacred Union government, led by António José de Almeida, lasted from March 1916 to April 1917; the second Sacred Union government, made up solely of Democratic party members, and headed this time by party leader Afonso Costa, lasted until December 1917). The political model adopted in 1910—that of a radical, vanguard-led Republic, was not to be abandoned. What was more surprising, in the light of this situation, was the lack of commitment shown by the government to the propaganda campaign, so essential for the turning of military intervention into a national policy understood and accepted by all. The government passed its responsibilities on to a host of friendly individuals and organisations which, although well-meaning, simply did not have the resources and the capability to mobilise a whole country facing the threat of the German Empire.

The government's meagre participation in the propaganda campaign is one of the most problematic aspects of Portugal's wartime experience. The Sacred Union governments showed a complete disdain for many of the institutions at their disposal, thereby weakening their ability to reach the population directly. This was true, for example, of primary and secondary schools, which in other

countries, especially France, so often the model state to be copied by Portugal's Republicans, provided the government with a ready-made network for the dissemination of propaganda.¹ The few government initiatives on the propaganda front were characterised by a disastrous and almost incomprehensible lack of commitment for a group of men who held the days of anti-monarchist propaganda as a mythical golden age of unity of purpose. In 1916, the Premier, António José de Almeida, carried out a poorly organised succession of quick visits around the country (*Notícias d'Évora*, 27.4.1916, *Gazeta de Coimbra*, 4.10.1916). A series of rallies to be held at national monuments was limited to the first of its kind, at the monastery of Batalha. A second series of rallies scheduled for 1917 involving the whole government, each member covering his respective base of political support, was postponed until the spring and then abandoned after the collapse of the first Sacred Union government in April of that year (*O Mundo*, 31.3.1917). Another failed initiative was the launch in 1917 of a magazine, *Portugal na Guerra*, which was to be published in Paris in Portuguese. Thanks to this magazine's monopoly on photographs of the Portuguese troops at the front, Portuguese newspapers and magazines were unnecessarily antagonised, as they could not provide their readers with photographs of the Portuguese trenches and the Portuguese troops in action. Needless to say, the magazine never found a market and was kept alive only by substantial government subsidies. Only four issues were published, and even their contents were the subject of constant attack in the Lisbon press, which accused *Portugal na Guerra* of concentrating on the Allied, rather than the Portuguese, war effort.² Belated attempts to launch another publication and to create a national propaganda commission were to be overturned by the Sidónio Pais *coup* of December 1917 (*A Capital*, 5.8.1917, 11.8.1917).

The lack of government initiatives on the propaganda front leads to the conclusion that the Sacred Union governments did not perceive its value, not only as a way of turning the country's military effort into a popular cause, but also as a way of shoring up the Republican regime in Portugal. The most important example of how the state's resources were badly used was the lack of policy in relation to schools, which represented a potentially unsurpassable network of centres for the spreading of propaganda. The loyalty of primary and secondary school teachers to the Republic was not assured across the country, but education in general had always been described as one of the priorities of the Republican leadership, who viewed it not only in the context of developing the country's economic potential but also as a means of creating loyal citizens: literacy, after all, was vital for participation in the country's political life. Some politically active primary school teachers offered their support to the cause from the earliest days of Portugal's intervention; they underlined their potentially key role in helping to carry out a campaign of propaganda and national reconciliation (*Educação Nacional*, 19.3.1916). Despite this appeal, the government chose to ignore the 6,000 schools it controlled across the country, and to let the teachers' patriotic ardour cool down and be replaced by the more immediate difficulties of survival on a low income in a country racked by inflation. Not even in Italy, where little was done on the propaganda front until the defeat of Caporetto, was there such a disdain for domestic propaganda and for the use of schools.

According to Andrea Fava, the Italian Ministry of Education, even if it did not send out precise instructions on propaganda to the schools, at least encouraged the national school teachers to participate in works of “civilian assistance” (Fava 1997: 53–69). This lack of government initiative was so inexplicable that even *O Mundo*, fiercely loyal to the dominant Democratic party, broke ranks within the Sacred Union and questioned the wisdom of the government’s inaction. Partisan use was made by *O Mundo* of the situation, because the Education Minister belonged to the Evolutionist party and was therefore, in *O Mundo*’s eyes, a legitimate target. Lopes de Oliveira, a teacher in the Passos Manuel secondary school in Lisbon, sent *O Mundo* a copy of a letter which he had also sent to the school’s headmaster, complaining that, having read out to his classes the official explanation for Portugal’s belligerence, as published in the official gazette, the *Diário do Governo*, he had come to the conclusion that the majority of his students were completely unaware that such justification existed. This, Lopes de Oliveira added, at a time when the secondary schools were the main centres of pro-German propaganda along with the barracks (*O Mundo*, 21.1.1917). According to the irate teacher, the Ministry for Public Instruction seemed to think that Portugal was a neutral country, ignoring as it did the repeated requests by school teachers for a national campaign to make students—and through them their parents—aware of the reasons why an army was being sent to France.³

One possible explanation for the failure to use the school system for the purposes of propaganda was that hopes had been placed in Preparatory Military Instruction (IMP) to carry out the same task. The IMP played an important part in the Republican concept of national defence, which revolved around the notion of a nation at arms: it was designed to bring boys from the age of seven upwards into contact with military discipline, physical exercise and the carrying and use of weapons, as well as to inculcate patriotic values. From April 1916 onwards, a series of decrees attempted to reinforce and widen the IMP’s network at national level. Its military component was to be reinforced for all those over the age of seventeen, while in the Civic Education classes Portugal’s participation in the war was to be discussed.⁴ Subsequent legislation attempted to stimulate the creation of IMP societies, which were given the official status of “patriotic and laudable”, and staffed with two officers from each recruitment area for the training of its members. Henceforth, greater discipline would be the norm: five unexcused absences could lead to seven days in prison (*Ordens do Exército*, 1916). These measures show that the governments were, at least, aware of the need to expose future soldiers to war propaganda; nevertheless, the lack of resources and the shortage of officers meant that the dream of a national IMP network remained just that. Worse still, attendance at the existing societies was so low that in September 1916 the Ministry of the Interior sent a circular letter to all Civil Governors reminding them to exert pressure on local authorities to co-operate with the IMP’s leadership.⁵

There is no doubt that the quantity of propaganda required to lead Portugal into war was underestimated, and that the propaganda actually produced was not tailored adequately to Portugal, for its ideas and language were borrowed almost exclusively from French propaganda. The official explanation for the sending

of the Portuguese Expeditionary Corps (CEP) to France, published in the *Diário do Governo* in 17.1.1917, described a clear diplomatic position on Portugal's part from the moment that the European War had begun, which had never been one of simple neutrality; an aggressive and treacherous policy on the part of Germany; and a fully legal seizure of German merchant ships interned in Portuguese harbours, resulting first in an insulting German ultimatum and then a declaration of war. This was a reductionist document: years of intense political debate about Portugal's possible intervention in the conflict were ignored. The report stated that "The country—the whole world—knows what our attitude has been and knows the events which shaped it. The Portuguese Government hid nothing from the nation which it represents; it hid nothing from friend or foe alike, and as a result has nothing new to add" (*Diário do Governo*, 17.1.1917). This attitude of unquestionable openness was a sham, readily contrasted with the words of an opposition member in the July 1917 secret sessions of parliament: according to Moura Pinto, a Unionist deputy, Portugal's intervention in the war "provoked one of the greatest confusions registered in our national history and was the sole source of hatreds which will never be extinguished among the present generation" (*Assembleia da República* 1917: 9). As to the benefits that the war would bring Portugal, the declaration stated that it was in general too early to tell, but one benefit was already clear: the affirmation of "a people worthy of the traditions of its past and the hopes for its future, worthy of its freedom and its independence, worthy of the noble civilisation to which it belongs and in which law and justice are sacred and inviolable notions" (*Diário do Governo*, 17.1.1917).

For Portugal, belligerence was to be a feat of glory never to be forgotten by the rest of the world: a sacrifice endured for an alliance six centuries old, with no desire for conquest or material rewards. It was, moreover, a fight for the rights of small nations, which the German empire was crushing. "Portugal defends its life and defends its patrimony. For these it will shed its blood to the last drop" (*Diário do Governo*, 17.1.1917). This struggle was being carried out by a nation finding its long-lost strength. At the rally at the Batalha monastery Afonso Costa used belligerence and the international prestige it brought the country to accuse his enemies of unworthiness and cowardice.⁶ The *Universidade Livre* (an organisation designed to promote adult education) distributed a special pamphlet to the departing troops, in which President Bernardino Machado explained his conception of the conflict. The war, he argued, was the logical continuation of the revolution that had given birth to the Republic: it was supported by the people at home and there were strong ties between domestic reactionaries and Germany: the people's enemies in 1910 and those of 1916 were essentially the same. In an army whose officer corps was still largely monarchist, such words cannot have been well received. According to Bernardino Machado, moreover, the history of Portugal represented a long road towards democracy, running from the establishment of municipalities, to the Estates-general, to the liberal constitution of 1821 and, of course, to the Republic. The war was the culmination of this process:

It is our mission to struggle always in the vanguard of civilisation, that same civilisation which we were the first to take to the whole world through seas never before sailed.

This civilisation is called, today, democracy. It is the motto which is inscribed [...] on the flag which we have entrusted to our brave army. Fighting for democracy we are fighting for ourselves, for our kind, for our language, for our past and for our future (Universidade Livre 1917: 5-6).

This vision of the war would undoubtedly find support among Republicans, whose patriotism had been forged by the British ultimatum of 1890, and who could not conceive of it in a different form. Bernardino Machado's words proved, however, that the Republic's President was deeply alienated from the reality of his country. Demonstrations in Lisbon and Oporto in favour of the Allies did not reflect the state of mind of the whole population before the threat of war; the law of Separation of Church and State had not diminished the prestige of the Church among Portugal's Catholics; finally, the replacement of a network of monarchist *caciques* by its Republican equivalent had not turned the country into a working democracy. References to Portugal's glorious past and the regime as a paladin of democracy and civilisation were not going to attract the support of the rural population, whose material difficulties were being ignored by Lisbon in its rush to prepare an army for the Western Front. The repeated affirmation of the population's supposed patriotism and willingness to sacrifice itself for the Fatherland and for the Republic reveals how shallow the regime's understanding of public opinion really was: a more careful reflection would have made it clear that *Civilisation, Democracy and the Rights of Small Nations* were hardly the causes for which the Portuguese as a whole would readily fight; something else was needed to transform the country's participation in the conflict into a true and meaningful national war.

Eric Hobsbawm, describing the production of tradition in the Third Republic, makes the point that "history before 1789 (except, perhaps, for 'nos ancêtres les Gaulois') recalled church and monarchy" (Hobsbawm 1983: 272-3) and that it was therefore neglected by the Republican leadership. Even within the context of the French Revolution, however, there was an infinity of dates and men to celebrate in accordance with the political nuances of the Third Republic. For the Republicans in Portugal, attempting to mobilise the country for war, the situation was far grimmer. The Republic was less than six years old when Portugal went to war; there was no reservoir of Republican events and symbols to draw upon in the attempt to generate popular enthusiasm. There was, moreover, a very real shortage of popular heroes who might be disassociated from a royal or a religious setting. Bernardino Machado's piece for the *Universidade Livre* booklet vividly illustrates this difficulty. Autonomy for the municipalities, one of the pillars of the Republican creed in Portugal, was also defended by the Integralists, eager to recreate the power structures of the pre-absolutist monarchy; the liberals of 1820 were not democrats, and popular engagement in the civil wars of the early 19th century often occurred on the absolutist and clerical side. The vision of Portuguese history presented to the departing troops by Bernardino Machado was therefore fraught with contradictions and its propaganda value was, at best, slight.

The government's paralysis on the propaganda front did not mean that the importance of propaganda was not recognised by other bodies. A discussion of

the various private attempts to mobilise the country is necessary, because many organisations took up the challenge of spreading the message of the Sacred Union in order to prepare the country for the coming struggle. The most important of these organisations was, not surprisingly, the Democratic party, the largest and best organised political force in Portugal. Its network of local branches, political clubs and newspapers was unrivalled. On 1.4.1916 *O Mundo*, the most important of the party's newspapers, published the Democratic party's call to arms which had been, in the newspaper's own words, "profusely distributed to the people and especially to the party's political organisations". The party called upon all its political commissions, centres, associations, etc. to "enlighten the people as to the causes and origins of our participation in the war, through conferences and propaganda missions". According to the document, Portugal was at war in order to carry out its duty towards England, an ancient ally. Failure to do so would have earned it "the entire world's scorn". The Portuguese army was fighting for the rights of nationalities to exist, for the "triumph of Law and Civilisation, (and) against the barbarian empires' brutal theories of universal domination." Finally, this message had to be taken into all villages, no matter how remote, "so as to prepare all Portuguese to perform any sacrifice which the Fatherland may request". The first months of the war saw a flurry of these party activities, notably in the larger cities, where patriotic rallies took place one after the other. On 4.4.1916, for example, four rallies took place in Lisbon alone, with one speaker, Jaime Cortesão, appearing at two different venues. These rallies would continue throughout 1916 and 1917, although their frequency naturally decreased. In the greater part of the country, however, the Democratic party's activity was much less intense, and in some areas it barely existed. As early as September 1916, the Democratic newspaper *Correspondência da Covilhã* complained bitterly of how little the city's Democrats had done on the propaganda front.⁷

Occasionally overlapping the Democratic machine, although keeping up a front of independence, were a variety of organisations which appeared in 1916 with the explicit purpose of aiding the government in the task of preparing the country's population for wartime and, in some cases, the post-war world. The most important of these organisations were the *Cruzada das Mulheres Portuguesas*, the *Junta Patriótica do Norte*, and the *Junta Nacional de Propaganda Patriótica*. The latter was virtually indistinguishable from the party; its manifesto, for example, had been drafted by one of *O Mundo*'s leading journalists, Mayer Garção. Published on 9.6.1916, the manifesto argued that while Portugal had in no way contributed to the outbreak of the war, it could not avoid participating in it, because of the British alliance and Portugal's own higher interests.⁸ The *Junta*'s limited actions can be clearly seen in an interview granted by Abílio Marçal, one of its members, to *O Mundo*, on 11.10.1916. Marçal described his associates as "good Republicans, friends of the country and the regime" and their actions as a "criss-crossing of the entire country, explaining to the humble and simple people of the countryside the reason for our belligerence, and the material and moral benefits which will result from that belligerence". Somewhat naïvely, Marçal believed that, after only four months of this campaign, the country had been won over and that the time had come to change over

from war propaganda to preparing the people for reaping the benefits of victory.⁹ In order to develop Portugal's backward economy, the model to follow was now Spain. Abílio Marçal's claim that the *Junta* had reached the whole of the population must be greeted with scepticism, for the government was to receive urgent appeals, throughout 1916 and 1917, for a continuing national propaganda campaign. Moreover, his claims that the *Junta's* propaganda had been delivered to even the most obscure of villages, and that it had been properly understood, do not ring true. João Ferreira do Amaral, an officer who served in both Africa and the Western Front during the war, provided a completely different picture of how wartime propaganda was viewed by its intended audience.¹⁰

In the north of the country, a more serious effort at a prolonged mobilisation campaign was made, one which involved local authorities, delegates from "the various scientific, industrial, commercial, artistic and associative corporations", and "all individuals who, spontaneously or at the League's invitation, agree with its patriotic goal" (*Junta Patriótica do Norte* 1918: vii). The League in question was the *Junta Patriótica do Norte* (or the *North Portugal Patriotic League*, as it styled itself in English in its material), an attempt to co-ordinate the action of local Republican authorities and the private sector in the preparation of the country for war. According to the two summaries of the League's activities, published in 1918 and 1931, such activities were divided into two periods: before and after the departure of the CEP for France. The first period was marked by "the diffusion of patriotic ideas" (*Junta Patriótica do Norte* 1918: xviii) carried out in the manner typical of the First World War: "When this movement was at its highest, manifestos and bills were published and widely distributed throughout the country; exhibitions were promoted in picture theatre, lectures and public meetings were held ..." (*Junta Patriótica do Norte* 1918: xviii-xix). Twelve manifestos were published in 1916, five in 1917, and two in 1918, by which time, of course, the focus of the League had changed. Its main task was now the funding and running of the "Home for Soldiers' Children", whose mission it was to educate both the children of poor soldiers and those orphaned by the war. By 1918, eighty-five children were being looked after. Other initiatives of the League were its "Information Office", designed to facilitate the contact between soldiers at the front and their respective families, a service for the forwarding of newspapers to the Western Front, the organisation of marches in support of the Allied cause, and a service of aid to Portuguese POWs in German hands. Finally, the League organised art exhibitions and other fund-raising activities, which were extended to expatriate communities in Brazil and California. The League's rhetoric, as exemplified by a one-page pamphlet whose distribution to the troops was authorised by the Ministry of War in September 1917, was built upon the idea of the need for solidarity at home in order to give those at the front the peace of mind necessary for the proper performance of their patriotic duty. The pamphlet spoke of the pride which praise for Portugal's troops, emanating from Allied officers and the Allied press, gave rise to back in the country, and promised the soldiers that their heroism at the front would be matched at home by the care afforded to their families during and after the war. The "Home For Soldiers' Children" represented living proof

of this promise “at the moment when you have been called upon to risk your life for the destiny of the Fatherland, closely bound as it is with the destiny of Humanity” (*Junta Patriótica do Norte* 1917).

The *Junta Patriótica do Norte* stands out from the rest of the self-mobilisation effort for its ambition, linking local authorities, private entities and patriotic citizens in the attempt to show the soldiers departing for the front that the country was united behind their sacrifice. It also stands as a powerful reminder of what might have been achieved had the Lisbon government not ignored the vital propaganda battle that had to be waged aggressively across the country so that the Republic could emerge stronger from the ordeal of war. Nevertheless, it made the same mistakes as other mobilising agencies: it considered the propaganda battle to be finished once the CEP had departed for France, it used an imported rhetoric which meant little to the majority of the soldiers and civilian population, and it was unable to sustain the enthusiasm of its members for a drawn-out campaign. According to the League’s 1918 report, its attempts to branch out into rural areas were a failure and the number of rallies planned but never carried out (22) far outweighed the number which actually went ahead.¹¹

The last of the three organisations already mentioned, the *Cruzada das Mulheres Portuguesas*, was torn between two roles: that of a semi-official charitable association, and that of a pioneering institution campaigning for women’s rights, which tried to involve women in the war effort so that they could demonstrate their importance to a Republican leadership which, despite its rhetoric, had failed to move towards equality of the sexes since 1910. The *Cruzada* was under the intellectual guidance of Ana de Castro Osório, a leading pre-war feminist, who wasted no time in seizing Portugal’s belligerent status as a shortcut to economic, social, and political equality for women in Portugal. Osório’s language regarding the war was identical to that of the government; through the war, Portugal’s women would rediscover their glorious past and true identity. Faced by the war, the Portuguese woman could undergo a process of rediscovery: “She is called to the responsibilities of the present hour, reminded of what she was once, in the past, names which she was never made to learn and memorise are mentioned and she, surprised and hurt, asks ‘what is my name? What is my name? I can no longer remember it... I have lost my name in the darkness’” (Osório 1916: 5). Through the present conflict, if the government were to allow women to participate in the war effort, that name would be rediscovered: Portuguese women would realise that they were the heiresses of a long tradition of heroic women who had stood by their men, even in battle, for centuries. This participation in the war effort was volunteered by the *Cruzada*, which raised money for the families of mobilised soldiers, distributed clothes, cigarettes and pre-addressed postcards (vital in an essentially illiterate army) among the departing soldiers, set up a nursing course; all this in addition to the propaganda sessions, where the war was explained to a female audience, never deviating from the government’s own view of events, and in which advice was given on how to influence the departing soldiers: “As mothers, as wives, as sisters, as friends, we must influence their hearts and their minds, breathing into them courage, abnegation, and patriotism. And when the time for them to leave

comes, and though our hearts may be bleeding, we must not let ourselves cry ...” (Pinheiro 1916: 20).

Ana de Castro Osório, despite the difficulties faced by the *Cruzada* before and after the collapse of Portugal’s war effort in December 1917, towered over her contemporaries in terms of the energy devoted to the task of mobilising Portugal for the war. Her action was, however, dispersed over too wide an area: she became involved in the struggle to prepare the whole country for the war, the struggle to prepare women to replace their husbands and brothers in the workplace with a view to keeping the economy alive, to prepare women for full citizenship, and to combat those engaged in counter-propaganda against the war effort. She criticised the Church’s insistence on the need for peace, rather than for victory (Osório 1918: 114), and recognised the war as an opportunity to create a new generation of committed Republicans—the children still at school—whose spirit would be forever altered by the political agitation and changes brought about by the conflict. In order to take advantage of this unique opportunity she wrote *De Como Portugal Foi Chamado à Guerra: História para Crianças*, published in 1918. Despite her constant efforts, and her undoubted usefulness to the Republic, she was ignored by the Sacred Union governments, and began to complain of a vicious circle in operation: women were slow to adhere to the war effort, while the government was slow to call for their help. Osório found it difficult to accept such an attitude on the part of the government: it refused to create training schools so that women could replace the departing soldiers in their professions, to ensure the equality of wages among men and women, and even to allow women working for the state to attend the *Cruzada* nursing course (Osório 1918: 111). This, she claimed, was a backward stance, not in tune with the age. The United States, Osório pointed out, did not hesitate to send its men to Europe and at the same time increase industrial output; this was possible because Americans knew that “behind their men [...] they have women who are capable of working, masters of factory and field, beings full of energy, nobility, and strength”.¹²

Other forces and individuals joined the propaganda battle, notably in intellectual circles, where the link with France was strongest, and where the defence of the Republic was seen as vital. The review *Águia*, directed by the poet Teixeira de Pascoais, engaged in denunciations of Germany from the onset of the war, and dedicated its April 1916 issue exclusively to war propaganda; after that issue, however, the war disappeared from its pages. According to Pascoais, the European War was merely the latest round in the conflict between two civilisations that fought for the soul of Europe: the Celtic–Roman civilisation, which stood for beauty, justice, and law for all, and the German civilisation, hostile to those around it. Participation in this war would heal rifts within Portugal and allow the country to find its real strength, doing away with

this cold selfishness which renders individual life incompatible with collective life, this disbelief in our own qualities; this inertia which consumes all of our energy; this stupid, aggressive, fratricidal, and destructive fanaticism [...] the lack of a common goal, which results from having forgotten our traditions, our history, our art, our literature, in other words, our patriotic soul. (*A Águia* 1914, 166)

For Teixeira de Pascoais, moreover, the role of Art in the conflict was to present the ideals behind the war in such a way as to overcome internal divisions and fire the imagination of the country's youth. His poetic efforts to this end included "Belgium", published in June 1915, and "Miss Cavell", which followed in December. In the April 1916 issue, Teixeira de Pascoais turned to Portugal's ties with France: "As Portuguese we must love France, no matter what, for France is our older sister; as Latins we must love France no matter what, for France is the great fountain of the Latin spirit; as men we must love France no matter what, for she was our emancipator, for she gave us freedom, self-esteem, justice, law, and individual consciousness" (*A Águia* 1916: 121).

Closely linked to *A Águia*, was Jaime Cortesão, a Democratic party deputy and the man who best understood the structural difficulties that propaganda faced in a country like Portugal. Doctor, playwright, poet, politician and historian, he was acutely aware that the oratory of his fellow politicians and artists was lost on the great mass of the population, who lacked even the most basic understanding of the key concepts in wartime propaganda: nation, fatherland, international law, the alliance with Great Britain. There was no point in appealing to the patriotism of those who did not know they had a *Pátria*. Cortesão understood, however, that the war was an excellent opportunity to change this situation, turning the apathetic rural population into a legion of committed Republicans. Cortesão's great contribution to the propaganda campaign was his *Cartilha do Povo*. The primer consisted of a simple dialogue (*The People's Primer*) between José Povinho, the traditional embodiment of the Portuguese, his son, Manuel Soldado, and a patrician figure, João Portugal. Through the dialogue Cortesão makes clear his belief in the innate patriotism and worth of the Portuguese, which had been obscured by the years of supposed decadence in the twilight of the monarchy. João Portugal patiently teaches José Povinho what a Fatherland is,¹³ and outlines the efforts made by generations of Portuguese to keep their country independent. João Portugal then leads his audience of two through the intricacies of Portugal's entry into the war, appealing to their honour with an everyday example: if a neighbour's house was on fire, would one wait until it threatened one's own house before offering to help put it out? The fire, of course, was the German army, which would do to the men of Portugal what it had done to the men of Belgium and of Serbia: "Their fields and farms were ruined, their houses, universities and churches were destroyed, their wives and daughters were dishonoured, men and women of all ages were shot, and those who were spared face the harshest tasks and the most onerous tributes" (Cortesão 1916: 13-14). Convinced by such plain but powerful arguments, Manuel Soldado becomes impatient to depart for the front, while his father laments not being able to accompany him. The *Cartilha* was an important first step in the right direction, but it was not followed up: Cortesão himself went to the front, while his work was never used as the basis of a national campaign, with national schools, drama groups, etc. Other intellectual figures who gave their weight to the propaganda campaign were the poets Guerra Junqueiro and Augusto Casimiro, and the Grand Master of the Masonic Order, and onetime Minister of Education, Sebastião de Magalhães Lima.¹⁴

Despite the distance that separates Portugal from France, and despite the

influence that conservative and anti-Republican elements held over Portuguese society, the governments of António José de Almeida and later of Afonso Costa opted for a secondary role in the wartime propaganda campaign. Indeed, António José de Almeida stated famously in parliament that it was precisely because of this distance between Portugal and the Western Front that war propaganda was not necessary in Portugal (*Diário da Câmara dos Deputados*, 20.5.1916). This stance was maintained despite a barrage of appeals for firmer action, which arrived from different sources, and all of which were ignored. In May 1916 Jaime Cortesão began to warn the government of the dangers of inaction:

I have not yet seen the government carrying out propaganda concerning our military duties. It could be said that your Excellency (António José de Almeida) is convinced that a single word, a sort of divine *fiat*, will suffice to lead armies to war. If we convince ourselves that our people are ready to endure all sacrifices for their fatherland, then we are living a lie" (*Diário da Câmara dos Deputados*, 20.5.1917).

Magalhães Lima was to reiterate this warning over a year later. In an interview to *O Mundo*, he stated that "above all it is necessary to impose on propaganda the unity of thought and action which it has lacked until today, because dispersed propaganda, of the type that has been circulated, yields few results, and can even be counter-productive" (*O Mundo*, 10.8.1917). Two weeks later a report from a Ministry of War Information Service (MGSI) agent stated that "In the whole of the Minho Province—propaganda against the Republic and above all against the present government is most intense. It is indispensable to disseminate a strong counter-propaganda" (Arquivo Histórico Militar 1917). The intensely pro-war journalist Homem Cristo, writing in his newspaper *O de Aveiro*, days before the *coup* that toppled Afonso Costa, complained that

the government has completely given up on propaganda. There has been no propaganda in the press, no propaganda from the tribune, no propaganda in schools, no propaganda in the barracks. All that was left to the traitors and the germanophiles. They were the ones who spread a most active propaganda. A formidable propaganda. In the press, in the streets, in schools, in halls, in public meetings, by all means, using all resources. Who opposed them? No one, absolutely no one. Except *O de Aveiro*... (*O de Aveiro*, 25.11.1917)

This lack of enthusiasm for the propaganda battle was only admitted by the defeated Republican leadership as it left for exile in December 1917. Deposed President Bernardino Machado told a French diplomat in Madrid that "the Government, faithful to the English alliance, thought that it was fulfilling its duty by carrying out its (military) campaign in France, but it failed to find popular support through the press, rallies, or conferences. The people lost interest in the government" (Ministère des Affaires Étrangères 1917).

This refusal on the part of the government to engage in propaganda activity must be carefully interpreted. It raises serious questions about the nature of the Republican regime idealised by the men of 1910. Might the refusal to involve the population in the war effort have been born out of the fear of that same population, the majority of which was rural and conservative? Could the Democrats have maintained their stranglehold on the country's political life if an

agreement had been made between the Republic and the country, with the promise of significant political and even social reforms as the reward for an orderly participation in the war? These questions undoubtedly haunted many within the Democratic party, who recognised the hollowness of the Sacred Union as it existed in Portugal. Jaime Cortesão, in his wartime diary, wrote of conflict within the party, especially prevalent among the deputies fighting in France: “in order to form a national government we defended the entry into the government not only of the Republican parties, but also of the working classes, while I went so far as to defend the inclusion of a Catholic, of those who claimed to be neutral in political matters” (Cortesão 1919: 51). Deputies returning from the front for the opening of parliament, despite their membership of the Democratic party, wanted to correct the organisational errors of the CEP and to topple the government.¹⁵ In other words, those at the front, who were closest to the fighting and the war effort in general, saw the continuation of that war effort as being more important than the Democrats’ survival in power: their awareness of the national interest was raised by being at the front, as was their understanding of the war’s unpopularity with the troops and hence with the country as a whole. Greater participation in the Sacred Union by opposing political forces, a political truce that would reach into the heart of the countryside, the bringing of the Church and the unions into the war effort: all these steps had to be taken for the war effort to survive, and yet they had a price. The Republic could not continue to be a radical regime, led by a small vanguard of ardent and anti-clerical francophiles, weaned politically on a violent opposition to a monarchy whose supporters they identified as traitors—with whom there could be no compromise—but who were simply too strong to be removed from the national equation. A recognition of the Church’s importance was highly necessary, although this would require a reform of the law of separation; co-operation with the National Workers’ Union (UON) would have improved the morale in the large cities, where the Republicans’ lack of a social programme had been taking a toll on their popularity since the 1912 strikes. All of these options were open to the Republicans: none was taken. This left the Sacred Union governments with more and more enemies as the economic situation deteriorated, and as material concerns overrode all considerations about the war and the fate of Portugal’s soldiers in France. The end, when it came, was swift. Sidónio Pais launched his *coup* in Lisbon with the support of 250 soldiers earmarked for immediate departure for France, and the government had nearly no forces with which to defend itself (Meneses 1996).

Portugal’s war effort lasted less than two years before it fell apart. The propaganda that was supposed to inform the Portuguese people as to why they were being called upon to sacrifice themselves in France and in Africa was inadequate in quantity, content and quality. Posters and the cinema were ignored, and in a country where the illiteracy rate stood at 70% the influence of an essentially literary propaganda was always to prove limited. Even a pioneering work such as Jaime Cortesão’s *Cartilha* required a support structure to make its message, suitable for the whole population, reach its target audience. Speeches and rallies were essentially limited to the larger cities and towns, and their audiences were made up of Republicans; the language of these speeches and

gatherings was designed to rally the Republican faithful, asking them to make a supreme effort to control and guide the rest of the country, even if unwillingly, towards active participation in the war. Monarchist, Catholic and syndicalist opinions were ignored. The lack of dialogue between rival political forces in Portugal was astounding. It was expected that once the troops had arrived in France, fear for their fate would keep the country united; this was not to be the case. The Republican leadership thought its support to be sufficiently strong to keep the regime intact during the war years: but the counter-mobilisation on the part of the Right and the syndicalist Left, and their eventual union in support of Sidónio Pais' bid for power, tipped the scales against the war effort. The war had provided the Sacred Union governments with the means to form a nation of 6 million Portuguese united by a common effort: but by focusing their attention on Republican opinion alone, in order to keep alive the dream of a radical Republic, wartime governments saw all their hopes dashed by the natural reaction of a scorned but ultimately powerful opposition. This opposition was to claim to represent the majority of the country, and that it was implementing a national policy against what it described as a small and unrepresentative clique, which had clung to power since 1910 with disastrous results. It was this message, and not the government's version of events, which was to reach and convince the majority of the country's population.¹⁶

Notes

¹ See Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau (1993).

² *O Século*, the main Lisbon daily, was one of the most vociferous opponents of *Portugal na Guerra*, which deprived both itself and its sister publication, *Ilustração Portuguesa*, of photographs from the front: "We see, through the appearance of the second issue of Mr. Pina's magazine, that the government has decided to ignore the public and press protests against the scandalous monopoly on photographs conceded to that same magazine. The Portuguese army [...] has at the front a photographic service, paid for by the State [...] However, unlike other armies, it is not able to profit from that service, because the propaganda of our military effort is rendered useless by an immoral favouritism, which prevents the war photos from receiving all the publicity they deserve [...]" (*O Século*, 12.7.1917). See also the same newspaper, 12.10.1917 & 6.11.1917 for further attacks by *O Século* against *Portugal na Guerra*.

³ *O Mundo* returned to this theme on 27.1.1917: "The Minister for Public Instruction has not ordered, to this day, the reading out in schools of the *Government's Report* on our participation in the war. He has not ordered it, nor will he do so in the future. This is what we heard a monarchist say. *O Mundo* regrets what is happening, and regrets that monarchists should feel themselves entitled to make declarations in the Republic's name or to make predictions ... that everything tells us, unfortunately, will be correct. We do not want to fight the Minister. We avoid all that might bring disunity, and it does not seem right to us that supporters of the Sacred Union such as ourselves should attack its ministers, diminishing its prestige. But the Minister's attitude remains ... inexplicable. The enemies of the regime have long considered it a capitulation. Dr Pedro Martins surely does not want it said that, because he has encountered in some schools resistance to war propaganda, he will attempt nothing against the germanophilism of certain sectors with which he has kept up relations. But these are personal relations, and must not be—surely are not—political relations. Let Dr. Pedro Martins reflect. Were history to be written on the basis of the archives of our Ministry of Instruction, historians would not even be aware that there had been a European war in the first quarter of the 20th century."

⁴ Ordens do Exército, 1916, 3.4.1916, Instrução Militar Preparatória, Secretaria de Guerra, la Direcção Geral: "[...] Article 7: To attempt to organize Preparatory Military Instruction corps in schools and sporting clubs, in order to harmonize the diffusion of that instruction with the comfort of the population [...] In this way the physical strengthening [of the Portuguese] will be achieved, and patriotism will be inflamed, placing the Portuguese in the most suitable condition for national defence, for the Republican

spirit, and for the integrity of our Fatherland, which, brought by an ambitious nation into the conflict that involved Europe and possibly the whole world, because of a mad lust for power completely incompatible with the intellectual achievements and social conditions of our age, will emerge from that conflict nobler, stronger, and prouder, reacquiring the leading role in the concert of nations, which rightly belongs to it as the discoverer of the greater part of the world.”

⁵ “This Directory-General having been made aware of successive absences by the young men assigned to IMP in many of the sites of instruction based in municipal capitals, which means that we are headed for the scheme’s complete abandonment—so pernicious for an important service is that of the preparation for military duty of our youth [...]” (Arquivo Nacional, Lisboa, Ministério do Interior 1916).

⁶ (*O Mundo*, 25.8.1916). This declaration and others like it led the opposition press’s keeping a close watch on what, if anything, foreign governments and the foreign press said about Portugal, humiliating the Sacred Union government every time Portugal’s war effort was ignored. See, for example, *O Dia* (Lisbon), 18.4.1917: “We have with us French and Spanish newspapers and in both we sought out the text of the English (*sic*) Prime Minister’s text, still hoping that Havas had cut short the cable containing Lloyd George’s speech in praise of the armies fighting alongside the English. Unfortunately Havas had not made a mistake. All are mentioned, even the Belgians.

Lloyd George did not even make the simplest of references in respect of Portugal! It is hard to accept, but that’s the way it is ...”

⁷ “We feel infinitely embittered. Everywhere ‘kermesses’, festivals, and shows were held which obtained sizable contributions for the poor families of those good Portuguese soldiers, for the medical care of our wounded, for the winter clothing of the keepers of our honour in Flanders.

What did we do? We have three clubs, with rooms which are sufficiently large to hold an event that would not shame us: a patriotic rally, a raffle, a concert ...

The war? Everybody shrugs their shoulders: Why bother? No one is being sent” (*Correspondência da Covilhã*, 17.9.1916).

⁸ “Here is the war! We did not provoke it. It sought us out, as it did other peoples. We know what we are going to fight for. For the honour of our Fatherlands, for the salvation of national independence, for the triumph of liberty. We will fight to avenge the dead who fell defending our flag; we will fight to ensure the future of our children” (*Junta Nacional de Propaganda Patriótica* 1916).

⁹ “The people, by being present at our meetings and at our great patriotic rallies, listening closely and warmly, applauding our vibrant speeches, show that they understand what we are saying to them. At this moment, in which the nature, the importance, and the effects of our alliance with the British Empire have become clearly defined, the people of even the most obscure villages, to whom we have spoken, demonstrate an understanding of the role which our country will play” (*O Mundo*, 11.10.1916).

¹⁰ “Diplomacy entrusted its heralds with the task of explaining matters to those who were to be sacrificed and to their families, through the press, through rallies, and through conferences. In this manner the future soldiers of Sur-la-Lys were shouted at, until the shouts reached the bottom of their ears, that it was necessary to D.I.E for Reason! D.I.E for Law! For the small nationalities! And the future soldiers of Flanders, from that sometimes idiotic, and almost always violent harangue, understood only that, for a great number of incomprehensible reasons, they were surely going to D.I.E” (João Ferreira do Amaral 1922: 128).

¹¹ “Stirred by a living faith, the new missionaries of patriotic Glory and Honour held meetings in about eighty rural municipalities of North Portugal, resulting in the formation of organized groups in these places which, however, on account of local conditions, did not attain the success of the Central Organization” (*Junta Patriótica do Norte* 1918: xviii).

¹² (Osório 1918: 39–40). This picture of American women was contrasted with Osório’s view of Portuguese women: “Scared by the critical atmosphere, terrorized by the prospect of struggle, within their own family, which greets their first words born out of a consciousness of individuality, paralyzed by an ill-will which readily greets all acts and words that denote the aspiration to independence, interpreted as the harbingers of competition [...]” (Osório 1918: 110–11).

¹³ “Where everybody speaks the same language—our language—has the same traditions, and laughs or cries with the same feelings. You must remember this: the man with whom a Portuguese will get along best is another Portuguese” (Cortesão 1916: 8).

¹⁴ Junqueiro (1916, 1918); Casimiro (1916, 1918); Lima (1917).

¹⁵ (Cortesão 1919: 105). See also *A Capital*, which from 23.11.1917 began to speculate on the coming political crisis and the possibilities of the formation of a new cabinet.

¹⁶ For a discussion of this counter-mobilization, see chapters VIII and IX of my doctoral dissertation for Trinity College Dublin, *The Failure of the Portuguese First Republic: An Analysis of Wartime Political Mobilization* (1996).

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