

Republican Portugal

*A Political History
1910–1926*

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Preface

The purpose of this study is to provide a concise yet full treatment of Portugal's first attempt at democracy, the First Republic, 1910-26. When I began to teach the history of modern Portugal and to attempt to relate it to the history of Western Europe and to the past of Portuguese-speaking Africa, I found that no adequate, introductory treatment of the First Republic existed in any language. In this study I have attempted to combine narrative with interpretation and I have drawn upon a variety of unpublished and published materials in Portugal, Britain, and the United States.

It has not been my intention to write an exhaustive history of this brief but highly significant era. Such a work will be feasible, perhaps, only after the Portuguese official records in various ministries are made available to researchers. While I have taken care to present a narrative survey of this sixteen-year period, I have not sought to cover in detail all historical fields. Rather, I have emphasized a strangely neglected area in modern Portuguese history: political history, which comprises both political parties and the role of the military in politics. Recent foreign and Portuguese scholarship on the First Republic has emphasized the social and economic at the expense of the political. I am attempting here to redress the imbalance.

One further point about the design of this study should be made: I have placed the First Republic firmly within the context of Portuguese history since 1807. In so doing I have discussed the course of modern Portuguese history since the coming of liberalism and constitutional monarchy in the early nineteenth century, and I have provided a brief introduction to the sequel of the First Republic, the Dictatorship, 1926-74.

On 25 April 1974 the importance of the role of the military in Portuguese politics again emerged: in a swiftly executed military coup an organization of young Portuguese officers overthrew a dictatorship that had lasted forty-eight years. Portugal has now given birth to a "Second Republic," a new, democratic, highly politicized, controversial, and sometimes tense, political experiment, in some ways comparable to the First Republic. The pre-1926 republic warrants serious study, I believe, by all those who are concerned with building a new Portuguese democracy.

Since beginning this book in 1969, I have acquired many friendly debts on two continents. I am grateful to the University of New Hamp-

shire for a sabbatical leave for research and for Central University Research Fund grants in 1974 and 1976 in order to prepare the manuscript. To my colleagues in the Department of History and to Professor Robert C. Gilmore, in particular, who bore the inconvenience of a chairman who took an early sabbatical, I am grateful. I must thank Jan Snow and Catherine Bergstrom for excellent typing. I am indebted to Professor Stanley Payne, University of Wisconsin, Madison, and Professor Francis A. Dutra, University of California, Santa Barbara, for their critical readings of the manuscript and to the editors at the University of Wisconsin Press for the excellence of their editing work.

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To my wife, Katherine Wells Wheeler, I will always be most grateful. Without her encouragement this complex project could not have been completed. Any errors in this work, of course, remain my responsibility.

Durham, New Hampshire
January 1977

D. L. W.

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An Introduction to Modern Portuguese History

... a people who accomplished what we did has the moral duty to continue existing.

Attributed to Miguel Torga, 3 April 1976
(*Expresso*, 29 October 1976)

The Nation That Refused to Die

“Long Live the Republic!” shouted a few deputies as they left the halls of the First Republic’s Congress. The date was 31 May 1926. Portugal’s first experiment with a modern democracy was ending. A bloodless military coup was in progress and young soldiers were in the streets of Lisbon. Western Europe’s most unstable parliamentary regime was finally collapsing. One superlative was giving birth to another: Europe’s most unruly parliamentary system was midwife to Europe’s longest surviving authoritarian system.

The historical puzzle that is Portugal’s long past demands an attempt at explanation. Portugal is a nation that refused to die, yet her existence is constantly questioned. Some writers claim that the Portuguese are a people of paradox, that they have a penchant for self-effacement which is disarmingly combined with self-aggrandizement. The Portuguese nationality is one of Europe’s oldest, and yet her leaders and thinkers again and again have despaired. In many nations independence and existence are taken for granted. Through the centuries in Portugal they have not been. Why does little Portugal exist at all? How can a country less than one-fifth the size of Spain* remain independent and free of her much larger and more powerful neighbor in the Iberian peninsula?

Other questions arise. What was this First Republic? Why did it fall? Is there any resemblance between this unusual political phenomenon and patterns among the Portuguese today? Is the Second Republic (25

* Portugal has an area of 35,430 square miles, including the Azores and Madeira Islands; Spain, including the Balearic and Canary islands, covers 196,607 square miles.

April 1974-) following a path similar to that of its ill-fated predecessor? Just how much of a burden is Portugal's heavy past? Even today, some Portuguese thinkers hesitate to reject the old Portuguese peasant saying, "When the evil is within a people, even the strength of soap cannot wash it away!"* Portuguese were disillusioned in 1926. Some are disillusioned fifty years later.

This national anxiety that will not go away has a complex history. It surfaced first in the sixteenth century or perhaps earlier. A sense of national crisis is a unique part of the Portuguese consciousness, indeed of the very nationality itself. This sense of crisis was a problem in the late nineteenth century and reached a new intensity in 1926. Nor has it gone away. Today some Portuguese thinkers are again concerned about the future of a people who have refused to be beaten by adversity or absorbed by their larger neighbor. In the 1970s a sense of despair, a national inferiority complex, a lack of pride, a dearth of confidence, a collective identity crisis have reemerged. Some of Portugal's finest minds are asking the old questions in a new crisis. National anxiety is playing its continuing role in Portuguese politics. A profound sense of *déjà vu* regarding a familiar malaise is clearly expressed in a recent article by António Quadros in a major Portuguese newspaper.

In the identity crisis, in the ignorant nonsense of the Fatherland rejected, in the vile and suicidal self-vilification of which many now seem to partake, there is a crisis of nationality which is more dangerous for Portuguese survival than our economic problem, the totalitarian threat, or the temptations of *golpismo*.† It is the spiritual corruption which comes from within. It is the mental poison of which Fernando Pessoa speaks.‡ It is the national suicide whose antidote urgently requires preparation.¹

Lest the reader also despair after this, the historian may provide counsel: historical perspective is required. To understand how the forty-eight-year dictatorship gave rise to the new Portugal of the 1970s, one must analyze the prologue to the dictatorship—the First Republic. In fact Portugal's past is replete with prologues. In examining her history, therefore, one must begin at the beginning, at the start of a nationality that, given the choice on several occasions over eight centuries, has refused to die.

* The original words of the proverb are: "Quando o mal é de nação . . . nem a poder de sabão!"

† *Golpismo* is a tendency to military coups; for full definition see Glossary.

‡ In this same article, the poet Fernando Pessoa is quoted as writing: "A nation which habitually thinks poorly of itself will end up by deserving the self-image which it first formed. Mentally, it poisons itself."

Portugal to 1820

In the middle of the twelfth century, Portugal first became independent of Castile and Leon. Castile and, later, a unified Spain, were a constant threat to the small country's independence. Although Portugal and Castile were linked by history, kinship, economics, language, and ethnic features, and thus similarities between the Iberian nations appeared to outnumber the differences, Portugal chose to go her own way. She expanded from her tiny foothold in western Iberia to build the first great European seaborne empire. Anticipating Spanish expansion by nearly a century, the small nation pioneered European explorations, discoveries, and colonization in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. During what the Portuguese call the "Marvelous Century," roughly 1415-1515, Portugal was a world power. In the middle of the sixteenth century a severe crisis gripped the country. Her hold on her overseas, largely coastal, empire deteriorated. At home, Castilianization deepened. In 1578 young King Sebastião, an impetuous imperialist, was killed with much of his army in the battle of Alácer Quibir in Morocco. The result was a fatally weakened country. In 1580 Spain under King Philip II invaded and annexed Portugal; Spanish rule continued until 1640, when a revolution restored the nation's precarious independence. Not until 1668, in a treaty with Spain, did Portugal win some assurance that the Spanish threat would abate. Still, the "Spanish menace," as expressed in literature, history, politics, and even sermons in church, has profoundly influenced the history of Portugal.

Lisbon dominated the official life of Portugal, while the rural masses remained largely unaffected by political changes. In the provinces, where agriculture greatly declined during the centuries following the Era of the Discoveries, peasants continued to live in their traditional society consisting of ancient customs, patriarchal habits, and communitarian activity. Indeed, rural Portugal remained a passive backdrop to coastal Lisbon.² Although Évora, Coimbra, and Oporto enjoyed prominence during the premodern era, Lisbon was usually the dominant beneficiary of what new ideas, developments, and imports arrived at Lusitanian shores. Even before the crisis of the nineteenth century, tensions were evident between Lisbon and the rest of the country.

Homogeneity of society and lack of differentiation among the ruling groups characterized premodern as well as modern history. Although there are distinct regional and provincial differences between Minho and Algarve, tiny Portugal did not have the severe cleavages and centrifugal forces found in neighboring Spain. In Portugal, with the exception of Lisbon, and in some cases, Oporto, no separatist regional