EL JORNAL PORTUGUÊS Y LA F<mark>ALACIA DE LA</mark> NEUTRALIDAD PORTUGUESA EN EL CINE PORTUGUÉS

THE JORNAL PORTUGUÊS AND THE FALLACY OF PORTUGAL'S NEUTRALITY IN PORTUGUESE FILM

Resumen

En este ensayo analizará el *Jornal Português*, el noticiero oficial que complementaba la proyección de películas nacionales e internacionales, y su papel en la mediación de la neutralidad, que contribuyó a convertir a Salazar en el padre protector de la nación, que impedía al portugués experimentar los horrores del conflicto. Pero también intentaremos revelar cómo la neutralidad de Portugal fue relativa y funcionó, mientras que fue conveniente para el país, los aliados y las fuerzas del Eje.

Palabras Clave

António Oliveira Salazar, Cine portugués, Jornal Português de Actualidades Filmadas, Neutralidad en la II Guerra Mundial.

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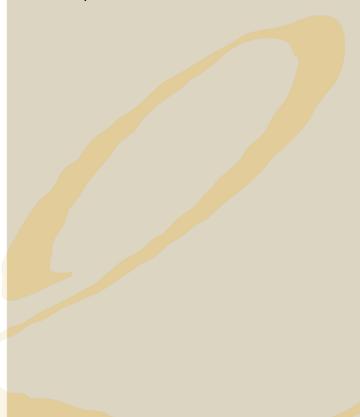
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Abstract

In this essay, I analyze the *Jornal Português*, the official non-mandatory newsreel that complemented the screening of national and international films, with the aim of demonstrating how the mediation of neutrality in World War II contributed to converting Salazar into the protective father of the nation, sparing the Portuguese people from experiencing the horrors of conflict. Furthermore, this also reveals how relative Portugal's neutrality proved since it was convenient not only to the country but also to the Allies and the Axis forces.

Key Words

António Oliveira Salazar, Portuguese Film, Jornal Português de Actualidades Filmadas, Neutrality in World War II.



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n 2015, as the world commemorated the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, the corresponding framework of the remembrance politics continues to be shaped primarily by the perspective of the then belligerent states. This situation proves quite odd for various reasons. Firstly, the world map has been considerably redesigned in the post-war era, which in itself might justify a more diverse approach to the past. Secondly, many nations ceased to exist due to the new division of power among the victors and the vanquished with new nations emerging onto the world scene. Thirdly, the huge population flows before, during and after the conflict drove novel types of cultural and political allegiances that impacted on the configuration of cultural identities. This latter aspect becomes particularly interesting when second and third generation descendants of those who experienced the conflict revisit the past.

Master narratives on and conventional memories of World War II mostly portray the conflict from the perspective of perpetrators and victims, winners and losers, tending to devalue or to push to the margins the memories of those European countries that opted to remain "neu-

tral" as was the case of Portugal, Spain¹, Ireland, Switzerland, Sweden, and the Vatican, despite the fact that they all faced the consequences of the war in their own diverse ways. Whilst neutrality was experienced differently by each of the aforementioned countries, in response to their very specific historical, political and economic contexts, neutral countries such as Portugal, Spain, Ireland and Sweden curiously only took on peripheral roles within the scope of constructing the European project in the aftermath of the conflict. This fact invites a reconsideration of representations of neutrality during and after World War II at the national and European levels so we may estimate how such discourses on neutrality have shaped the collective politics of remembrance, and to what extent the official mediation of neutrality reveals the fallacy of the latter in conjunction with its ambiguities.

Within the range of cinematic representations of neutrality in Portugal, and just how skilfully they were manipulated by Salazar's regime to transform the political leader into a myth, I will here focus my attention on the *Jornal Português de Actualidades Filmadas*² [*The Portuguese Journal of Newsreels*], the official non-mandatory

newsreel that complemented the screening of national and international films in Portugal³. Starting with a brief reflection on how the politics of neutrality were configured, my aim involves demonstrating how the mediation of neutrality through the *Jornal Português* on the one hand served the regime through nurturing the conversion of Salazar into the protective father of the nation, a kind of messiah saving the Portuguese people from experiencing the horrors of the conflict then devastating Europe, and, on the other hand, conveying how relative Portugal's neutrality proved given its convenience to the country, the Allies and the Axis forces.

Salazar was a very skilful politician, and knew that consolidating his Estado Novo (New State hereafter) regime depended on his ability to prevent Portugal from getting directly involved in the conflict. The trauma of the disastrous participation of Portugal in World War I had definitely not healed by the late 1930s, and the national pride would be seriously damaged should another similar setback once again happen. Moreover, Portugal's involvement in the conflict would jeopardise Salazar's economic measures designed to cleanse public finances since well-equipped and duly prepared armed forces were essential to prevailing in such a conflict, and, despite efforts to reform the sector, the Portuguese state remained unable to compete with the major players on the international scene. Another fundamental reason stemmed from the awareness that trade with the colonies would be seriously affected at a time when such trade relationships proved crucial not only to guaranteeing the supplies the country needed in a period of severe shortages but also to fostering, whenever possible, international trade (both with the Allies and the Axis forces). At the political level, after having handled his support for Franco during the Spanish Civil War⁴ with extreme care, Salazar knew that, on the one hand, the latter conflict served as a laboratory for German forces to test out new weapons and military strategies, with the threat of an invasion of Portugal and the spread of communist ideals proving a real possibility⁵. On the other hand, Salazar also feared that some of Franco's supporters might demand Spain annex Portugal⁶. This meant Salazar perceived maintaining good and cooperative relationships with Franco with a view to protecting the country's borders, and ultimately the Peninsula's sovereignty, should the Axis powers decide to cross the Pyrenees, as a fundamental goal. The threat of an invasion also considerably worried the Allies bearing in mind the geostrategic position of Portugal, and the belief prevailing that whoever controlled the Vigo-Canary Islands-Azores triangle would be in a privileged position to win the conflict⁷. In sum, Salazar knew he was a key player on the international scene, and did not hesitate to resort to every available means (e.g. the old Anglo-Portuguese Alliance, cooperation with Franco during and after the Spanish Civil War, the opportunity to increase trade relationships with the Axis in a period of blockades) to defend Portugal's interests8.

Close reading of a booklet written by Luiz Teixeira and published in 1945 illustrates how the politics of neutrality were configured even before the outbreak of World War II. Clearly in keeping with the ideological line of Salazar's dictatorship, and despite being rather paradoxical, the title of Teixeira's booklet summarizes the spirit of Portugal's neutrality: "Portugal e a Guerra. Neutralidade Colaborante" ["Portugal and the War. Cooperative Neutrality"9]. What might seem somewhat shocking to a 21st century reader is just how neutrality, which should presuppose impartiality, was clearly biased in accordance with the interests of the international actors predominating in the late 1930s and early 1940s, and how this period considered that fact natural. The interest of Teixeira's text arises from the didactic summary he provides of the main external political policy guidelines fol-

lowed by Salazar: "aliança inglêsa, solidariedade peninsular e ligação íntima, (...), com o Brasil"10. We should point out that Teixeira subtly omits references to cooperation with the Axis powers, and Germany in particular, which becomes easily understood when considering the ideological allegiances of the text and its date of publication as by 1945 it was already clear that the Allies would win the war. This correspondingly does much to explain why the author opted to throw the emphasis on the efforts made by Portugal and Spain to help the Allies. Two interpretations seem pertinent on analysis of this issue. On the one hand, by highlighting the peninsular peace and the treaty of friendship and non-aggression with Spain, the author stresses how Portugal's and Spain's neutralities proved mutually reciprocal, and how the Allies viewed this reciprocity favourably. On the other hand, this helps pave the way for discussions over the strategic position of the Azores and the presence of Portuguese troops there to protect the region. Salazar allowed the Allies to use facilities in the Azores in 1943 with this authorisation proving decisive in the defeat of the Axis, therefore transforming Portugal's neutrality into a service done to the world in general, and Britain in particular, since Portugal was able to protect part of the Atlantic that could not be solely controlled by British surveillance. What Teixeira's analysis suggests, and it is worth recalling that his ideas reflected the regime's interests, is that Portugal's neutrality represented an asset to the Iberian Peninsula, to Europe and to the Atlantic, and therefore transforming the nation into an important player on the global scene despite not having engaged in conflict.

Having sketched the historical context of Portugal's external politics in the late 1930s and into the 1940s, we may better understand why the *Jornal Português* contains an interesting sample of the manipulative dynamics of Salazar's regime in its ideological dissemination of information. Firstly, the newsreels clearly demon-

strate how the New State became influenced by the imagery and the gestures of the authoritarian regimes of that period, and that depended, among other factors, on the cult of the leader (consider, for instance, the depiction of demonstrations during which people pay tribute to Salazar, the importance given to youth movements, and the ways in which the education system perpetuated a certain representation of the dictator). Secondly, the *Jornal Português* constitutes an important source for understanding the regime's mediation of news representation as regards the course of ongoing events.

We would therefore stress the key propagandistic role played by censorship within the framework of an authoritarian regime characterised by permanent distrust since the external description of events might shape progress in the conflict on the battleground, and was internally essential to maintaining political order and restraining any attempt at political opposition. Maria do Carmo Piçarra¹¹, in her thorough examination of the *Jornal Português*, emphasises the dominance of the propagandistic component to the detriment of the informative dimension when summarising the contents and form of newsreels during World War II:

Durante a II Guerra Mundial o Jornal Português foi usado intensamente para fazer a propaganda da situação política e social 'privilegiada' de que gozava o país e enaltecer a ordem vigente. Sintomaticamente, não há notícias sobre as frentes de batalha nem sobre o evoluir do conflito e as alusões à guerra são sempre no sentido de sublinhar a paz nacional e a acção do Ministro dos Negócios Estrangeiros, Oliveira Salazar, na manutenção da neutralidade portuguesa¹².

In her analysis of the thematic *Jornal Português* repertoire, Piçarra¹³ draws attention to the fact that in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War, and throughout World War II, coverage of military issues remained fairly dominant. National issues related to economics and politics became

the secondary themes addressed, followed by religious topics, and events related to sports and culture¹⁴. According to Piçarra, the lack of thematic diversity resulted from the aforementioned propagandistic and uninformative nature of the newsreels since prominence was attributed to key personalities of the regime as well as major events celebrating the New State and the singularity/exception of Portugal when compared to other nations (that is, while Europe was getting destroyed, in Portugal, there was still reason to celebrate the great deeds of Portuguese people down through history).

The Jornal Português illustrates how the fallacy of Portugal's neutral position came in for delineation even before Hitler invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, as events between March 1938 and July 1939 demonstrate15 with Portugal frequently welcoming military missions from Germany, Britain, Spain, and Italy, with squadrons and vessels visited by the President and other important political representatives. After the outbreak of conflict, military issues and events related to the Portuguese armed forces and external policies continued to receive prominence, for example in issue number 13 (February 7, 1940, reporting the arrival in Lisbon of castaways from a Dutch vessel torpedoed by a German submarine); 15 (May 20, 1940, when Air Base 2 was inaugurated in Ota); 17 (June 29, 1940, on the occasion of celebrations of the anniversary of the May 28 coup, praising the role of the Portuguese army); 22 (November 29, 1940, providing coverage of military exercises); 26 (May 29, 1941, when another contingent of Portuguese troops departed from the harbor of Rocha do Conde de Óbidos in Lisbon for Cape Verde to strengthen the military objectives of the empire); 27 (July 4, 1941, reporting on the departure of a battalion to the Azores to guarantee Portugal's sovereignty and defend the government's neutrality); 32 (May 27, 1942, describing the exchange of belligerent nation diplomats in Lisbon, due to the neutral position

of Portugal and its international prestige); 36 (January 9, 1943, when the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs visited Lisbon and made the announcement of the Peninsular Bloc characterized as a "bastion of peace in a contentious world"); 40 (October 2, 1943, depicting the new army parade with twelve thousand men, high ranking politicians and diplomats representing the belligerent nations); 45 (May 26, 1944, when there was an exchange of German and Brazilian citizens); 46 (July 11, 1944, covering an air force parade in the Ota Military Base); 48 (September 2, 1944, when the second parade of the new Portuguese army took place, with the event attended by the President, Salazar and military representatives of belligerent nations who came together in a "friendly and neutral land"); and 49 (December 11, 1944, which was a special edition dedicated to military maneuvers). In May 1945, the war on the Western Europe front ended, and issue number 54 (December 21, 1945) portrayed the parade of the Portuguese army in Lisbon together with the Brazilian expeditionary force that had fought in Italy.

The aforementioned selection of issues, based on the summary proposed by José de Matos-Cruz (1989), suggests that, despite the neutral positioning during World War II, the Portuguese government (i) did not overlook investment in the armed forces (suggesting that, should it be necessary, the Portuguese Armed Forces would be ready to protect the nation, a suggestion that did not however reflect reality); (ii) maintained good relationships with belligerent nations since their official representatives experienced moments of formal conviviality at events and ceremonies organized by the Portuguese government; and (iii) served both the opposite sides given Portugal was perceived as a neutral international arena as illustrated, among other examples, by the exchange of diplomats. In other words, Salazar's regime to some extent deployed the Jornal Português as a tool, on the one hand, to convey messages to

belligerent nations about Portugal's availability to cooperate with all sides, and especially whichever looked to be attaining supremacy in different phases of the conflict (even if the Portuguese Armed Forces were not prepared to fight). On the other hand, the newsreels served to transmit a message of trust in the government from the Portuguese people through the various events celebrating national grandiosity (e.g. the centennial celebrations, and the Portuguese World Exhibition of 1940), which also represented a way of contributing to the alienation of the people. In visual terms, the true and cruel reality of battlegrounds was not shown in the same way as there were no images portraying the difficulties Portuguese people had long since endured, and that were considerably aggravated by the effects of the conflict, such as rationing, more poverty, and hunger. The Portuguese World Exhibition is perhaps the single best symbol epitomizing what might be termed the "Lusitanian illusion" as discussed by João Canijo in his 2010 documentary¹⁶.

The propagandistic dimension of the Jornal Português attains its acme with issue number 52 (May 22, 1945) that falls beyond the aforementioned selection as it does not directly relate to military issues. On May 19, a few days after the capitulation of German forces, there was a demonstration attended by thousands of people in support of Salazar and President Carmona in Lisbon's Terreiro do Paço and seeking to show their gratitude for peace in Portugal. While in previous issues of the Jornal Portuquês, Salazar was often referred to as having attended ceremonies with dignitaries within portrayals of national life, this demonstration acquires a particular meaning. Immediately after the war that annihilated the Hitler and Mussolini regimes, there was a perceived need to consolidate Salazar's power given the end of World War II would inaugurate a new political cycle in Europe. It is curious to observe that the

only two authoritarian regimes to survive the war (except for Stalin's but who was decisive both to ending the conflict, and to redesigning spheres of influence post-1945) were Salazar's and Franco's and that would endure into the early 1970s. In May 1945, Salazar probably could not anticipate the temporal proximity of decolonization processes, and a threat that would not only haunt him until the end of his life but also push him into the Colonial War. However, as such a gifted and clever politician, he did know that, as a consequence of the war, the New State would also be entering a new phase. Therefore, guaranteeing the people's support, and repressing the opposition, represented crucial objectives to the regime. Since Maria do Carmo Piçarra¹⁷ has already analysed this issue of the Jornal Português, I would only like to draw attention to three facets in order to stress its propagandistic content.

The first interrelates with the voice-over that introduces the report by making reference to the Portuguese people's "debt" toward their head of state, when war once more ravaged the world and "Portugal escaped unharmed from this tremendous catastrophe without disrespecting its secular commitments, and harming the national honor". The "debt" reference is afterwards complemented by comparing Portugal's neutrality to a kind of miracle performed by Salazar, which thus clearly contributes to his deification.

The second corresponds to the newsreel section in which the voice-over makes reference to the singularity of cinema as a privileged tool for depicting the truth of this demonstration:

Por isso, no Terreiro do Paço, diante das janelas do ministério das Finanças, o primeiro gabinete de Salazar como ministro, se juntou a mais numerosa multidão que jamais viu Lisboa, e o que então se passou ninguém pode contar melhor do que o cinema pois basta ver e ouvir.¹⁸

This excerpt translates the belief of António Ferro (the man behind Salazar's ideological propaganda machine until the end of the 1940s) in the potential of cinema as a propaganda tool, and that he would openly acknowledge some time later, in a public speech in August 1946 entitled "The Greatness and Misery of Portuguese Cinema":

Mais do que a leitura, mais do que a música, mais do que a linguagem radiofónica a imagem penetra, insinua-se, sem quase se dar por isso, na alma do homem. (...) O espectador de cinema é um ser passivo, mais desarmado do que o leitor ou do que o simples ouvinte.¹⁹

The third aspect interrelates with Salazar's words that defined that demonstration as a moment of celebration of the "patriotic satisfaction". Salazar thanked the Portuguese people for having done "their part", praising the people's "work", "order", "discipline", and "sacrifices"; in sum, some of the basic tenets of the New State deemed necessary for continuous cultivation.

Besides drawing attention to the ideological purpose of the newsreel, its pedagogic dimension deserves due emphasis. Despite the fact that the voice-over script and Salazar's speech are simultaneously rather short, simple and clearly targeted, the succession of images portraying

the national flag, the enthusiastic crowd cheering Salazar, Lisbon's most important historical square completely packed out, and demonstration banners are all very eloquent and impressive and more effective than any words.

Even while measuring the reception of the episodes of the Jornal Português has not hitherto proven possible, its reception is likely to have been limited²⁰. Cinema was mainly popular in urban areas but even here many people could not afford to go to the movies. Moreover, even when cinema was taken out to villages, its reach was probably not as wide as António Ferro and filmmakers connoted with the regime would have liked. Despite the only relative level of efficacy of the Jornal Português, the truth remains that these newsreels constitute important documents not only for understanding the visual indoctrination of the Portuguese people under the New State, but also identifying the meanders of Portugal's questionable neutrality during World War II. Besides all this, they also help understand why for older generations of Portuguese people Salazar remains remembered first and foremost as the man who saved Portugal from the war²¹. Through deconstructing the underlying ideological meanings of official newsreels, we become able to re-signify the visual construction of both the Estado Novo and of Salazar as a messianic figure.

NOTAS

¹Spain did not declare its neutrality, but it positioned itself as a non-belligerent country. In any case, due to the non-definition of its allegiance to either side in the conflict until the end of the war, I include it among the 'neutral' countries.

²LOPES RIBEIRO, António (dir.). *Jornal Português de Actualidades Filmadas*. Lisboa: SPAC, 1938-1951.

³On the *Jornal Português de Actualidades Filmadas*, see, among others, Heloísa Paulo (2000), José de Matos-Cruz (1989), and Maria do Carmo Piçarra (2006). I henceforth refer to the *Jornal Português de Actualidades Filmadas* by the expression *Jornal Português*. I am here using Piçarra's translation for the newsreels.

According to Maria do Carmo Piçarra (2006: 131, 136, 138), the *Jornal Português* corresponded to the first Portuguese monthly newsreel with a continuous production, even though somewhat irregular (an average of 7 issues per year). It addressed national issues, even though it also included news from other official newsreels, such as, for example, the Spanish NO-DO (whose screening was mandatory). The newsreel was shown as a complement to fictional features along with foreign newsreels, documentaries and short animation films. It was first premiered in 1938, and 95 issues were produced through to 1951 before being replaced by a newsreel following a similar pattern entitled "Imagens de Portugal" in 1953 ("Images of Portugal") (Heloísa Paulo, 2000: 106).

⁴Salazar feared the communist threat should the Republican side win the Spanish Civil War.

⁵As Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses points out in his book (2009), Portugal faced an Axis threat between 1939 and 1942, and an Allied threat between 1943 and 1945. On the operation codenamed "Felix" (that planned a potential invasion of Portugal by Germany through Spain), see, among others, Waller (1996) and Payne (2008). On Portugal's neutral position during World War II, see Lochery (2011).

⁶According to Meneses (2009: 257-258), when Hitler ordered the launch of Operation Barbarossa, the participation of the Falange's Blue Division on the Eastern Front represented a serious threat to Portugal, should Franco decide to openly support the Axis. This might pave the way for a Spanish invasion and eventual annexation of Portugal.

TEIXEIRA, Luiz. Portugal e a Guerra. Neutralidade Colaborante. Lisbon: Ática, 1945, pag. 13. Were the Axis forces to seize control of the Peninsula and conquer Gibraltar as the Germans planned, Great Britain's access (as well as the Allies') to the Mediterranean would become impossible.

⁸For an overall view of Portugal during the Second World War from the political, economic, social and ideological perspectives, see, among many, Filipe Meneses (Op. cit.), António Louçã (2000), António Telo (1991), Fernando Rosas (1990), and Luiz Teixeira (1945).

⁹From now onwards, unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

10"Anglo-alliance, peninsular solidarity and intimate relationship, (...), with Brazil". TEIXEIRA, Luiz. Portugal e a Guerra... Op. cit., pag. 5.

¹¹PIÇARRA, Maria do Carmo. *Salazar Vai ao Cinema. O Jornal Português de Actualidades Filmadas*. Coimbra: Minerva Coimbra, 2006, pag. 135.

¹² "During WWII, the Jornal Português was widely used to make propaganda about the 'privileged' political and social situation of the country, and to praise the regime. Symptomatically, there is no news either about the situations on the battle fronts or about the ebbs and flows in the conflict. Moreover, the references to war are in line with the need to stress the importance of national peace and the diligences made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Oliveira Salazar, in the maintenance of Portuguese neutrality".

¹³PIÇARRA, Maria do Carmo. *Salazar Vai ao Cinema...* Op. cit., pags. 166-167.

¹⁴MATOS-CRUZ, José de. "Portugal – O Cinema de Guerra". En: VV.AA. *Portugal na Segunda Guerra Mundial. Contributos para uma Reavaliação*. Lisbon: Publicações Dom Quixote, 1989, pags. 236-244, makes a list with a summary of the main editions of the *Jornal Português* between 1938 and 1946 (covering 60 issues). During this period, from just before until shortly after World War II, military topics clearly dominate the news.

¹⁵For a comprehensive view of military reports in the indicated period, see José de Matos-Cruz. Ibídem., pags. 236-238.

¹⁶See CANIJO, João (dir.). Fantasia Lusitana. Lisbon: Periferia Filmes, 2010.

¹⁷PIÇARRA, Maria do Carmo. Salazar Vai ao Cinema... Op. cit., pags. 213-216.

¹⁸"Thus, at Terreiro do Paço, in front of the windows of the Ministry of Finance, where the first office of Salazar as a minister was located, a crowd that Lisbon had never seen before gathered, and what then took place no one can tell better than the movies, since it is only necessary to look and hear."

¹⁹António Ferro, in the speech "Grandeza e Miséria do Cinema Português" ["Greatness and Misery of Portuguese Film"], collected in the volume FERRO, António. *Teatro e Cinema*. Lisbon: SNI, 1950 *apud* Eduardo Geada, 1977, pag. 82. On the role of António Ferro and the importance of his "Politics of the Spirit", see, among others, VIEIRA, Patricia. *Portuguese Film, 1930-1960: The Staging of the New State Regime* (trans. by Ashley Caja). New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

"More than literature, more than music, more than the radio, image penetrates, subtly insinuates in the human soul. (...) The spectator of movies is a passive being, more defenseless than the reader or the sheer listener".

²⁰See Maria do Carmo Piçarra quoting of José Bénard da Costa's opinion (PIÇARRA, Maria do Carmo. *Salazar Vai ao Cinema...* Op. cit., pags. 137).

²¹Other bibliographic sources: GEADA, Eduardo. *O Imperialismo e o Fascismo no Cinema*. Lisbon: Moraes Editores, 1976; LOCHERY, Neill. *Lisbon: War in the Shadows of the City of Light, 1939-1945*. New York, Public Affairs; LOUÇÃ, António. *Hitler e Salazar. Comércio em Tempos de Guerra (1940-1944)*. Lisbon: Terramar, 2000; MENESES, Filipe. *Salazar: A Political Biography*. New York: Enigma Books, 2009; PAULO, Heloísa. "Documentarismo e Propaganda. As Imagens e Sons do Regime". En: REIS TORGAL, Luís. *O Cinema sob o Olhar de Salazar*. Lisbon, 2000, pags. 92-116; PAYNE, Stanley. *Franco and Hitler. Spain, Germany and World War II*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008; ROSAS, Fernando. *Portugal entre a Paz e a Guerra 1939-1945*. Lisbon: Editorial Estampa, 1990; TELO, António. *Portugal na Segunda Guerra (1941-1945)*. Lisbon: Vega, 1991, 2 vols.; WALLER, John. *The Unseen War in Europe: Espionage and Conspiracy in the Second World War*. New York: Random House, 1996.