

António de Oliveira Salazar and the British

by

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On the 50th anniversary of the death of Salazar, this article briefly considers his life and then discusses the activities that brought him into conflict with the British.

Salazar: the man

António de Oliveira Salazar was born in the village of Santa Comba Dão, near Vimieiro in the Viseu District on 28 April 1889, to a relatively poor family. The young António was originally earmarked to become a priest, and from 1900 to 1908 he studied at the Viseu Seminary. Although he did not end up going into the Church, he remained profoundly Catholic and the influence of conservative Catholic thought could arguably be seen in his subsequent personal conduct and in the policies of his governments.¹ Although his policies underwent many changes during his rule, Salazar always remained paternalistic and authoritarian in nature, as well as being an imperialist with a strong commitment to maintaining Portugal's colonies.



In 1910 Salazar went to Coimbra University to study law, eventually specialising in the economic and financial aspects of law. Graduating in 1914, he immediately came to attention outside of the university due to his exceptional mark of 19 out of 20. He then took a teaching position at the same university and was awarded a Doctorate in 1918. In 1921, he was reluctantly persuaded to stand for election to Parliament. He appeared only once in the Chamber and then returned to Coimbra, appalled by the nature of party politics.² The Republican period 1911-1926 was one of total chaos in Portugal: there were nine presidents, 44 governments, 25 uprisings or attempted military coups, and three temporary dictatorships. One president, Sidónio Pais, was assassinated in 1918.^{3,4} Groups of armed civilians were infiltrating the military, universities, workers' unions and even Catholic student organisations. Most political parties had their own clandestine armed groups.⁵

After the "coup d'état" of 28 May 1926, the new government was casting around for experts to help it run the country and approached several Coimbra University professors. Salazar briefly joined the government as Minister of Finance. He spent five days in Lisbon but then resigned after his proposals to control the country's enormous public debt were rejected. He took the next train back to Coimbra, arguing that he could not take on the task unless given full responsibility. Several times between 1926 and 1928, Salazar, who had continued to attract attention with articles on the economy in the Catholic newspaper *As Novidades*, turned down the job of Finance Minister. However, with the country under the threat of an imminent financial collapse, he finally agreed to become finance minister on 26 April 1928, after Óscar Carmona had been elected president. It is clear that Salazar, unlike Hitler, Mussolini and Franco, with whom

¹ Hugh Kay, *Salazar and Modern Portugal*, Hawthorn Books, 1970

² Neill Lochery, *Lisbon: War in the Shadows of the City of Light, 1939-45* Hachette, UK

³ Stephen J. Lee. *The European Dictatorships 1918-1945*. Routledge, 2000.

⁴ Pedro S.F. de Avillez. Portugal and the 1st World War. BHSP Annual Report 2018, Vol. 45.
<https://www.bhspportugal.org/library/articles/portugal-and-the-1st-world-war>

⁵ *ibid*

he is sometimes compared, was not a man who was initially seeking power. He appeared to take on the job with the greatest reluctance and was quoted as saying that it was a “duty dictated by my conscience”.⁶

Unlike during his previous brief incumbency, he was given considerable power by Carmona. As British diplomats noted, Salazar tried, almost unaided, to turn the economy around. He personally went through the books of each government department to see where improvements and savings could be made. He quickly succeeded in placing the public finances on a sound footing, which led to economic growth in the 1930s. Even when Prime Ministers changed, he remained in place as Minister of Finance before he himself was appointed Prime Minister on 5 July 1932. The subsequent acceptance by much of the population of the *Estado Novo*, which came into being in 1933 led by Carmona and Salazar, can be attributed at least in part to these economic successes.⁷ Motivated by the memories of the chaotic battles between political parties in the Republican period, the *Estado Novo* adopted a corporatist approach in which different sectors, including labour unions, were organised into representative “interest groups” or *grêmios*.

Salazar had a considerable capacity for working long hours, in part as a result of not having a family and being uninterested in the social events of the Lisbon elite. As one of his academic colleagues put it: “A professor he was and a professor he remains. He does nothing without careful consideration: he will not be hurried or disturbed.”⁸ This rigorous academic approach would later lead to problems with the British, who viewed his slow decision-making as less that of a professor and more that of a procrastinator. He also had a considerable ability to attend to detail. This enabled him to take on, simultaneously, the roles of war, foreign affairs, and finance ministers, thus centralising power in his hands. In time, however, this overwork, his inability to delegate and his need to consider all issues at length would have repercussions for his health and performance.

Salazar survived an assassination attempt on 4 July 1937 while on his way to Mass at a private chapel in a friend's house. As he stepped out of his car, a bomb exploded only three metres away. He was untouched, but the explosion led to his chauffeur becoming deaf.

Described by *Life* magazine as “everything that most Portuguese are not—calm, silent, ascetic, puritanical, a glutton for work, cool to women”,⁹ and by the obituary in the *New York Times* as “ascetic rather than exuberant; aloof rather than gregarious; professorial rather than demagogic; understated rather than ostentatious”,¹⁰ Salazar was a frugal man. He didn’t use heating and in winter would work covered by a rug, wearing his overcoat. This simple approach was widely reported in Portuguese newspapers to try to instil similar values into the ordinary Portuguese.¹¹ In many cases they had little choice but to follow his example, as Portugal remained a very poor country, despite a decade of growth prior to WW2.

For much of his life, a woman from his home region, Maria de Jesus Caetano Freire, known as Dona Maria, served as his secretary and housekeeper, guarding access to him, and keeping him abreast of popular gossip. She had worked for him in Coimbra and stayed with him throughout his time as Prime Minister and until his death. Most observers believe that their close relationship was platonic. His reputation as a cold and

⁶ Michael Derrick, *The Portugal of Salazar*, Campion Books, New York, 1939,

<https://archive.org/details/portugalofsalaza011716mbp/page/n5/mode/2up>

⁷ Lochery, *op cit*

⁸ Derrick, *op cit*

⁹ *Life*, 29 July 1940, pp 65-72.

<https://books.google.pt/books?id=xz8EAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>

¹⁰ Alden Whitman. *Antonio Salazar: A Quiet Autocrat Who Held Power in Portugal for 40 Years*. New York Times, July 28, 1970

¹¹ Lochery, *op cit*

aloof man was belied by his affection for two children of a relative of Dona Maria, who would sometimes stay with her. He reportedly played with them and told them stories.^{12,13}

He never married, although he was linked to several women, despite the image, presented by state censorship, of being the equivalent of a monk, removed from female temptations. His first love apparently ended when her parents forbade the girl to see him because of his humble origins. However, he had several relationships while he was at Coimbra University and subsequently. His last was with Christine Garnier, a married French journalist who had visited Portugal in 1961 with the idea of writing a book on Salazar. She travelled backwards and forwards from France on many occasions and wrote a book, *Férias com Salazar*.¹⁴

British relations with Salazar

Portuguese Neutrality

At the beginning of WW2, Portugal followed a policy that has best been described as “undeclared neutrality”. This had wide support from the population from both sides of the political divide. Most people still remembered well the tragic involvement of the country in WW1, when so many Portuguese troops were lost at the Battle of La Lys,¹⁵ and the resultant political instability. The neutrality policy also recognised the weakness of Portugal’s military forces; the country had no real means of defence.

Both Britain and Germany indicated that neutrality was acceptable as long as Portugal really was neutral and didn’t surreptitiously attempt to favour the other side. Britain was particularly concerned that invoking the Anglo-Portuguese Alliance to force Portugal to take the British side would encourage Spain to join the War, thereby altering the whole course of the War to the advantage of the Axis.¹⁶ However, the excellent strategic locations of Portugal and the Azores, combined with the fact that Portugal was a major source of wolfram (tungsten), which was required by both sides, but particularly Germany, meant that a country previously regarded as relatively insignificant suddenly assumed a new importance.

Therefore, throughout WW2, Salazar had to play a balancing act to avoid the possibility of a German invasion or, at the least, aerial bombing, if he moved too close to the British. He had been advised by Britain in May 1941 that Britain would be unable to assist were Germany to attack.¹⁷ At the same time, he could not appear too supportive of the Axis for fear of retaliation by the British. On top of this, there was the constant fear in Lisbon that Spain might invade Portugal, even though Salazar was friendly with the Spanish dictator Franco, had supported him in the Spanish Civil War by allowing Germany to send men, planes, tanks, and munitions via Lisbon, and had done nothing to stop Portuguese volunteers joining the Nationalist cause. Immediately after the Civil War, Franco and Salazar signed a mutual non-aggression pact. Salazar obtained the approval of Britain, before he signed.^{18,19} Salazar was also concerned that opposition forces in Portugal would use WW2 as an opportunity to attempt to overthrow him. The issue of the country’s colonies also came into play: by taking sides, Portugal considered it could jeopardise its overseas territories, a factor

¹² António de Oliveira Salazar. https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ant%C3%B3nio_de_Oliveira_Salazar

¹³ *Life*, op cit

¹⁴ Felícia Cabrita, *Os Amores de Salazar*, published by A Esfera do Livros, 2006

¹⁵ Richard Hartwell, *Portugal at La Lys in WW1*. British Historical Society of Portugal Annual Report 40. 2013
<https://www.bhspportugal.org/library/articles/portugal-at-la-lys-in-ww1>

¹⁶ Joaquim da Costa Leite. *Neutrality by Agreement: Portugal and the British Alliance in World War II*. American University International Law Review, 14:1. 1998

¹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁸ Encyclopaedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Antonio-de-Oliveira-Salazar>

¹⁹ Lynn Booker. *A fine balance - Portugal in World War II*. Algarve History Association, 2014.

<https://www.algarvehistoryassociation.com/en/portugal/125-a-fine-balance-portugal-in-world-war-ii>

clearly brought home when Neville Chamberlain reportedly offered Angola to Germany at the time of the negotiations that came to be known in Britain as the “appeasement”.²⁰

This balancing act had a considerable effect on Salazar. During the War his hair turned grey and he developed large black bags under his eyes. Diplomats reported increasing fits of bad temper and the British ambassador warned London that he was becoming mentally unstable.²¹

The role Salazar played in ensuring Spanish neutrality has been much debated. Early in the War, the British certainly used Salazar to relay messages to Franco.²² It was, of course, clearly in Portugal’s interest that Spain should not become involved in the War. The British felt that the role Salazar was playing was vital in keeping Spain out of the War at a time when the Germans were making gains. As a result, Britain organised three “tokens of appreciation”. Initially, in September 1940, Winston Churchill wrote to Salazar to thank him. Next, Oxford University, presumably under pressure from the Government, conferred an honorary degree upon Salazar. The awarding committee travelled to Coimbra University to make the presentation. Finally, Britain appointed a new ambassador, Sir Ronald Campbell, who was considered to have a higher rank than his predecessor, and also upgraded the number and quality of staff that worked at the embassy.²³

Propaganda and arms sales

Among the many issues of concern to Salazar was the propaganda being carried out by both the British and the Germans to win support of the Portuguese. Malcolm Muggeridge, a British spy based in Lisbon who went on to become a 1960s TV “personality”, noted the similarity between the propaganda of the two sides, “like Pepsi and Coke”.²⁴ German propaganda attempted to convince Salazar that the British were planning to overthrow him, playing into Salazar’s fears that the British were growing frustrated with him. Concern was being expressed by the British community that Germany was winning the propaganda battle, although this was helped by German victories on the field, as both Salazar and the Portuguese were inclined to back the side that was winning. Muggeridge also noted that the number and rank of Portuguese officials that would show up at garden parties at the British Consul-General’s residence would rise and fall according to the latest news from the front.²⁵

Although the potential for successfully defending Portugal against a German or Spanish invasion was minimal, Salazar made some efforts to upgrade the country’s armed forces. The British had hoped to sell arms to Lisbon but Salazar procrastinated, a skill he used on many occasions, arguing that many of the arms the British were trying to sell were overpriced and obsolete. This created some ill feeling between the two countries. Much to British annoyance, Salazar ending up getting supplies from other countries, including Germany.

Royal visits

The *Exposição do Mundo Português*, organised to celebrate the founding of Portugal in 1140 and its independence from Spain in 1640, was held in Belém in 1940. Britain was represented by the Duke of Kent, and Salazar, as well as the British, saw the visit as a propaganda opportunity. As another example of his attention to detail, Salazar personally handled the arrangements. The visit was seen as a great success.

²⁰ Lochery *op cit*

²¹ *ibid*

²² *ibid*

²³ *ibid*

²⁴ Malcolm Muggeridge. *Chronicles of Wasted Times: An Autobiography*. Regent College Publishing, Vancouver, 2006 p. 410 (Quoted by Lochery *op cit*)

²⁵ Muggeridge, *op cit* p. 411

The arrival of another Duke, the Duke of Windsor, would cause Salazar many problems, however. In the early summer of 1940, he learnt that the former king and his wife were in Spain, after leaving France, and were seeking to go to Lisbon as a means of reaching Britain, although it was unclear whether they were welcome in London. This presented several problems for Salazar, who was concerned not to antagonise the Germans at a time when they were experiencing considerable military success. He believed that the British would expect the couple to be allowed to leave for England. At the same time, he was aware that the Germans were hoping to persuade the Windsors to go to Berlin. As with the Duke of Kent's visit, Salazar took personal charge of all the arrangements, for what he hoped would be a brief stay. He arranged for the Duke and Duchess to stay with the banker Ricardo Espírito Santo at his home near the Boca do Inferno at Cascais, rather than at a hotel, thus keeping the couple out of public and media view and away from German agents. However, the arrangement caused concern in the British Embassy, where Espírito Santo was viewed as having sympathies for the German side.²⁶ Eventually the couple left by ship on 1 August 1940, after the Duke was appointed Governor of the Bahamas. It subsequently emerged that there had been a German plot to capture the royal couple, known as "Operation Willi". As a last effort, the Germans spread the rumour that there was a bomb on the *SS Excalibur*, the ship on which the Windsors were due to sail from Lisbon, thereby delaying its departure. They finally left on 1 August 1940.²⁷

The British Media

The Times. The *Polícia de Vigilância e Defesa do Estado* (PVDE) was the equivalent of a secret police force that was responsible for monitoring foreigners in Portugal, as well as the Portuguese. Both during the War, and in the years leading up to it, the PVDE deported many British and Germans, although many more of the latter. A high-profile British deportee was Walter Lucas, the Lisbon correspondent of *The Times*. He had written articles in which he suggested that the Portuguese people were on the British side, but that the government and the PVDE were pro-German. After interrogation by the PVDE on Christmas Eve 1940, he was given until January 10th to leave the country. The treatment of Lucas was clearly managed by Salazar, who was keen to act against any reporting that he judged to be dangerous. The *Anglo-Portuguese News* (APN), which received a subsidy from the British Government, had been founded by Lucas' predecessor as *The Times* correspondent, Major C.E. Wakeham. Lucas was himself also involved and the paper was temporarily closed down by the PVDE. As foreigners could not edit Portuguese newspapers the editor was Luíz Marques, father of the former Chairman of the BHSP, Paulo Lowndes Marques. Luíz purchased the paper in 1953 and published it as owner/editor until his death, after which his wife, Susan Lowndes Marques, became editor.²⁸

The BBC. BBC broadcasts to Portugal started on 4 June 1939. From the outset they became very popular. Salazar's censorship of the Portuguese media had created a desire to listen to foreign stations, of which the BBC was by far the most appreciated. In turn, this led the Portuguese government to monitor the BBC's output and to try to influence its coverage. However, the main bone of contention was the BBC's employment of an anti-Salazar political refugee, Armando Cortesão. Known for his opposition to the *Estado Novo*, Cortesão had been sentenced in absentia in 1934 for the attempted overthrow of Salazar.²⁹

²⁶ Carlos Alberto Damas. *Duke of Windsor and Ricardo Espírito Santo*. British Historical Society of Portugal Annual Report No. 29. 2002 <https://www.bhsportugal.org/library/articles/duke-of-windsor-and-ricardo-espírito-santo>

²⁷ Eric Niderost. *Operation Willi: The Nazi Plot to Kidnap the Duke of Windsor*. Warfare History Network. <https://warfarehistorynetwork.com/2016/11/08/operation-willi-the-nazi-plot-to-kidnap-the-duke-of-windsor/>

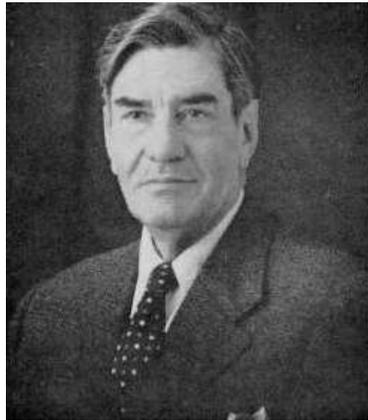
²⁸ Peter Booker, Portugal's Secret War. Algarve History Association, 2014.

<https://www.algarvehistoryassociation.com/en/previous-presentations/155-portugal-s-secret-war>

²⁹ Nelson Costa Ribeiro. *Salazar's interference in the BBC Portuguese service during World War II*. Journalism Studies, April 2010.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233482399_Salazar's_interference_in_the_BBC_Portuguese_service_during_world_war_ii

Cortêsão was a translator for the Portuguese Service in 1941 and was also responsible for editing some of the talks aired on the broadcasts. The BBC was well aware that his employment was a very sensitive matter and had considered transferring him to another section but had not done so. Salazar adopted a two-pronged attack. He had his censors control publication of news and use of photographs about Britain and also used the press to disseminate information to try to harm the BBC's credibility. This was being exploited by German propaganda and the situation became so bad that the British Ambassador recommended that the BBC should give in to Salazar's demand and dismiss Cortêsão, which happened in December 1941.³⁰ Cortêsão spent the rest of the War manning anti-aircraft guns in London.



Armando Cortêsão

From the start of the BBC's Portuguese Service, the Portuguese Ambassador in London had cultivated good relations with the Corporation. Moreover, when the Service began, it lacked qualified people with a good knowledge of both English and Portuguese. Salazar had authorised three Portuguese civil servants to work as translators. The Service, perhaps unwittingly, had also employed a Salazar supporter, Colonel F. Clement Egerton, who was to publish a book entitled *Salazar, rebuilder of Portugal*.³¹ Not only were his scripts flattering to the Salazar regime, but he also kept the Portuguese Embassy informed of what was happening inside the BBC and even inside the British Ministry of Information. This influence had considerable impact. BBC broadcasts had a tendency to flatter Salazar and paid less attention to Russia than did other language services, as Salazar feared mention of Russia would encourage Portuguese communists. Support for this approach even came from the British Ambassador, who recommended that the word "democracy" should not be used on the Portuguese Service as Salazar would interpret it as encouragement to the opposition.³²

Wolfram

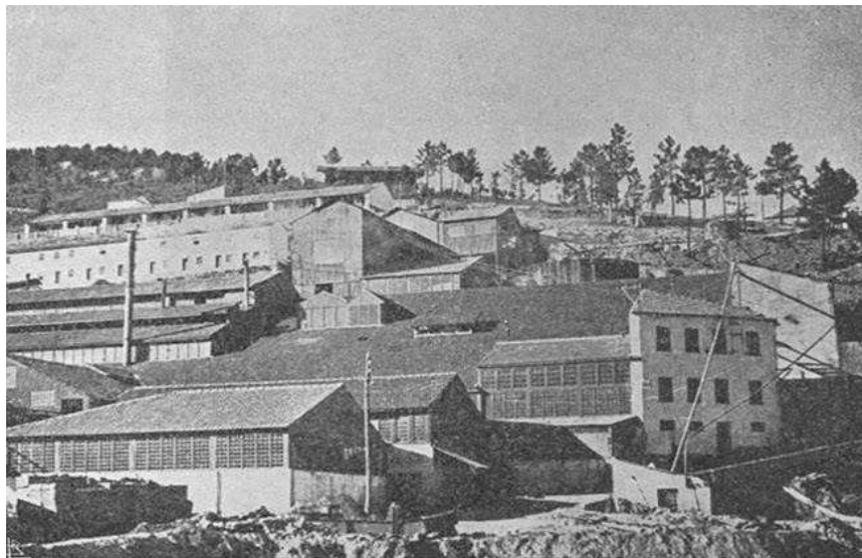
Salazar attempted to maximize the Portuguese gain from the War without exposing it to economic or military retaliation. A major problem was the impact on his country of the British economic blockade of Germany. The main commodity Britain was concerned to stop reaching Germany was wolfram (tungsten). It was used by the armaments industry to harden steel for armour, armour-piercing shells, and other products. As the War developed, many sources of supply dried up and Germany became increasingly dependent on supplies from Portugal. In addition to seeking to control Portuguese exports to Germany, Britain sought to buy much of the wolfram in order that Portugal would have little left for the Germans. However, the British could not buy up all Portuguese tungsten, even if it could have afforded to do so, as this could have provoked a German invasion of Portugal, possibly also involving the Spaniards.

³⁰ *ibid*

³¹ Hodder & Stoughton, 1943

³² Ribeiro, *op cit*

The British Government formed the United Kingdom Commercial Corporation in 1940 with a view to preventing minerals falling into German hands. In an article in the British Historical Society's 2010 Annual Report, Rosemary Walters notes that the agreement between the Corporation and the Panasqueira mine managed by her father, Stanley Mitchell, worked well until it was realised in January 1941 that wolfram production was declining. This was found to be due to pilfering by the workers who could sell it to the Germans for £1,000 a ton, when the British were paying just £100. This led to an increase in the British price to £650 a ton, together with a willingness to pay almost unlimited sums on the black market. Mitchell then employed agents to buy back wolfram from his own miners and also to compete with the Germans for other black-market wolfram. So much money was to be made that adulteration of the ore became a problem. New mines were appearing everywhere and Mitchell had to stake claims to land surrounding his mine to prevent stolen ore being taken to nearby mines.³³ The opportunity to make money from the mineral encouraged a gold-rush feeling in Portugal. Those from both sides attempting to buy wolfram in the villages came across fraud and deceit, and the term "wolframista", meaning war profiteer, entered the Portuguese language. In the village of Alvarenga there was even a shootout between police and wolfram buyers.³⁴



The mine at Panasqueira

Wolfram presented the single biggest issue of 1941 for Salazar. Eventually, he decided that all wolfram mined in Portugal would be sold at a fixed price to the Government and established a National Minerals Commission. Heavy fines were introduced for illegal mining and export. This effective nationalisation of the industry allowed Portugal to continue to export part of its production to Germany, thus protecting against the danger of a retaliatory invasion. At the same time, Portugal permitted Britain to receive credit backed by the pound, allowing Britain to make purchases at a time when it was short of gold. By 1945 the British owed Portugal over US\$322 million (1945 prices) under this arrangement.³⁵

With Allied victories continuing, Salazar came under pressure from London and Washington to stop further sales to Germany. As the War was clearly heading towards a conclusion, his arguments for continuing to trade with Germany became weaker. It was now not a question of protecting the country from German

³³ Rosemary Walters. *Stanley Mitchell: The Mining Experiences of a Cornishman in Serra da Estrela 1922-1945*. BHSP Annual Report No. 37. 2010

³⁴ <http://aterremportugal.blogspot.com/2012/06/batalha-do-volframio-em-alvarenga.html>

³⁵ Kay, *op cit*. During the War it was common for exporters to require sales to be backed by gold rather than by vulnerable currencies

invasion, but one of continuing to have access to the gold that Germany used to pay for the wolfram.³⁶ Two days before D-Day, on June 4 1944, Salazar gave in and announced a total ban on wolfram mining.

The Azores

Mainland Portugal and the Azores and Madeira, together with the Cape Verde group, occupied positions of strategic importance along British trading routes. If this was not recognised by the British prior to WW2, it certainly was by the Germans, and both Madeira and the Azores received a visit from the German Minister of War in 1937 with promises of military aid. Not only were the Azores desirable as U-boat bases to control the Atlantic trade, but Hitler could dream of one day being able to bomb the US Eastern Seaboard.³⁷ No one appreciated the potential role of the islands more than Salazar, who in 1941 had planned, with British support, to move the bulk of his military to the Azores in the event of a German invasion of the mainland.³⁸

For the British and the United States, access to the islands was considered essential for the battle against German U-boats, which were heavily disrupting the convoys bringing essential supplies across the Atlantic. Additionally, the USA saw the islands as potential staging posts for cross-Atlantic air traffic and, in time, this came to be more important for them than controlling U-boats.³⁹ While Portugal had been permitting the refuelling of British naval ships at Ponta Delgada, and was following a liberal interpretation of the Hague Convention to the advantage of the Allies,⁴⁰ the real need was for a base.



Lajes airfield during the War

The desperation of the Allies to access the Azores enabled Salazar to use his skills of procrastination. This was another issue on which he had to balance Portugal's neutrality with the realities of the War, which appeared to be moving in favour of the Allies. According to Pease, Salazar "created an enigma that puzzled

³⁶ German gold bars often consisting of gold that was made from the jewellery and teeth of Jews killed during the Holocaust. At the Bretton Woods Conference on post-war restructuring, countries were requested to freeze looted assets, identify German assets in Portugal, and hold them for their eventual return to democratic authorities in Germany. This was another area where Salazar demonstrated his skill for procrastination and only a few bars of German gold were eventually surrendered. An estimated 100 tons of German gold reached Portugal, much of it being sold through the Portuguese colony of Macau after the War

³⁷ Pease, Michael. Portugal; A WWII Enigma? British Historical Society of Portugal Annual Report 38, 2011.

<https://www.bhsportugal.org/library/articles/portugal-a-wwii-enigma>

³⁸ Douglas Wheeler. *The Azores, Allied Secret Operation and World War II, 1939-1944*. British Historical Society Annual Report 32, 2005. <https://www.bhsportugal.org/library/articles/the-azores-allied-secret-operation-and-world-war-ii-1939-1944>

³⁹ Antony Hugill. *Operation Alacrity*. British Historical Society of Portugal Annual Report 5, 1978.

<https://www.bhsportugal.org/library/articles/equotoperation-alacrityequot>

⁴⁰ Hugill, *op cit*

the principle belligerents but which had to be resolved because Portugal's position held the key to arguably the most important battle of WW2, the Battle of the Atlantic".⁴¹ At the same time, his chickens were coming home to roost: his failure to delegate, taking all major responsibilities on himself, was severely affecting his health. Either as a consequence of his continuing to exercise his skills of procrastination, or because he was finding it difficult to make decisions, the British and Americans were becoming increasingly frustrated and were making plans to invade the Azores.⁴² Initially he waited to see the direction of the War in North Africa, but when the Allies proved victorious he continued to "obfuscate, evade and obstruct".⁴³

On June 18 1943, the British Ambassador formally requested that Britain should be allowed to use the facilities on the Azores, citing the 600-year-old Anglo-Portuguese Alliance. On June 23, Salazar agreed in principle to the request, but made it clear that he wished to provide the facilities without endangering Portugal's neutrality. That meant that Portuguese troops would offer no direct support. Salazar also insisted that access to the Azores was conditional on steps being taken by the British to ensure that Portugal's Atlantic coast did not fall into German hands. He also warned the British Ambassador that negotiations on the actual details were likely to be lengthy. This greatly annoyed Churchill, who demanded a deadline for those negotiations to end. But Salazar continued to delay. As the German army was still in the French Pyrenees there was a fear of retaliation, which could have been through a land invasion, a bombing campaign against Lisbon and Oporto, or through German U-boat attacks on Portuguese shipping. Salazar therefore linked the signing of the agreement to the arrival of promised British anti-aircraft defences.

The British established a deadline of September 15 and Churchill insisted that Salazar must be made aware of the implications for relations if Portugal did not accept. USA economic assistance was offered as a carrot for Portuguese compliance. What Salazar did not know was that Britain's military leadership had in place "Operation Brisk", a plan to use 130 landing craft to capture the Azores by force. The British expected only limited resistance from Portuguese troops and were planning to proceed with the operation no later than August 1943. However, Salazar was not yet ready to give in, arguing that Portuguese defences could not be ready before October 15. In the end, Portugal and the Allies agreed on October 8, when Portugal allowed the British the use of Horta on Faial and Ponta Delgada on São Miguel, as well as the airfields of Lajes on Terceira and Santana Field on São Miguel. However, the question to be asked is what would have been the consequences for WW2 had Britain taken over the Azores in 1942, instead of waiting until 1943.⁴⁴

After the War

Early opposition

From 1945, Salazar's main aim was to bring Portugal fully back into an alliance with the Allies, while also protecting Portugal's colonies. On the domestic front there were groups hostile to the *Estado Novo*, although they were largely rudderless. Salazar, on the other hand, retained the support of the armed forces, and while they supported him there was little chance that he would be replaced. He also received continuing support from other powerful groups, including the Church, which had been appalled by the anti-clericalism during the Republic, and also from the upper classes, who wanted economic stability.⁴⁵ Opposition immediately after the War was short-lived, but Salazar had noted the growth of the opposition and for a limited time authorised some limited democracy, although this was quickly followed by repression, often ruthlessly carried out by the PIDE, the regime's secret police (formerly the PVDE). Again, opposition was muted,

⁴¹ Pease *op cit*

⁴² Lochery *op cit*

⁴³ Pease *op cit*

⁴⁴ Wheeler, *op cit*

⁴⁵ Lee, *op cit*

possibly because a large proportion of the adult population still remembered the chaos of the years before 1926 and also because there was considerable gratitude to Salazar for having kept Portugal out of the War.

However, by the mid-1950s, a new generation was emerging with no memory of the earlier instability. Neutral observers believed that the opposition candidate in the presidential elections of 1958, Humberto Delgado, would have defeated the Estado Novo candidate, had the election been conducted fairly. Delgado had indicated that if elected, he would dismiss Salazar. Following the election Salazar pushed through a constitutional amendment that placed the election of future presidents in the hands of the two Houses of Parliament, both of which he controlled. Delgado was expelled from the military and went into exile in Spain, where he ended up being assassinated by the PIDE near the border town of Olivenza, on 13 February 1965, while trying to clandestinely enter Portugal. Salazar is said to have approved the assassination.

After the War, Lisbon's main ally increasingly became the USA, rather than Britain. In 1948, a defence agreement confirmed the American access to military bases on the Azores. Portugal joined NATO in 1949 and, during the Cold War, Britain, the United States and other NATO members were happy to ignore the country's lack of democracy if the alternative to the regime was communism.⁴⁶ As Leite notes, they had always "preferred to deal with Salazar rather than promote a democratic transition. The Cold War merely provided a convenient rationale to an earlier strategic partnership."⁴⁷

Southern Rhodesia

During the 1950s, Anglo-Portuguese relations were generally good. However, Salazar's determination to stand against the 'winds of change',⁴⁸ as Britain moved to give independence to its major colonies in the early 1960s, caused significant problems.⁴⁹ Matters came to a head in the mid-1960s when Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) announced a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from Britain to avoid being forced to hold multi-racial elections. Salazar's support for white rule in Southern Rhodesia was intended to strengthen Portugal's position as a colonial power in Angola and Mozambique. Portuguese support for Prime Minister Ian Smith would, he felt, bring closer links with South Africa, thereby facilitating Portugal's colonial battles against liberation movements in Angola and Mozambique and cementing an anti-nationalism alliance in southern Africa. Portugal had been experiencing significant military difficulties in Angola from 1961, and had already strengthened political, economic, and military ties with Ian Smith, but the support he could offer was insignificant compared with that potentially available from South Africa.⁵⁰

In September 1964, Ian Smith met Salazar in Lisbon, before going to London to try to negotiate independence. In October, the British Labour Party won the general election and in November a referendum restricted to white Rhodesians authorised Smith to declare UDI, which was not done until a year later. In the first half of 1965, Portugal and Rhodesia negotiated a trade agreement and diplomatic representation in Lisbon. The designation of a Head of Mission, effectively the Ambassador, caused considerable friction between Salazar and Prime Minister Harold Wilson. The British view was that Southern Rhodesia remained a British colony and thus any representation should work out of the British Embassy. He believed that permitting a separate Mission was tantamount to recognising Rhodesia's independence.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Diário de Notícias, *Portugal em 1945*, 18 May 2005. <https://www.dn.pt/arquivo/2005/portugal-em-1945-599724.html>

⁴⁷ Leite, *op cit*

⁴⁸ A phrase first used by UK Prime Minister Harold MacMillan in a speech in South Africa in 1960

⁴⁹ Oscar Jose Martin Garcia: *The End of the Carnival: The UK and the Carnation Revolution in Portugal*. Contemporary British History, April 2015. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13619462.2014.970392>

⁵⁰ Luís Fernando Machado Barroso (2014), *The Independence of Rhodesia in Salazar's Strategy for Southern Africa*, African Historical Review, 46:2,

⁵¹ *ibid*

Portuguese support was essential for UDI to succeed, as Smith required access to the port of Beira in Mozambique for commodity exports and the import of fuel and other goods. When the British began to blockade Beira after UDI, many Rhodesian products suddenly became of Mozambique origin. Hitherto a minor producer of tobacco, Mozambique overnight became one of the world's leading exporters; a result of Portugal issuing certificates of origin for Rhodesian goods. Salazar also connived to help Smith by-pass the British blockade on imports. In March 1966, the Portuguese government lodged a protest against Britain for interfering with navigation and violating Mozambique's territorial waters and airspace. In the following month, the *Joanna V*, which was carrying 18,700 tons of oil, was allowed to dock in Beira after reporting that it only wished to collect supplies for its onward voyage. However, it became clear that the oil was destined for the Smith regime. This led to United Nations Security Council Resolution 221 on 9 April, which empowered the United Kingdom to arrest and detain the *Joanna V* upon her departure from Beira in the event of her cargo being discharged there. As a consequence, it sat in Beira for some time and was never unloaded there.⁵²



The *Joanna V*

Portugal's active support for the regime in Rhodesia obviously weakened relations with the British. However, Britain was reluctant to put too much pressure on Salazar, as it feared that the collapse of the *Estado Novo* would leave a power vacuum in Africa. During the 1960s, British involvement in both Portugal and her colonies remained substantial. At the beginning of the 1970s, 25 per cent of foreign investments in Portugal were British. The UK was still Portugal's most important trading partner, receiving 23 per cent of its exports and supplying 13 per cent of its imports.⁵³

Salazar's death

From 1950 Salazar used the *Forte de Santo António da Barra*⁵⁴ in Estoril as a summer home and, on occasions, as a place to receive foreign visitors. In 1968, he suffered a cerebral haemorrhage after a fall while at the fort. His condition resulted in the President of Portugal, Almirante Américo Tomás, appointing Marcelo Caetano as the new Prime Minister without telling Salazar, who, in fact, lived for a further two

⁵² *ibid*

⁵³ Garcia, *op cit*

⁵⁴ Recently restored by the Municipality of Cascais

years. When he unexpectedly recovered some of his mental faculties, his staff and friends did not tell him he had been removed from power, allowing him to "rule" in privacy until his death on 27 July 1970.



Forte de Santo António da Barra

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