

Cinema, Fascism and Propaganda. A historical approximation to the Portuguese Estado Novo

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Abstract: The Portuguese dictatorship of António de Oliveira Salazar used the cinema as an efficient propaganda instrument to consolidate the Estado Novo regime in the 1930s. Portugal's National Propaganda Secretariat and other structures controlling public communication played an important role in persuading the Portuguese society and promoting a positive image of the Salazarist abroad. During the Spanish Civil War, the Portuguese cinematic propaganda intensified its campaign against communism and in favour of the Iberian fascism.

Keywords: Cinema; fascism; propaganda; dictatorship; Salazarism; Portugal

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1. Introduction

This article addresses some interesting aspects of one of the least studied European film industries existing during the establishment of the fascist dictatorships in various European countries after the 1930s. Italy and Germany have always been referenced as paradigms of fascist cinema during the regimes of Hitler and Mussolini due to the strategic importance and prestige reached by the film productions of these states in the 1930s and 1940s (cf. Pizarroso-Quintero, 1990).

However, there have been very few research works focused on other more peripheral authoritarian regimes, in which cinema also played a key role in persuading the local public opinion and promoting a positive image of their respective governments abroad. The case of the dictatorship of António de Oliveira Salazar, whose institutionalisation was forged in 1933 with the adoption of the Constitution of the Estado Novo and lasted until 1974, offers singular features that deserve special attention (cf. Ribeiro, 2010; Torgal, 2009; Pinto, 2003).

Within this context, this brief investigation aims to reveal some of the key features of the cinematic discourse of the Portuguese regime and its propagandistic dimension immediately after the creation of the Estado Novo as an authoritarian political project, organised according to a corporate model inspired by the structures of the Italian fascism of Benito Mussolini (Torgal, 2009). Thus, the main hypothesis of the analysis responds to the need to shed light on the cinematic propaganda model designed by the Salazarist dictatorship to disseminate its ideological proposals and make the Portuguese society accept its political project which, according to the regime itself, was based on the “política do espírito” (“politics of the spirit”). This term was coined by writer António Ferro, the first director of the National Propaganda Secretariat (SPN, according to its initials in Portuguese), which was founded in 1933 (cf. Matos, 2010a and 2010b; Pena, 2009).

The first objective of the article is to examine several important elements in the relationship of the Portuguese cinema and the Estado Novo. The objective is to answer three key questions: What structures of film production and distribution were used? What mottos and propaganda instruments were used by this type of cinema? What propaganda films were produced in the 1930s, when the instruments of propaganda of the Estado Novo were created and consolidated? This analysis takes into account the context of the Spanish Civil War fought between 1936 and 1939, which involved the participation of several thousand Portuguese men enlisted in the troops of General Franco (cf. Antunes, 2003; Pena, 1998; Oliveira, 1988).

The methodology used in this research is the discourse analysis of Portuguese films, focused on the study of the propagandistic construction of the audiovisual narrative and its public reception in the Portuguese media, which were controlled by the censorship apparatus of the Salazarist regime. The object of study is addressed mainly through qualitative techniques and by making use of original hemerographic, documentary and audiovisual sources. The development and structure of the research have taken into account a list of themes of extraordinary importance in order to undertake a historical examination of the cinematic phenomenon with enough critical amplitude. The themes addressed in the study include: the role of censorship; the influence of the Spanish Civil War on the formation of the Portuguese cinema; the creation and operation of the so-called People's Mobile Cinema; and the film that symbolises the cinematic discourse of the Estado Novo: *A Revolução de Maio*.

2. The Cinema and the Estado Novo during the Spanish war

The Portuguese films about the Spanish Civil War have been scarcely analysed. It is true that these films have been less important in comparison to the many internationally-distributed films and documentaries that were produced by other countries that were involved in the conflict, such as Italy and Germany (cf. Pizarroso-Quintero, 1990; Mazzacoli, 1976). The German, Italian, French, American, British,

and Russian film industries were much more developed, technically and professionally, than the Portuguese industry, and therefore were able to create cinematic propaganda of greater quality.

Although the Portuguese cinema did not have any less propagandistic importance than the aforementioned national industries and its documentaries did not lack artistic value, we must be aware of its limitations with respect to those countries that had more production companies in Spain and created many more films than the Portuguese industry, which only took off with the advent of the Estado Novo in the 1930s (Pina, 1977).

From the SPN, António Ferro became the main promoter of cinema with propagandistic purposes. Along this interest of the Portuguese government, which launched, among other initiatives, the People's Mobile Cinema (to disseminate its discourses in all the corners of Portugal where there were no movie theatres), some directors like António Lopes Ribeiro and Leitão de Barros appeared in the film scene of the neighbouring country to implement personally-financed and state-financed projects with ever-increasing success. The production of feature films in Portugal between 1933 and 1940 reached an annual average of 15 films (Pina, 1977: 37-47; cf. Piçarra, 2006).

According to statistical data disseminated in Portugal by the Catholic Church (which was interested in the evolution and public influence of this new medium), less than 5% of the films screened in Portugal during 1935 were of national production. That year, on the eve of the fratricidal war in Spain, the American, French and German companies were the ones selling the largest number of films to the Portuguese distributors. Nevertheless, in and outside Portugal, the national film industry had some peculiar features, which may be unique in some cases and, undoubtedly, allow us to talking about a cinematic propaganda that characterised the Portuguese dictatorship (cf. Torgal, 2011; Piçarra, 2006). This propaganda had a great intentionality and public impact.

During the first half of 1936, Lisbon had more than twenty movie theatres and thirty-two by April 1939. In Oporto, there were around a dozen of movie theatres between 1935 and 1940. In the rest of the country there were some cinemas in the main towns, but the best movie theatre (which also worked as distributor) in the rural area was probably the SPN's People's Mobile Cinema, which showed documentaries about the "patriotic work" of the Portuguese government in all corners of the country.

The interest of the Portuguese public on the cinema was extraordinary. This is evidenced by the existence of two film magazines, *Cinéfilo* and *Cine-Jornal*, which by 1936 were already consolidated in the Portuguese publishing scene, and by the broadcast, in the national radio station, of a movie section that was called "Meia hora de cinema" ("Half an hour of cinema") and was produced in collaboration with *Cine-Jornal*. [1]

2.1. Censorship and propaganda

When the first American-produced documentaries about the war events in Spain began to be marketed internationally, the Portuguese government prohibited their showing in the country as it feared they were not “suitable” for the Portuguese public. In addition, aware of cinema’s persuasion power and social influence, Salazar feared riots would arise as a result of the effervescence caused by the war.

The distribution of newsreels about the war was not authorised until the middle of October, 1936, after many considerations. The lifting of the ban, however, did not cause riots but produced excellent propaganda results on the Portuguese population, which applauded the on-screen triumphs of the Francoist troops. *Cinéfilo* wrote an article about that time when movie theatres in Lisbon showed the first images of the troops and applauded the initiative of the Portuguese Government in favour of the public:

“Vão os nossos melhores cumprimentos, aos quais a gratidão não é estranha, para a Inspeção dos Espectáculos que, com louvável critério, autorizou a estreia no nosso País dos documentários da guerra civil de Espanha. Bem hajam pela iniciativa, que na própria noite de apresentação do primeiro jornal ouviu aplausos, significativos sob mais de um aspecto. Primeiro, porque tranquilizaram aqueles que temiam que a passagem de tais películas dividissem as opiniões provocando incidentes mais ou menos lamentáveis. Depois, porque deu ensejo a verificar-se que a maioria da população está de alma e coração com os defensores da causa nacionalista. Provou-se isso na espontaneidade das ovações ouvidas nas nossas salas de cinema e tributadas às forças anti-marxistas e verificando-se que nenhuma discordância importante contrariou as palmas da maioria. [...] Sob êsse aspecto, os documentários que Portugal está agora vendo só podem ter resultados salutareos. [...]” (*Cinéfilo*, year 8, nº 427: 2).

From then on, the censorship exercised by the *Serviço da Inspeção Geral dos Espectáculos* (General Inspection of the Performances) allowed the showing of films that were related to the conflict but always employed arguments and images that presented a partial view of the facts, which was favourable for the National Francoist movement. For this reason, the distributors had many problems and some of them directly confronted the Portuguese government about the initial Solomonic suspension of the dissemination of documentaries about the Spanish War and, later, about the extreme measures taken to filter the cinematic projections (cf. Lauro, 1978).

The newsreel distributor *Jornal Fox*, subsidiary of the American company in Portugal, published in the *Diário de Lisboa* (Lisbon’s Daily) a notice about the reason why Fox’s internationally successful documentaries were not shown in the country:

“Jornal Fox. Explicação: A *Companhia Cinematográfica de Portugal* previne (sic) ao publico de que Jornal Fox não apresentou ainda em Lisboa as suas sensacionais reportagens dos acontecimentos em Espanha que ha mais de dois

meses correm o mundo) pela simples razão de que as respectivas entidades oficiais, assim o determinaram. O Jornal Fox, o mais categorizado em todo o mundo, demonstrará, *logo que lhe seja permitido* (cursiva en el original), o valor excepcional das suas reportagens da guerra civil em Espanha, algumas das quais já podiam ter sido estreadas em Portugal ha dois meses”. (*Diário de Lisboa*, nº 5000, 18/10/1936: 4).

The day before *Fox*'s notice was published, on 17 October 1936, Lisbon's São Luiz theatre officially premiered the first war documentary ever screened in Portugal. This documentary was centred on the “liberation” of the Alcázar of Toledo and depicted the attack of the militant men loyal to the government of the second Spanish Republic to the fortress, which was under the artillery fire and whose towers were shown collapsing amid clouds of dust and smoke. The documentary also showed the entry of the legionaries to the Alcázar and the meeting between general Franco and Colonel Moscardó, at the front of the resistance. According to the *Diário de Lisboa* newspaper, which published a review of the documentary, the photography was excellent despite the difficulties faced by the cameramen during the shooting.

However, before the presentation of the war feat of General Franco's soldiers in Toledo, the virtues of his army were already known by the Portuguese public, which watched, in September, the film documentary *La Bandera* (The Flag), which revolved around the life of *El Tercio* (a military unit of the Spanish army) in Morocco. This documentary was shown thanks to the initiative of the *Sindicato Nacional dos Profissionais do Cinema* (National Union of Cinema Professionals) in collaboration with the *Mocidade Portuguesa* (Portuguese Youth), which was an organisation of young militant defenders of the Estado Novo. According to the *Diário de Notícias*, the documentary showed the “[...] disciplina, a valentia, o espirito de abnegação dos heroicos legionarios ao serviço de Espanha.” *La Bandera* was shown at Lisbon's Condes Cinema and served as a pretext for an anti-communist propaganda session involving the Portuguese journalist Armando Boaventura, the leader of the *Renovación Española* party, Antonio Goicoechea, and the Marquis of Quintanar.

In the second half of 1936, thanks to the initiative of the directives of the *Mocidade Portuguesa* and the *Legião Portuguesa* (the regime's militia), the Portuguese cinemas also showed German films about Hitler and his social and military successes. These films were provided by the Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro (DNB) Nazi agency. On 15 November, the São Luiz cinema organised a cinematic Nazi propaganda meeting with the screening of the documentaries *Juventude Hitleriana* (Hitlerian Youth) and *Olimpiada branca* (White olympiad), which were described as “[...] admiráveis documentários cheios de beleza artística e educativa [...]” by the Estado Novo's official newspaper, *Diário da Manhã* (Morning Newspaper). The meeting was attended by the director of the German DNB Agency, diplomats from the Italian and

German embassies, the Commander of the *Mocidade Portuguesa*, Nobre Guedes, the head of the Fascio in Lisbon, Count di Carrobio, as well as the followers of the Nazi movement and many young Portuguese people.

The cinematic propaganda showed the Portuguese people the progress achieved by the Fascist German and Italian states, while the war conflicts unfolded in Spain. But the documentaries about Hitler and Mussolini were not always well received by the Portuguese people, especially after the Spanish War, in April 1939, when both dictators had already shown their imperialist cards on the European board. Sometimes the images of both leaders were booed by the Portuguese public when they appeared on screen [2]. In response to the spectators' attitude, the members of the *Legião Portuguesa* in Viana do Castelo decided to strongly protest against the leader of the French Popular Front, León Blum, and "other like-minded politicians" whenever they appeared, circumstantially, in any documentary.

However, the general interest shown by the Portuguese audience towards the documentaries related to the war events in Spain forced the film entrepreneurs and the SPN, which had the power to decide which films could be publicly shown, to introduce war films during the screenings of feature film to attract audiences with propagandistic intentionality.

In the daily newspapers, mainly during the last year of war, it was common to find various advertisements of cinemas promoting newsreels about the events occurring in Spain. No advertisements about these documentaries were found in the Portuguese newspapers in late 1936 or in the first half of 1937 despite these documentaries had high social expectations (cf. Rodríguez-Mateos, 2009; Pérez-Cuadrado, 2008). This fact makes us believe that Salazar, aware of the importance of the propagandistic use of cinema, viewed with mistrust the films that were not produced by the SPN nor controlled directly by any other state agency, and so he restricted their dissemination through private distributors. Anyways, censorship became more tolerant as the Francoist side was winning the battle.

Some of the documentaries most promoted by the Portuguese press were: the short film *Visões da guerra de Espanha* (Visions of war in Spain), which centred on the Battle of the Ebro and the bombings to Madrid's University City; *Imagens da guerra de Espanha* (Images of war in Spain), which showed scenes of the Francoist conquest of Barcelona; and *A tomada de Madrid* (The occupation of Madrid), which was created only with images of the Spanish capital after the end of the war.

This last short film and *O Desfile da Vitória* (The Victory Parade) were the cinematic climax on the Spanish Civil war for the Portuguese public after the victory of the so-called Nacional Francoist Movement. Both films premiered in Portugal in June 1939, during the "triumphal day" of homage to the "viriatos" (the Portuguese fighters enlisted in the Spanish rebel army) at Lisbon's São Luiz cinema. In the event, the Spanish leader was cheered as usual every time he appeared on screen, but this

time his figure had a special recognition for viewers because it was, according to the press, the first world winner over communism and because his troops “[...] restituíram á Espanha o direito de dizer: - Elevámos a Patria á categoria de hostia do sacrificio [...].”

3. Cinema’s arrival to the village: the People’s Mobile Cinema

The SPN created a cinema section to disseminate the Estado Novo’s “política do espírito”. This organism soon managed to sell some of its documentaries to Fox Movietone News, Éclair-Journal, Ufa Wchenschan, France-Actualités, and Paramount News. Two years after the creation of the cinema section, in September 1935, the film archive of the SPN already contained 50 films, many of them with sound, and produced exclusively by its staff or the Portuguese production companies that were hired to do specific works. The documentaries were shown for free in the headquarters of the trade unions, public squares, and the atriums of the villages, etc. [3]

The SPN developed various actions to shape the thoughts and behaviour of the Portuguese society. One of the first initiatives that employed the film discourse was put into action on 14 December, 1936, as part of an anti-communist campaign directed mainly to the Portuguese proletariat. To this end, the Salazarist organism equipped a special lorry with all the equipment necessary to screen patriotic documentaries at the *Casas do Povo* (People’s Houses) of some towns, which were the primary unit of corporate rural organisation during this time.

The success of António Ferro’s initiative forced the government to reconsider very soon this idea of bringing the cinema of the SPN to the rural areas. Immediately, the government decided to create a more complex and effective traveling organism that could take its propaganda to the Portuguese provinces more quickly and often, without having to build cinemas around the country. In this way, the People’s Mobile Cinema, inaugurated on 20 February, 1935, in Lisbon’s *Sindicato dos Caixeiros*, became a powerful weapon of mind control (cf. Paulo, 1994).

The screenings were held in different parts of Portugal according to the plans created by the theatre section, called *Teatro do Povo* (People’s Theater). The sessions were staged just like political meetings. The members of the regime’s corporate bodies, and even priests, gave heated discourses to the public at the end of the screenings. These discourses always highlighted the representative value of documentaries and warned people about the destructive hazards of the Communist ideology, with which the Spanish government of Azaña was identified.

The People’s Cinema managed to congregate, outdoors, entire villages and towns in front of the screen for the first time. Several meetings were held per day in various places and there were special screenings for children accompanied by their teachers. In his tour by the north of Portugal, the President of Vidago’s Casa do Povo,

fascinated by the magic of this event, by the “living representation” of a distant reality and its convening power, described the People’s Cinema as the “embaixada de paz, de cultura e de elevado patriotismo”.

The first tour of the People’s Mobile Cinema was held between January and May of 1937 in the north and centre of Portugal. There were in total 127 sessions, 11 of which were diurnal and aimed for children. During the first trip, the trucks of the SPN visited 74 towns, mostly small villages, whose inhabitants were unaware of the existence of cinema. Of the screenings, 61 were held in the Casas do Povo, 8 in unions’ buildings and other corporate bodies, and 4 in schools. More than one hundred thousand people went to see the documentaries and to listen to the 96 propaganda discourses given during the film sessions by the local authorities and popular characters supporting the Estado Novo.

In the second half of 1937, the SPN took its mobile cinema section to the south of the country, and crossed several dozens of villages, which due to their isolation were surprised by the propaganda that reminded them, through devastating images, that the war in Spain was not fiction and that Salazar would ensure the peace in Portugal with their help. The People’s Mobile Cinema continued its work in the following years. In 1938, it incorporated another team to its activities, which allowed it to extend its propaganda to more places.

As it happened with radio, some populations were especially problematic and showed their rejection towards the regime’s nationalist ideology and their preference for the Spanish “vermelhos” (the red Spaniards) during the war. The favourable attitude towards the Spanish Republic forced the authorities to take the People’s Mobile Cinema to these “black spots” to mitigate the effects of the illegal propaganda (developed mainly through leaflets and fliers) with the strong persuasive power of the cinema.

In May 1937, a film session with these motives was held in Salgueiros, a district of Viseu, in the fair field of Lima Loureiro. The event was attended by 2,500 people. The meeting was opened by the local delegates of the Legião and the Mocidade Portuguesa, who were followed by the interventions of professor António Pais-da-Cruz, who justified the presence of the People’s Cinema to publicise the social progress of the dictatorship. However, there were other professors, like António da-Silva-Leitão, who rejected the invitation of the corporate organisations to indoctrinate the people about the benefits of the Estado Novo. In addition, the spies of the Legião found out, prior to the session, that the “communists” had terrorised the population by threatening it to provoke a shootout during the screening in order to discourage attendance to the screening.

4. The film production of the SPN

The fight against communism was the motto of the cinema section of the SPN during the Spanish Civil War. It was common that the monthly budget of the Secretariat contained a chapter dedicated to the “anti-communist propaganda through cinema”, which described the amounts paid to some private film production companies, like Lisboa Film, and individual producers for these services (Pina, 1987).

In the first half of 1937, the budget allocated to film production reached the high figure of half a million escudos, which included the maintenance cost of the People’s Mobile Cinema; the funding of newsreels and the feature film *A Revolução de Maio* (The May Revolution); the payment to the French company Éclair-Journal; the purchase of equipment and material for the photographic archive; and the acquisition of foreign films. During 1937, the SPN concentrated its cinematic propaganda in Portugal, by using most of the film copies available in the mobile cinema. This prevented the organism from properly meeting the orders made by nationalist organisations like the Falange, which requested Portuguese films.

Adaptations of foreign documentaries for the Portuguese public were commonplace in the film activities of the SPN, which added comments or signs to advance their manipulative agenda. In addition to the already mentioned films (*Visões da guerra de Espanha*, *Imagens da Guerra de Espanha* and *A Tomada de Madrid*, among others), it is important to highlight the Italian-Spanish 1939 original production *Nada de Novo no Alcázar* (Nothing New in the Alcázar), whose Portuguese audio adaptation mentioned the aid provided by the presenters from Radio Club Português to the people under fire in Toledo’s Fortress (Matos-Cruz, 1989: 91).

The short film *A Guerra Civil de Espanha* (The Spanish Civil War) is the only adaptation produced by the SPN of which a copy is preserved in the Arquivo Nacional das Imagens em Movimento (National Archive of Moving Images), aka ANIM. However, the production date is unknown. However, it is probable that it was distributed in Portugal between 1936 and 1938, since the film is presented as a “sensational” reportage containing the first images filmed in the loyal Barcelona during the war. Its images were probably bought from some foreign production company that had camera operators on the loyal side.

The editors from the SPN transformed the shots of the documentary into a cinematic libel against the government of Madrid. The silent documentary only showed images of buildings, churches and monuments that were supposedly destroyed by the “marxists” (sic) in Barcelona. Thus, the subtitles at the beginning of the story made clear that: “O público vai ver as primeiras imagens colhidas em Barcelona, entre os marxistas, os quais dão uma idéia clara da desordem e indisciplina que ali reinam, numa fúria de terror e destruição, pois nada escapa à onda de vandalismo.” The documentary showed different shots of the port of Barcelona and of several streets with debris from burnt-down houses. Other message indicated: “A desorganização nas

ruas é evidente. Todos mandam mas ninguém obedece, pelo que são constantes as discussões entre os elementos marxistas. As ruas oferecem um conjunto desolador. Por tôda a parte se vêem destroços provocados pelas hordas marxistas que nada respeitam”.

The documentary’s on-screen description demanded some imagination, since the documentary’s images did not show damages in the docks of the Catalan port, nor fights started by the cited “Marxists”, nor any suggestion of unrest in the streets of Barcelona. There were, however, images of semi-destroyed buildings, children playing amid the ruins, and many images of two burnt-down churches. The documentary even showed the famous images of the mummified nuns displayed at the entrance of the temple.

One of the most emblematic productions of the SPN related to the events in Spain is perhaps the silent documentary *Comícios Anti-Comunistas* (Anti-Communist Rallies), which had legends that lasted almost fifteen minutes. This documentary was produced in 1936 and fortunately for the film history of Portugal the ANIM still retains a copy of it. Its title summarises the content of the film, which is images of the patriotic acts against the “communist invasion” in the main Portuguese cities during the first months of the war. The documentary tried to show, in view of the tragic events caused in Spain by the international communism that threatened Portugal (sic), the “consciência do dever” (sense of duty) of all the Portuguese people, united with Salazar against marxism. This point of view was perfectly illustrated in the introductory part of the documentary, whose subtitles warned the viewer about the nature of the images:

“Enquanto em Espanha a onda de selvajaria e de destruição servida por autênticos bandidos e assassinos vai arruinando tôdas as actividades e riquezas da nação, em Portugal realizam-se comícios anti-comunistas em todo o Paiz, na melhor ordem e com uma vibração popular enorme. Nestes comícios, realizados com numerosíssima concorrência, em Lisboa, Porto e Coimbra, bem como nas restantes capitais do distrito e grandes centros industriais, milhares de nacionalistas afirmam a vitalidade e a sua devoção patriótica unindo-se á volta do Governo do Estado Novo na defeza do prestígio e da integridade da Pátria Portuguesa.”

Although the documentary mentions the massive rally at Lisbon’s Campo Pequeno Bullring (held on September 28, 1936), it does not shows any image of it. However, it does show an abundance of scenes of the acts in Oporto and Coimbra, which confirms the real manipulative purpose of the SPN’s film propaganda. The documentary shows the military parades and the rivers of frenzied men, women and children dressed and groomed for the occasion, applauding and waving in the fascist style, attending rallies with banners showing support to the government that was facing the “red danger” that was destroying Spain.

The images of the anti-communist ceremony held in Oporto's Crystal Palace, on 18 September 1936, are an example of the ritual aesthetics of the fascist cinema, devoid of spontaneity, trying to transform the people into a disciplined and orderly mass that obeys its leaders devoutly. The camera makes an endless wipe shot over the heads expecting to hear the discourses of their leaders.

The president of the meeting, the Secretario de Estado das Corporações, Rebelo de Andrade, appears uniformed as a legionnaire while the public applauds and waves white handkerchiefs. The film shows the banners with messages about the social peace achieved by the government, the virtues of corporatism, and praise for Salazar and the head of state, General Carmona. There are images of the Nazi representatives, fascist Italians and Spanish Falangists, preceded by a subtitle announcing that the Portuguese people received them at the rally with “inexcedível carinho” (unexcelled kindness), to which they responded by cheering the Estado Novo.

In Coimbra, the documentary begins with a travelling shot through the crowd waiting in line at the edge of the River Mondego, which is the beginning of the demonstration through the streets of the city. There were groups of people holding posters that identified them with some corporate union, as well as professors and students from the University of Coimbra that were also holding messages against communism (cf. Torgal, 2011). The camera stops for several seconds over one banner that says: “Morra o comunismo que é: contra a pátria, destruidor da família, perturbador da paz, violador dos lares”; and over another pro-Salazar banner carried by the workers of Figueira's *O Figueirense* newspaper. There is also a focus on other posters from students who say: “Abaixo o comunismo”; “Académia de tradições gloriosas! Dai o vosso apoio a Salazar!. Gritai do fundo dos vossos corações: Viva Portugal livre!. Por um Portugal maior!. Viva Salazar!”.

The subtitles of the documentary highlight the virtues of the new Portuguese youth, which was indoctrinated according to the Salazarist principles: “A actual mocidade portuguesa vai sendo educada nos grandes princípios do amor da Pátria e da Família, e toma parte em tôdas as manifestações que tendem a glorificar o Estado Novo, redentor de Portugal.”

The director of the documentary also offers a tour through the posters about the event that were placed in the streets of the main towns of the Coimbra District as proof of the magnificent organisation of the event. The posters show profile pictures of Carmona (Head of State) and Salazar, and the camera zooms on the text long enough to allow its reading. The posters urge all people to attend the demonstration with such phrases as: “Quem não for ao Comicio anti-comunista é pela desordem e pelo crime. Quem faltar ao Comicio anti-comunista é simplesmente cobarde!”; “[...] Não reagir contra o comunismo é trair a Pátria e a Família [...]”. In the middle of the flood of demonstrators there is a bus decorated with the Nazi, Portuguese and Spanish flags at the front, as well as nationalist messages on the sides.

There are uniformed boys and girls parading amid Nazi and Italian flags. Some of them are shown in close up, waving handkerchiefs and singing the Portuguese anthem. In another shot there is a group of students in typical national costumes greeting with great enthusiasm. The speeches are given at the end of the demonstration from an incredibly high podium which has the pictures of the Head of State and the Head of the Government on its sides.

The documentary's subtitles interpret the meaning and value of the words of the participants: "O sr. Ministro do Interior e alguns outros oradores mostraram ao Povo de Coimbra, em breves palavras, o valor da atitude tomada pelo Govêrno Português na luta contra o Comunismo que ameaça a Península e como ela foi apreciada e louvada no estrangeiro." The anti-communist meeting ended with a terrifying message on the importance of fighting against the murderous communism aiming to destroy the country: "O comunismo, que significa uma declaração de guerra contra o Espírito, a Ordem, a Nação, a Família, é terrível e pavoroso, e só tenta viver à custa de milhões de vítimas que morrem a tiro, na fôrca, no fôgo, ou à fome."

5. The greatest production of the Salazarist cinema

A Revolução de Maio (The Revolution of May) is the first feature film produced by the SPN in 1937 with the intention of disseminating an idyllic image of the Portuguese Estado Novo regime. The film, which was shot by the company Tobis Portuguesa, is conceived as the greatest film work of the Estado Novo, which intended to put the Portuguese cinema at the same level of the German, Italian and Russian cinema, in its use as an effective weapon of propaganda [4]. *A Revolução de Maio* presents a new Portugal returning to old traditions; a country renewed by numerous public works undertaken by Salazar in a country dominated by joy; everything is organised and everybody has a role to play in society, regardless of the ideologies and the revolutionary movements that sought to terminate the social peace.

The feature film is a mixture of fiction and reality, because the plot is made with contemporary images of the political and social Portuguese life. The screenplay was written by António Ferro in collaboration with Lopes-Ribeiro, who conceived a work of fiction to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the military coup in Portugal (1936), although the delays relegated its premiere until the following year. The action is set precisely in 1936 and is based on the life of a persecuted politician, played by actor António Martínez, who enters Portugal to carry out a communist revolution because he is blinded by a *false* vision that the propaganda of the Popular Front implanted in him during his exile.

The character, named Cesar Valente (with ironic intent), aims to organise a revolutionary movement in Lisbon as he evades the police. But, little by little, he realises that what he is trying to achieve with his revolution makes no sense because the Portuguese society is happy living in a completely heavenly place forged by the

Estado Novo. In the end, Valente understands the work of the political police, who chase him from a distance as guard angels who expect him to face his own mistakes and rectify his vision of reality. In the end, the protagonist accepts the Salazarism to preserve the order and welfare achieved by the government that he, unconsciously, wanted to destroy.

The film, which takes place mainly in Lisbon [5], includes scenes taken from 14 documentaries about the so-called *Festas do Trabalho* (Labour Festivities), the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the regime change, a speech by Salazar, and images of the main public works of the government, etc.

A Revolução de Maio should be understood as a work of propaganda that is no stranger to the context of the Spanish Civil War, with a Salazar who fears that there will be civil protests caused by the agitated clandestine opposition. As *O Século* states “[...] todo o filme é bem português e não procura ignorar os problemas da hora que passa [...].” It is a film that at the time intended to show, through pictures, the magnificent achievements of the Estado Novo and to mythicize its leaders as sensitive towards the Portuguese people, who are confident, caring and grateful to their benefactors. The feature film became the main propaganda support for the regime abroad. The regime’s international projection had as a priority the colonial territories and the Portuguese communities in different countries.

The film was directed by António Lopes-Ribeiro and had the participation of 20 interpreters, including, in addition to António Martínez, Maria Clara, Emilia de Oliveira, Alexandre de Azevedo, Clement Pinto, Francisco Ribeiro, Luiz de Campos, José Gambôa, Elieser Kameneski and Ricardo Malheiro. The music was directed by Pedro Freitas Branco, the set decoration was directed by António Soares, and the music was written by Vencesalau Pinto, among many other collaborators, such as Paulo de Brito Aranha, Octavio Bobone, Manuel Luiz Vieira and Aquilino Mendes and Nunes das-Neves.

The film’s premiere, on 6 June 1937, was preceded by an advertising campaign put into place by the SPN in the Portuguese daily press for several weeks. Only in September 1937, this organism spent 68,000 escudos in advertising to promote *A Revolução de Maio*, which was highly advertised in the *O Século* newspaper, which published ads with the following message:

“É amanhã o grande acontecimento do ano!. O cinema português em marcha triunfal!. “Sonoro Filme” apresenta no Tivoli A REVOLUÇÃO DE MAIO. Um film de António Lopes Ribeiro. Um filme de acção violenta e empolgante!. O cinema exaltando um idéa!. O cinema exaltando Portugal!. NÃO É UM DOCUMENTÁRIO!. É um filme no GENERO POLICIAL e onde ha de tudo: Amôr, Perseguições, Dedicção, Crime, Romarias, Emmoção, Pitoresco, Paixões cegas, Patriotismo, Loucura, e um final apoteotico! (...)” (original emphases).

The premiere of *A Revolução de Maio* was held at the Tivoli Theatre in Lisbon with the presence of Salazar, the Deputy Director of the SPN, António Eça de Queiroz, authorities of the Estado Novo, members of the Legião Portuguesa and the Mocidade Portuguesa, and the diplomatic staff in Portugal. During the film presentation, the Portuguese government was supported by all the attendants and the dictator was cheered.

For the first time, the Portuguese people could watch in the cinema a nationalistic full-feature fiction film produced in Portugal. The Salazarist press highlighted the propaganda value of the film. *A Voz* praised the excellent opportunity offered by *A Revolução de Maio* to show to the Portuguese society and the whole world the achievements of the dictatorship. On the 17th of November of that year, the film was presented in Brussels thanks to the mediation of Augusto de Castro, the Portuguese ambassador in Belgium, but the organisation was conducted by the SPN, which sent its director, António Ferro, to coordinate the event.

Ferro was in Paris at that time to monitor the participation of Portugal at the International Exhibition. Thanks to the mediation of Portugal's Amis association, on 22 October, the director of the SPN visited the Belgian capital to deliver, in the Royal Museum, a lecture on the life and work of Salazar. The event was attended by the representatives of the Nuncio; the ambassadors from Italy, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Latvia and Colombia; the representative of General Franco in Brussels, Mister Zulueta; the Court Marshal of her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, as well as several senators, deputies and a large group of members of the Portuguese colony. According to Augusto de Castro, in a letter to Salazar, Ferro's conference was "[...] vivamente aplaudida, sendo o nome de V. Exa. objecto de ovações que frequentemente interromperam o conferencista [...]."

After Ferro's speech, the Portuguese delegation offered a banquet in his honour, which was attended by various Belgian political personalities and numerous journalists, including George Detry, president of the Foreign Press Association in Belgium, and directors of *Soir* and *Revue Belge*.

The screening of *A Revolução de Maio*, at the Palace of Fine Arts, was preceded by the documentaries *Mocidade Portuguesa* and *Açores*. The objective of this diplomatic offensive was to mitigate the effects of the anti-Salazarist propaganda of the European democratic movements and, in particular, the Portuguese exiles. The Legation invited once again the diplomatic staff, members of the government and Belgian parliamentarians, as well as intellectuals, bankers and businessmen. The cinema room was packed, with more than 800 people, of whom the majority were members of the Portuguese colony.

The show began with a speech by Belgian senator and former minister Paulo Crokaert, who spoke of the political and social benefits of the Portuguese regime. During the screening of *A Revolução de Maio*, the audience cheered some scenes,

especially those where Salazar appeared. The Belgian press featured the event and Augusto de Castro remarked that it was an “[...] excelente obra de propaganda e de publicidade do nosso Pais e do Regimen.”

Thanks to the efforts of the Portuguese diplomacy in collaboration with the SPN, the success of *A Revolução de Maio* spread to other countries. In Brazil, the film was received with infinite admiration by the national press as a “master lesson” of the government of Salazar, who was worshiped in the altar of paternal imperialism.

The premiere in Manaus took place in the Politheama cinema on October 25, 1938. In addition to *A Tarde*, other major newspapers of the city such as the *Jornal do Comércio* and the *Diario da Tarde*, encouraged the public to watch *A Revolução de Maio* through prominent advertisements targeting the Portuguese colony. These ads were illustrated with a legionnaire wearing a flag that described the film, in a festive tone, as the best Portuguese film ever made.

“A REVOLUÇÃO DE MAIO. O maior filme portuguez de todos os tempos. Espectaculo dedicado á laboriosa colonia portugueza, na pessoa do Ilustre Senhor Moysés Cruz, digno vice-cônsul de Portugal. Palpitae, corações portuguezes, tendo uma visão da grandeza de Portugal, em seu progresso, em sua cultura, no engrandecimento do seu exército e da sua marinha. Uma realização de António Lopes Ribeiro, com Maria Clara, António Martinez, Emilia de Oliveira, Clemente Pinto e Alexandre Azevedo. A alma do velho Portugal atravez de suas tradições e de sua profunda e encantadora irradiação. este film é um himno ao Estado Novo e á grande obra do Dr. OLIVEIRA SALAZAR. (Este film volta ao sul pelo vapor “Pará”, sendo exhibido, por esse motivo, poucas vezes)” (original emphases).

A Revolução de Maio was even showed in Budapest, during a conference organised by a Hungarian intellectual, who was invited by the Portuguese diplomacy to speak about the social reforms of Salazar in his country. The copy distributed in Hungary was donated by the House of Portugal in Paris, which was in charge of disseminating the film propaganda of the Estado Novo in the French capital. The film was also shown in North America. The SPN was satisfied with the success achieved by the film in the USA. Meanwhile in Canada, the SPN ceded the film’s distribution rights to the reverend Henri Roy, through Montreal’s Consulate. However, the Consul’s fears of demonstrations, delayed its release to the Canadian public.

5.1. The dissemination of *A Revolução de Maio* in Spain

During 1938 and 1939, the SPN disseminated the film widely in other countries. The work of António Lopes Ribeiro was shown (with Spanish subtitles) with great success in many Spanish cities that were in the hands of the nationalist rebels. In Lisbon, the SPN, in collaboration with Francoist representatives and the Ministry of Union

Organisation and Action of Franco, sent to the Portuguese Embassy in Spain the film along with several documentaries on the social work of the corporate bodies of the Estado Novo. The aim was to launch a campaign orchestrated by Franco's government on the advantages achieved by the corporate regimes.

The Portuguese ambassador in Spain, Pedro Teotónio Pereira, personally collaborated in this campaign. In alliance with the Francoist authorities, he organised the screening of *A Revolução de Maio* in Burgos for the rebel leadership and later, together with the Civil Governor of San Sebastián, he organised several screenings in the city's cinemas, where donations were collected for the "regiões libertadas" (liberated areas). The Portuguese diplomat funded the printing of brochures about the film and gave free tickets to wounded or on-leave soldiers.

The film's premiere in the Basque city was held on 29 January 1939 in the Kursaal cinema, presented by the Civil Governor, who, according to Pereira, highlighted the lesson taught by the film and stated that "[...] o povo espanhol devia sentir-se edificado pelo renascimento da nação irmã que também se salvara do caos mercê do esforço imenso que aquela película simbolisava [...]." *A Revolução de Maio* was also shown at the Victoria Eugenia Theatre and the Salón Miramar in the following weeks. The Francoist newspapers intensely publicise the film. A Falangist newspaper, *Unidad*, published a complimentary critique of the film, which stressed its technical and artistic perfection as well as its pedagogical value for the Spanish public:

"[...] Apart from serving as propaganda for the friendly nation, this film has many very interesting aspects for the public that is eager to discover the beauties of a good film. Its photography is almost unbeatable, its sound is almost unique due to its clarity and synchronisation; everything is directed with a master hand. Its argument is emotional and keeps the public increasingly interested in its development, with a comic character, the famous Barata, who plays his role with such success that he makes the audience laugh with delight at his situations. In opposition to this character, there is a sinister pseudo journalist, Fernández, who is a professional agitator commissioned by the Marxist International to create difficulties for his government. However, after an internal struggle, the social influence turns him into the son of Portugal and in an act of true contrition, instead of sinking it with his criminal revolution he salutes the national flag and departs from the wrong direction. Apart from the argument, the film shows the prosperity of a country that trusted its leaders, who never stop working in favour of their people." (*Unidad*, 02/02/1939) (*text translated from Spanish*).

Various institutions of the government of Burgos requested copies of *A Revolução de Maio* to the SPN to hold events to collect donations for the army. After the end of the war, the film of Lopes Ribeiro was still shown in some Spanish cinemas. It was presented in Vigo on 18 October 1939, with honours, by the Portuguese Consul in the city's largest auditorium, the García Barbón Theater. There was a party which was

attended by several hundred people, the leaders of the movement, and local personalities. The *Faro de Vigo* newspaper described the event as a “clear triumph” and a “[...] magnificent exponent of the great progress achieved by the Portuguese Nation since the implantation of the New State [...]”

6. Conclusions

Film propaganda during the establishment of the Salazar’s Estado Novo regime, in the 1930s, played an important role in persuading the Portuguese public opinion. The *Secretariado da Propaganda Nacional* (SPN) created innovative infrastructures like the People’s Mobile Cinema, which was put at the service of the regime to indoctrinate the Portuguese society in the “política do espírito” in order to achieve a rapid integration and participation in the corporate structures of the Estado Novo, which was institutionalised through the 1933 Constitution.

Cinema became an instrument whose development was determined by its propaganda use. The Portuguese dictatorship financed various film productions that the SPN disseminated nationally and internationally. One of the most significant productions was the feature film *A Revolução de Maio*, which had a great reception in Spain by the Francoist authorities, who used it to make propaganda for the Iberian fascist movement.

During the Spanish Civil War, the Portuguese cinema was at the service of Franco. Salazar applied severe censorship to the cinema in order to avoid the influence of the Spanish “revolution” in Portugal. Portuguese movie theatres only showed films that favoured the image of the Francoist fighters. The cinematic vision of Spain offered through the films produced by the SPN was completely distorted.

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8. Notes

[1] Both publications offered articles narrating the activities of the operators working in Spain in the filming of war documentaries. The articles did not contain important data or specific documentary references, but, in some cases, had a clear propagandistic goal. *Cinéfilo*, which was owned by the publisher of *O Século*, the *Sociedade Nacional de Tipografia*, published four articles about this matter. The first article, entitled “A produção espanhola ante a Guerra Civil” (“The Spanish production company in the Civil War”) (year 8, n° 426, 10/17/1936, pp. 9-12), offered some notes about the work of the French and Spanish production companies in the battle fields. The second article, entitled “As actualidades espanholas em Portugal” (News from Spain in Portugal) (year 8, n° 427, 10/24/1936, p. 2), is perhaps the most persuasive text. It describes the success of the war documentaries disseminated in Portugal. In the third article, “A organização da “Fox Movietone News na Guerra Civil de Espanha” (The organisation of Fox Movietone News in the Spanish Civil War) (year 8, n° 4290, 11/07/1936, pp. 7-8), the director of Fox in Europe explains the organisation of the American company in Spain. The fourth article, “Na Guerra Civil de Espanha, Memórias dum operador de cinema. As ruínas gloriosas do Alcázar” (“The Spanish Civil War, Memoirs of a film cameraman. The glorious ruins of Alcázar”) (year 8, n° 430, 11/14/1936, pp. 7-8), tells us how S. Uberti, a Fox’s cameraman, filmed the conquest of Toledo’s small Fort. *Cine-Jornal* dedicated two articles to the war: “A situação do cinema em Espanha durante a guerra civil” (“The situation of cinema in Spain during the Civil War”) (n° 47, 09/07/1936, p. 2) and “O sublime sacrifício dos operadores de actualidades na Espanha sangrenta...” (“The sublime sacrifice of news cameramen in the bloody Spain”) (n° 48, 14/09/1936, p. 4). Both articles were reproductions of articles from French magazines: *Cinematographie Française* and *Cinemonde*, respectively.

[2] The police informed the Minister that viewers constantly booed Hitler and Mussolini, every time they or their troops appeared on the screen. The Portuguese guards explained to the Ministry their difficulties to act against the audience inside the cinemas: “(...) É de facto bastante difícil a intervenção policial para acabar com tais excessos, porquanto pode dizer-se que a manifestação é feita por todos os espectadores, e ainda por os salões se encontrarem às escuras. É frequente assistirem a estes espectáculos estrangeiros que certamente reprovam tal atitude e até alguns poderam melindrar-se, e com subida razão, dando lugar a qualquer incidente de gravidade. Afigurase-me que talvez fosse de conveniencia uma determinação superior para, pelo menos durante este momento de excitação produzida nas populações pelo terror a uma nova guerra, não serem projectados documentários em que aparecessem os assuntos que venho referindo.” (cf. Arquivo do Ministerio do Interior/Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo [AMI-GM/ANTT], M 509, box 67. Official letter n° 14,

from the *Comando Geral da Polícia de Segurança Pública* in Coimbra to the *Ministério do Interior*, 19/14/1939.

[3] The full list of films produced by the SPN between 28 May 1936 and 28 May 1937 is as follows: *Jornada Corporativa em Vila Nova de Gaia*, *Juramento de Bandeira em Infantaria 1*, *Juramento de Bandeira no Alfeite*, *Homenagem aos mortos da Guerra*, *Desfile Naval*, *Carmona e Salazar*. *Ídolos do Povo*, *Festa Vindimaria de 1936*, *Parada da Policia de Lisboa*, *Pescadores da Povia de Varzim*, *Comemoração da Batalha de Aljubarrota*, *Regatas Internacionais da Figueira da Foz*, *Cortejo Regional em Vila Franca de Xira*, *Congresso dos Bombeiros em Espinho*, *Comícios Anti-comunistas em Coimbra e Porto*, *Manifestação ao Governo em 31 de Outubro*, *Chegada dos Trimotores de Guerra*, *Visita Presidencial ao Porto, Braga e Santo Tirso*, *Exercícios finais dos Graduados da Legião Portuguesa*, *Dia da Marinha - cerimónia do içar da Bandeira dos Descobrimentos*, *Exercícios e Acampamento da Legião Portuguesa no Calhariz*, *Festas do Trabalho em Famalicão*, *Lançamento dos barcos em ferro para a Pesca do Bacalhau*, *Lição de Ginástica pelos soldados do Destacamento da Penha de Fraça*, *Inauguração do Parque Infantil no Campo 28 de Maio*, *Trabalho dos Operários para o Pavilhão Português da Exposição de Paris*, *Juramento da Bandeira em Artilharia 3*.

[4] In Lisbon *Tobis* built eleven studio sets and one 2-story-high outdoors set. To create *A Revolução de Maio*, the production company shot 70,000 meters of film, of which only 3,600 meters were selected, and 735 photographs were made. Cf. *O Século*, nº 19826, 28/05/1937, p. 3.

[5] Scenes were filmed at the following locations of the Portuguese capital: In the Tagus estuary, several scenes were shot on board of the “Van Dyck”, “Fort de Troyon” ships; in a tug of Lisbon’s *Parceria dos Vapores*; in the dock of Alcântara; in Rocha do Conde de Óbidos, of Santos; in the Sodré; in the shipyards of the S.C.N.; in the avenues: *India*, *24 de Julho*, *da Liberdade*, *do 5 de Outubro*, *Miguel Bombarda* and *Rovisco Pais*; in the neighbourhoods: *Bairro Social do Arco do Cego*, *Bairro do Instituto Superior Técnico*, *Bairro Azul*, *Bairro da Liberdade y Alfama*; in the *Miradoiro da senhora do Monte*, in the *São Jorge Castle*, in *Zimboro da Estrela*; and in the gardens: *Jardim da Estrela*, *Jardim Botânico*, *Jardim de S. Pedro of Alcântara*, *Parque Eduardo VII*, *Parque 28 de Maio*; in the *Terreiro do Paço*, the *Rossio Square*, the *Travessa de Palmeira*, etc. Scenes were also filmed in the following outskirts of Lisbon: *Forte de Almada*, *Sintra*, *Estoril* (beach, tamariz, palace, hotel, park and casino), in *Barcarena* (facilities of the *Emissora Nacional*), in *Alfeite*, etc. A team of 21 people (artists, technicians and assistants) also travelled two times to the north of the country, in in a caravan of 7 vehicles (2 film trucks, a lorry and 4 cars). Scenes were filmed in the city of *Oporto*, in *Leixões*, in *Matozinhos*, in *Santo Tirso*, in the village of *Santiago da Cruz*, in *Barcelos* (*Festa do Trabalho*), etc. Another car with a

team of camera operators visited multiple points of Portugal (a total of 25,353 km) to collect typical scenes of the folklore. Cf.: *O Século*, nº 19826, 28/05/1937, p. 3.

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