

“THE MOST CHRISTIAN STATE IN THE WORLD”*: IRISH NATIONALIST NEWSPAPERS AND THE *ESTADO NOVO*, 1932-1945

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Throughout the first years of Salazar’s *Estado Novo* regime, Portugal was the object of particular attention in Ireland. Reflecting this general tendency, the pro-treaty nationalist newspaper *The Irish Independent* and its republican rival *The Irish Press* both painted a mostly positive picture of Portugal’s dictator. In their eyes, the Portuguese leader’s chief merit was, besides having contributed to Portugal’s financial recovery, to provide “a striking example of what God demanded”, as the *Irish Independent* then put it. This article analyzes the perspective on the Portuguese dictator presented by these two Irish newspapers and the arguments on which they relied to express their support for his dictatorial regime. Based on an analysis of contents of the most significant articles devoted to Salazar and the *Estado Novo* over the period, its main conclusion is that both newspapers, while disagreeing on most issues on the Irish scene, basically shared the same positions towards Salazar’s regime, but came to opposite conclusions as far as the Irish situation at the time is concerned.

Keywords: António de Oliveira Salazar; Eamon de Valera; Irish newspapers; Irish nationalism; *Estado Novo*.

Durante os primeiros anos do Estado Novo, Portugal era objeto de muita atenção por parte da Irlanda. Esta tendência reflete-se nos dois principais jornais nacionalistas irlandeses da altura, o *Irish Independent*, favorável ao Tratado Anglo-irlandês, e o republicano *Irish Press*, que passavam uma imagem claramente positiva do ditador português. Para ambos, a principal virtude de Salazar era, além

* Title of an *Irish Independent* article on 2 June, 1940.

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de ter contribuído para a recuperação financeira de Portugal, de fornecer “um exemplo marcante do que Deus exigia”, para citar um artigo no *Irish Independent* nesta altura. Este trabalho analisa a perspetiva apresentada por estes dois jornais irlandeses relativamente ao ditador português, bem como os argumentos por eles apresentados para exprimir o seu apoio ao regime ditatorial. Baseado numa análise de conteúdos dos artigos mais significativos sobre Salazar ao longo do período, as principais conclusões deste artigo tendem a demonstrar que, enquanto os jornais estão em desacordo em relação à maioria das questões relacionadas com a vida política irlandesa, partilham das mesmas posições sobre o Estado Novo mas tiram conclusões opostas no âmbito da situação política irlandesa.

Palavras-chave: António de Oliveira Salazar; Eamon de Valera; jornais irlandeses; nacionalismo irlandês; *Estado Novo*.

Since the beginning of the financial crisis in 2008, Ireland and Portugal have often been the object of comparisons of all kinds, especially after both countries asked for a bailout, in November 2010 and April 2011 respectively. But there is more in common between Ireland and Portugal than their current financial, economic or social difficulties, especially in terms of economic conditions, demographic evolution, social and religious context or international relations throughout the twentieth century. In particular, despite essentially different political regimes, Ireland and Portugal went through some similar experiences between 1932, the year when both de Valera and Salazar arrived to power, and the end of World War II, in which both leaders chose to keep their respective countries neutral.

There have been numerous studies comparing the Portuguese *Estado Novo* in its pre-war phase with countries then living in regimes somewhat comparable to Portugal's at the time (Franco's Spain, Hitler's Germany, Mussolini's Italy, Dollfuss's Austria or even Pétain's France in the early 1940s), as António Costa Pinto has shown in his *Salazar's Dictatorship and European Fascism*^[1]. However, possibly due to the unquestionably democratic nature of Ireland's political regime since the foundation of the Free State in 1922^[2], few studies have been dedicated to the relationship between

1 António Costa Pinto, *Salazar's Dictatorship and European Fascism* (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 1995).

2 The Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed between an Irish delegation led by Michael Collins and Lloyd George's British Government on 6 December 1921, and ratified by the Dáil by 64 votes to 57 on 7 January 1922. In June, 92 pro-Treaty candidates were elected, against 36 Republicans, in the general election. This division led to the Civil War between pro and anti-Treaty troops from April 1922 to May 1923.

Ireland and Portugal throughout the four decades of Salazar's reign, with the notable exception of Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses's *Correspondência Diplomática Irlandesa sobre Portugal, o Estado Novo e Salazar* in 2005^[3].

The period chosen for this study, from 1932 to 1945, covers the first twelve years of the *Estado Novo*^[4] and coincides with the arrival to power of both de Valera^[5] and Salazar who shared, besides an exceptional duration in power^[6], many personal characteristics (Ribeiro de Menezes, 2009: 354). This period may also be seen as one when the similarities between the two countries are the most striking, both on the domestic and the international scenes with, for example, the arrival to power of leaders who would strongly influence their country for several decades, the reaction to rising national Fascist movements^[7], the approval of a new Constitution, in 1937 and 1933 respectively^[8], the debate around the Spanish civil war^[9] or neutrality in the

3 Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses, *Correspondência Diplomática* (Lisboa: Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, 2005).

4 The *Estado Novo* regime begins with the ratification of the Constitution in March 1933.

5 De Valera first took part in the 1916 Easter Rising, was elected MP for East Clare the following year and became President of the illegal Irish Parliament, Dáil Éireann, in 1920 before opposing the Treaty and leading the anti-Treaty troops in the Civil War. After founding the Fianna Fáil party in 1926, Eamon de Valera first won the general election in February 1932, and again in January 1933, July 1937, June 1938, June 1943 and May 1944. He lost to John Costello's Fine Gael (which would lead a coalition government with Clann na Poblachta and the Labour Party) in February 1948. Back in office in June 1951, he had to leave power again following his defeat in the May 1954 general election. He became Taoiseach again for the last time in March 1957 before giving way to Sean Lemass in 1959 to become President of the Irish Republic, a function to which he would be reelected in 1966 and which he would hold until 1973, then aged 91.

6 António de Oliveira Salazar was first elected as a Member of Parliament for the Catholic Party in 1921 but the Parliament was soon dissolved. Following the military coup in May 1926, he was offered a post in the new cabinet but declined it, alleging he didn't have the conditions to solve the financial crisis (Rosas 2012: 51-53). Eventually made Minister of Finances in April 1928, Salazar progressively gained influence until his nomination as President of the Council in July 1932, a post he would cling to until his health condition forced him to stand down in September 1968.

7 Eoin O'Duffy's Army Comrades Association, or "Blueshirts", in Ireland and Rolão Preto's *Nacional-Sindicalista* movement in Portugal (Pinto, 2006: 207- 210)

8 In Portugal, on the day of the plebiscite (19 March, 1933), only 6,000 voters opposed the New State's Constitution, against 720,000 who supported it. Nearly half a million abstentions were counted as votes in favour, due to the fact that the Constitution considered voting as compulsory (Barreto & Mónica, 1998: 404-412). In Ireland, after being approved by the Dáil on 14 June, 1937 (62 votes in favour, 48 against), the Constitution (*Bunreacht na hÉireann*) was approved by 56.5% of the voters on 1 July (Lee, 1989: 210).

9 Most historians now agree about Salazar's important part in the success of Franco's nationalist troops in the Spanish Civil War (see, for example, Alberto Pena, *O que parece, é*, Lisbon: Tinta da China, 2009). In Ireland, de Valera resisted strong pressure to intervene on the Nationalist side, especially from the leading opposition party Fine Gael and the Catholic authorities, as well as newspapers such as the *Irish Independent* and the *Cork Examiner*. Following the position

second World War^[10]. These common points, as well as the difficult economic and social conditions both countries were going through in the early 1930s, may partly explain the interest in Portugal demonstrated at the time by Irish society in general and Irish newspapers in particular (Ribeiro de Menezes, 2005: 13).

On 2 June 1940, an *Irish Independent* article dedicated to the *Estado Novo* and entitled “The most Christian state in the world” considered that “It is generally agreed that today Portugal’s organization is nearer than that of any other country in the world to that proposed by the Encyclicals of Leo XIII and his successors”. The following year, while justifying the opening of Dublin’s first diplomatic representation in Lisbon, Eamon de Valera, then Taoiseach (Ireland’s Prime Minister) made the following statement in the Dáil (Irish Parliament):

Portugal is a neighboring country. In certain respects, her geographical situation and her attitude in relation to the present conflict are similar to our own and, no doubt, the problems which confront the two countries, particularly at the present time, have also many points of resemblance. We have all heard of the great advance which Portugal has made under the leadership of her present Premier, Dr. Salazar. The progressive and Christian manner in which the Portuguese Government is handling its economic and other domestic problems has attracted attention and admiration throughout the world and not least, I think, in this country^[11].

The objective of this paper is to analyze the perspective on the Portuguese dictator and regime as presented in Ireland’s major nationalist newspapers of the time, the *Irish Independent* and the *Irish Press* and, above all, the arguments on which they relied to express their support of his dictatorial regime. In order to do so, this essay is based on an analysis of

of the Society of Nations, Ireland would only recognize Franco’s government at the end of the conflict, in February 1939 (McGarry, 1999: 157).

10 António Salazar and Eamon de Valera announced their country’s neutrality in WWII on 1 and 2 September 1939 respectively. But while Portugal’s neutrality was strongly encouraged by the allies and, in particular, Britain, as a way of keeping Franco’s Nationalist Spain out of the conflict (Rosas, 1994: 320), de Valera’s decision was made and stuck to despite strong pressure from Britain’s Prime Minister, Churchill, to enter the war on the allies’ side (Keogh & O’Driscoll, 2004: 126). Besides, if Ireland was, on the whole, quite faithful to the allies’ cause, Salazar’s Portugal made the best of business with Germany, namely with exports of tungsten, before progressively giving in to the allies’ demands from 1943 onwards, for example on the use of the highly strategic Azores archipelago.

11 Extract from a Dáil debate on 4 December 1941, available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/0085/D.0085.194112040036.html>.

contents of the most significant articles devoted to Salazar and the *Estado Novo* by these two newspapers between the dictator's arrival to power in 1932 and the end of World War II^[12]. Accordingly, after briefly presenting the characteristics of the newspapers in view of Ireland's political debate at the time, the views expressed by both the *Irish Independent* and the *Irish Press* will be defined, taking into account the specificities of the Irish situation and the influence of the newspapers' positions within Irish politics upon their attitude towards Salazar's regime.

Before presenting an analysis of the contents of the articles, it is important to understand the characteristics of the newspapers chosen in order to determine to what extent their perception of the Portuguese situation and leader may be biased by their position on the Irish political scene. Indeed, the *Irish Independent* and the *Irish Press* represent different tendencies within Irish nationalism. Originally born of the division between Charles Parnell's supporters and opponents after the nationalist leader's fall from grace in 1891^[13], *The Irish Daily Independent* soon became a British-style mass circulation daily paper (McCartney, 1984: 31), particularly after it was bought by William Martin Murphy, a rich Dublin businessman, in 1900. In the 1930s, it enjoyed an impressive circulation of about 150,000 (Brown, 1937: 171). Following the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922, the newspaper went on supporting the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty, which led to the foundation of the 22-county state, against the Republicans, who rejected it in favour of a 32-county republic. In the 1930s, the newspaper gave unambiguous support to William Cosgrave's pro-Treaty government until 1932 and was the first opposition newspaper to de Valera's successive Fianna Fáil governments between 1932 and 1948.

The *Irish Independent's* systematic hostility towards Eamon de Valera led the Republican leader to found his own title, the *Irish Press*, which defined its ambitions in its very first editorial, on 5 September 1931, in these terms:

Our ideal, culturally, is an Irish Ireland, aware of its own greatness, sure of itself, conscious of the spiritual forces which have formed it into a distinct people having its own language and customs and a traditionally Christian philosophy of life.

12 A total of over 160 articles.

13 Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-1891), a Protestant landowner, first led the war for the land through the Land League before fighting for Home Rule from the early 1880s onwards. His alliance to British liberal Prime Minister Gladstone led to the first Home Rule Bill, which was narrowly rejected by the House of Commons in June 1886. In 1890, Parnell was forced to resign as head of the Irish Parliamentary Party after his relationship with a British officer's wife was revealed.

With sales around 100,000 in the early 1930s (*Ibidem.*), during the first years of Fianna Fáil in power, the *Irish Press* held an important part as the mouthpiece for de Valera's ideal of a Catholic, Gaelic, rural and self-sufficient Ireland (Coogan, 1999: 444)^[14]. Despite their opposition on the national political scene, the *Irish Independent* and the *Irish Press* both made a highly positive assessment of the first years of the *Estado Novo* regime in Portugal, while drawing different conclusions from this common judgment.

Indeed, although disagreeing on most issues on the domestic scene, both the pro-treaty nationalist newspaper *Irish Independent* and its republican rival the *Irish Press* painted, at least until the mid-1940's, a mostly positive picture of Portugal's dictator António de Oliveira Salazar based on their admiration of Portugal's financial recovery.

Among many articles praising the alleged achievements of the *Estado Novo*, the *Irish Independent* writes, on 28 February 1939, that "under the strong, decisive, energetic and yet mild and moderate management of Dr Salazar, the country [has] emerged from a state of chaos into a Model Nation" (*Irish Independent*, 28 February 1939). Indeed, over the period, the *Irish Independent* is often particularly enthusiastic in its praise of Salazar's achievements with statements such as "Portugal, transformed under the wise guidance of Dr. Salazar, is to-day one of the best-governed countries in Europe" (1 March 1938), or "the Portuguese can point with equal pride to the achievement of their ancestors and those of their present rulers" (3 April 1940).

Besides a genuine feeling of admiration for the changes brought to Portugal's economic situation, one may wonder whether the *Independent* may not have had other reasons for such an unambiguous enthusiasm: by systematically praising the Portuguese evolution, the faithful supporter of the pro-treaty government in place until 1932 indirectly minimizes de Valera's achievements. Thus, statements such as "In Portugal we have a striking example of the emergence of a nation from a condition of almost chronic unrest to a state of ordered progress and stability" (18 April 1939) may be seen as an underlying criticism of the Fianna Fáil government's incapacity to restore peace and prosperity in the island. More strikingly,

14 Besides the *Irish Press*, the *Irish Press* group included an evening (the *Evening Press*, 1954) and a Sunday newspaper (the *Sunday Press*, 1949), all highly successful until the early 1960s. Due to the evolution of Irish society as well as the management of the newspapers, the group finally closed down in 1995. The demise of the *Irish Press* Group is often seen as the symbol of Ireland's evolution between the 1960s and 1990s.

when the *Independent* praises Salazar for “showing the world what a small state can do when it is well governed” (11 May 1940), one may conclude that, in the perspective of the newspaper, another small country – Ireland – could do much better if only it was better governed...

Not surprisingly, the *Irish Press* is less enthusiastic than its rival and underlines the achievements of the Portuguese authorities in much more moderate terms. Above all, it repeatedly reminds its readers that, in many aspects, Portugal, for all its progresses, still stands quite a long way from Ireland in fields such as education (“Dr Salazar [...] has built many schools, but many years must pass before the standard of education even remotely approaches ours”, 8 December 1938), public health (“In Portugal, in spite of the many hospitals which have been built, the infant mortality rate is one of the highest in Europe. It does not compare favorably with the infant death rate in this country”, 8 December 1938) or energy (“Although a much larger country, with double our population, Portugal has nothing comparable to the Shannon scheme and 70 % of her motive power is still derived from imported fuel”, 22 September 1944). On the whole, the position of the *Irish Press* may be summed up by the following extract from an editorial on 25 April 1939:

Dr Salazar, nobody will deny, is a Statesman of great qualities and high ideals. (...) But a lot of nonsense is sometimes talked about the magnitude of his achievements. Portugal is still far from being a Utopia; it remains, for all Salazar’s efforts (...) one of the most backward countries in Europe. In such things as education, culture, hygiene, public health services and the general standard of living, it [cannot] compare (...) with this country.

As far as the representation of Salazar himself is concerned, the divergences between both newspapers may turn out to be even greater because biased by their own positions towards Eamon de Valera.

Many efforts were made by the *Estado Novo* authorities to build up Salazar’s image of a dictator living according to Christian values and dedicated to his country to the point of self-sacrifice (Mesquita, 2007: 16-20; Léonard, 1996: 9-73). In this respect, descriptions by the *Irish Independent* and, to a lesser extent, the *Irish Press* sometimes sound like panegyrics of the *Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional*. Among plenty of examples, Salazar is successively defined as “the most modest but intrinsically greatest of dictators” (*Irish Independent*, 14 November 1940), an “economic wizard” (*Irish Independent*, 12 February 1938), a “scholar dedicated to God and statistics” (*Irish Press*, 24 December 1941), a “dictator *malgré lui*” (*Irish Press*,

12 January 1938), “the professor who left his class-room to remake a state” (*Irish Press*, 25 April 1939), “a medieval monk” (*Irish Independent*, 1 March 1938), “the hermit economic-philosopher” (*Irish Press*, 16 May 1938), “a retiring scholar, monastic in his manners” (*Irish Press*, 20 April 1936), “This modern Cincinnatus” (*Irish Independent*, 28 April 1941), “a devout, ascetic man” (*Irish Independent*, 28 April 1941) or “this only non-violent, gentle dictator” (*Irish Independent*, 10 March 1938).

However, all these descriptions probably represent the least original component of Irish newspapers’ representation of the Portuguese leader, and it may be more significant to determine how they may be seen in the Irish context of the time. In particular, considering the way both Salazar and de Valera concentrated attentions on their respective national political scene, it seems difficult to consider the representation of Salazar without references to the Irish leader, be them direct or indirect. Again, although the *Irish Independent* never directly associates the Portuguese dictator with the Irish head of government, numerous allusions to de Valera may be found in some of its comments on Salazar. For instance, the statement “Dr Salazar is probably the only prominent statesman in Europe who is in a position to repeat his public utterances and promises over 11 years without advertising his own inconsistency” implies that de Valera is either not prominent or, more likely given the newspaper’s constant criticism of de Valera, not true to his word. The same could be said of statements such as “This only non-violent, gentle dictator is unique in shunning the limelight, rarely makes speeches, and never poses for the camera, a fact which many in this age of vulgar publicity will count much to his credit” (1 March 1938) or “Fortunately for Portugal, a great man was at hand to save the country from the excesses of Totalitarianism” (16 September 1938). This latter remark sounds even more powerful when one remembers that de Valera was then growingly accused by his opponents of behaving like a dictator.

On the contrary, the *Irish Press* associates de Valera with Salazar whenever the opportunity arises, considering, for example, that “what is told of Portugal might be told of our own country, under rulers who are guided by the same vision” or that “Mr. de Valera is like Dr Salazar of Portugal, a leader of the people maintaining a firm rule and yet upholding the principles and practice of democracy”. These efforts to make de Valera benefit from Salazar’s achievements and popularity are condemned by the opposition leader, who declares in the Dáil at the time: “Let us at least dismiss the implication that Salazar’s policies are De Valera’s and that when we praise

Salazar what we are really doing is patting De Valera on the back, because if there are two men in Europe further apart...^[15].

As far as the true essence of the regime is concerned, one may determine, on the basis of the corpus chosen, Ireland's position on this issue as evidenced in the newspapers of the time. On 23 March 1938, the *Irish Independent* publishes a letter to the editor in which a reader writes:

The implication that Portugal under Salazar is anti-democratic is a misrepresentation of the facts. (...) Portugal is a satisfactory example of what may be classified as a democratic dictatorship. Likewise in Nationalist Spain Franco has intimated that he will be largely inspired by the democratic ideal. Neither Salazar nor Franco is Fascist.

However baffling, this view illustrates the opinions repeatedly expressed in this newspaper over the years, all tending to deny the Fascist nature of the *Estado Novo*. Among other examples, the *Independent's* special correspondent to Portugal defends the same position on 24 February 1938:

It is often said that the Portuguese State is like the Italian and the German, a Totalitarian State. Dr Salazar has warned people against taking this view. (...) In a word, we do not meet that fanatical policy of self-sufficiency which is so rife in other countries today. Dr Salazar pursues his work quietly without any flourishing of trumpets. He knows that he has the mass of his people behind him.

There is no trace of any debate about the Fascist nature of the Portuguese regime in the *Irish Press*. However, according to the Republican newspaper, Salazar's dictatorship is both legitimate and extremely positive, as one may judge from statements such as "The conditions which Dr. Salazar encountered when he assumed authority were enough to justify almost any form of government that would bring peace and stability" (25 April 1939), "Could one ever be converted to the idea of a dictatorship in any form the present condition of Portugal under Dr Salazar would doubtless be one of the strongest arguments in its favour" (18 April 1939), "If dictatorships are

15 James Dillon, Fine Gael leader, in the Dáil, 4 December 1941, available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/0085/D.0085.194112040036.html>. Years later, when de Valera and Salazar met in Portugal in 1953 at a time when de Valera was growingly accused of democratic, or at least autocratic, ambitions, former Fine Gael Minister for Justice General McEoin declared: "I have every reason to believe that the Taoiseach, when he met Dr. Salazar in Portugal, had already come to the conclusion that the system of government and finance in that country could, and should, be put into effect here" (*The Irish Times*, "Is Taoiseach considering Salazar system?", 13 October, 1953).

essential to the modern world - a theory to which I am reluctant to subscribe – let them be on the model which has given Portugal the ordered rule and measure of popular content which it is now enjoying” (2 June 1940) or “However we may dislike the idea of dictatorship, there is this to be said for the rule of one strong man: that more than once in history, order – which is peace – has been re-established through the action of a single mind, rightly directed” (20 April 1936).

On 9 September 1938, both the *Irish Independent* and the *Irish Press* quote the following extract of a speech at the Catholic Social Conference in Belfast: “There are two states in Europe today that furnish us with striking examples of what God demands. One is the Portugal of Dr Salazar and the other country is Eire”. Considering the strong influence of the Catholic Church over politics in Ireland at the time, the Christian values associated to the *Estado Novo* could hardly leave Irish observers indifferent. What is more surprising is the fact that, whereas de Valera is usually seen as a statesman keen on seeing his people “living the life that God desires that Man should live”, as he once put it himself in a famous speech broadcast to the nation in March 1943^[16], the *Irish Independent* is again much more enthusiastic than its Republican rival in its praise of the Portuguese leader in this respect. Among many other examples, the *Irish Independent* considers that “Portugal’s organization is nearer than that of any other country in the world to that proposed by the Encyclicals of Leo XIII and his successors” (2 June 1940), that “Dr Salazar (...) is merely expressing in words suited to present-day conditions the immemorial traditions of Christian statesmanship” (1 May 1941), “Salazar (...) has breathed a new spirit of Christian hope in his people” (12 February 1938) and that, on the whole, “the new regime owes its triumphs to a whole-hearted acceptance of Christian principles in social relations, in economics and in political life” (10 June 1940).

Again, beyond the praise of the Portuguese situation, the condemnation of the Irish government and its leader is never far. For example, although the 1937 Constitution is widely regarded as the setting of Catholic principles as the basis of Ireland’s political life and social policies (Chubb, 1991:

16 “That Ireland which we dreamed of would be the home of a people who valued material wealth only as the basis of right living, of a people who were satisfied with frugal comfort and devoted their leisure to the things of the spirit – a land whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with the sounds of industry, with romping of sturdy children, the contests of athletic youths and the laughter of happy maidens, whose firesides would be forums for the wisdom of serene old age. It would, in short, be the home of a people living the life that God desires that man should live”. Extract from Eamon de Valera’s broadcast speech to the Nation on Saint Patrick’s Day, 1943.

45), the *Independent* insists on considering Portugal as “the only country in Europe in which a conscious and determined effort has been made to translate the teachings of the Papal Encyclicals into practical legislation” (10 August 1938). The same can be said of the place given to the family, a pillar of both Salazar’s and de Valera’s vision of society, when the *Irish Independent* regrets that “we have not given such practical effect to the social importance of the family as the Portuguese have done by establishing the family vote” (31 October 1939). On various occasions, the newspaper urges the Irish government to imitate the Portuguese regime in this respect, as in February 1940: “It is to be hoped that Salazar’s works and his ideals would be closely examined and carefully pondered by those responsible for building up the new Ireland” (22 February 1940).

To conclude, the most striking feature of this brief review of Irish nationalist newspapers’ coverage of the *Estado Novo* regime in Portugal between 1932 and 1945 may be the fact that, in spite of supporting different political parties and visions of the Irish Nation, both the *Irish Independent* and the *Irish Press* make an extremely positive assessment of the first years of the regime and its leader. At the same time, however, their representation of Salazar and the *Estado Novo* may be seen as actually being much more centered on domestic issues than on Portugal itself.

Indeed, both the pro-Treaty *Irish Independent*, and the anti-Treaty *Irish Press* seem to use their coverage of the Portuguese situation as an instrument not only in their commercial fight for the Catholic readership but, above all, in their political antagonism. In this respect, one may compare this attitude with the newspapers’ positions towards the Spanish Civil war, with the *Irish Independent*, like Ireland’s other major nationalist newspaper of the time, the *Cork Examiner*, and the Irish Catholic authorities, unambiguously supporting Franco’s side (Horgan, 2001: 38, 39) while the *Irish Press* faithfully defended de Valera’s policy of non-intervention (O’Brien, 2001: 68).

It must be reminded at this stage that the essential cleavage within Irish political life was not then based on classical ideological divergences but on the reproduction of different positions at the time of the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922. This characteristic may help to explain why the major nationalist newspapers of the time, supporting the political parties which succeeded each other in power, do not express essentially divergent views of the Portuguese regime in itself. Instead, each concentrates on drawing conclusions adapted to its own domestic purposes. In other words, while the *Irish Independent*, in its praise of the achievements of the *Estado Novo*, systematically takes the opportunity to denounce the lack of

a similar evolution in Ireland under the rule of de Valera, the *Irish Press*, from essentially the same perception of the Portuguese situation, comes to the opposite conclusion and underlines the part played by the same de Valera in what it presents as a model of government. This essentially partisan motivation applies not only to the perception of the Portuguese regime as such and its characteristics, be them economic, moral or political, but extends to the representation of its leader, Salazar, especially as opposed to de Valera in Ireland.

The years between 1932 and 1945 probably represent the time when Ireland's interest in Portugal was at its peak, but this interest would progressively weaken not so much because of the evolution of the *Estado Novo* regime and its growing isolation in the post-war world, but because it became obvious that Salazar's solutions were far from the panacea once believed. Indeed, from the end of World War II onwards, the relations between Ireland and Portugal would first stagnate until the mid 1950s before getting considerably worse, with both countries pursuing radically opposed aims within the United Nations. And by the time de Valera and Salazar did eventually meet, for the first and last time, in September 1953, Ireland and Portugal were already following growingly separate paths.

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