

‘We can’t have Reds in Portugal’: The Portuguese Response to the Spanish Civil War.

Anita Stelmach

Abstract

During the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), Portugal was in a unique position, both geographically and politically, compared to other European powers. With a 1200 kilometre border shared exclusively with Spain and a young authoritarian political regime, which had established Portugal as a corporatist state in 1933, the Portuguese could not ignore the civil war on their doorstep. Regarded as the ‘poor relation’ of Europe, and viewed as the inferior partner in the historical Anglo-Portuguese Alliance, an anxious Portugal was suddenly elevated into a central position on the European political stage when Britain and France pressured the European powers into non-intervention during the Spanish conflict. This article will show that the Estado Novo government, led by Prime Minister António de Oliveira Salazar, followed a course of action in support of a Nationalist-controlled Spain under General Francisco Franco. It will be argued that this response was influenced by Salazar’s personal principles in order to protect Portuguese sovereignty and interests from the threat of communism and atheism, which Salazar associated with the Spanish Republic.

This article has been peer reviewed

The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) caused widespread concern across continental Europe in the 1930s. European powers, such as France and Britain, held fears of a pan-European war beginning in Spain and spreading across the continent. No country was in quite the same state of anxiety as Portugal, Spain’s Iberian neighbour, whose sovereignty was threatened by the hostilities

across the border.¹ Despite their fears, the Portuguese government was able to steer Portugal through the crisis so that the nation emerged intact following the Spanish war. During this time, Portugal was governed by the Salazar regime, a right-wing dictatorship that held power from 1926 to 1974, and took its name from Dr. António de Oliveira Salazar, the Prime Minister of Portugal and leader of the regime.²

This article will present a brief discussion of the history of Portugal to demonstrate the political and social setting in which the Portuguese responses to the Spanish Civil War were made. These responses will be examined to determine how and why the Salazar regime was able to successfully lead the nation through the uncertain times of the Spanish Civil War. The nature of the Portuguese response to the war will be shown to stem from the personal principles of the Portuguese Prime Minister, Salazar, which included his devotion to the Catholic faith, his commitment to a traditional social order in Portugal, his passionate defence of Portugal's sovereignty and his intense fear of communism.³

An important series of events involving Portugal, at an international level, was the Salazar regime's reactions to the policies of non-intervention, which were proposed by the British

¹ Glyn Stone, *The Oldest Ally: Britain and the Portuguese Connection, 1936-1941*, Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1994, pp. 7-15.

² D.L. Raby, *Fascism and resistance in Portugal: Communists, liberals and military dissidents in the opposition to Salazar, 1941 – 1974*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988, pp. 1-2. The regime suppressed numerous coup attempts and periods of civil unrest, and was successful in leading Portugal through the Second World War. Salazar died in 1970, but the regime continued until 1974.

³ Charles E. Nowell, *Portugal*, The Modern Nations in Historical Perspective Series, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973, p. 155; Robert O. Paxton and Julie Hessler, *Europe in the Twentieth Century*, 5th ed., Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2012, p. 305.

and French governments at the outbreak of the Spanish conflict. This paper will outline the significant events regarding Portugal's role in the Non-Intervention Committee (NIC) and its breaches of the Non-Intervention Agreement (NIA).⁴ Some attention will also be given to the Anglo-Portuguese Alliance, which strongly influenced Portugal's association with non-intervention during the Spanish Civil War.⁵

This article will examine the assistance that the Salazar regime provided to the Spanish Nationalist forces, led by General Francisco Franco, in order to prevent a Spanish Republican victory. It will be argued that Portuguese resistance towards the Salazar regime, and the contribution of Portuguese soldiers to both sides of the war, indicated that Portuguese society had divided political opinions, despite the *Estado Novo's* suppressive methods of maintaining social and political order in Portugal.⁶ To conclude, this article will briefly discuss the nature of, and reasons behind, Salazar's decisions regarding the Spanish Civil War, and the position of Portugal at the end of the conflict.

An independent Portugal gradually emerged from its position as a feudal dependency of the kingdom of León in the twelfth century. Since this time, Portugal's independence has been precarious. Threats and invasions by foreign tribes, empires and European powers had endangered the sovereignty of Portugal for nearly eight hundred years. Following the decline of the powerful, medieval Portuguese Empire over time, the imperial ambitions of other European powers had also endangered Portugal's colonial

⁴ It is impossible to examine all of the events regarding non-intervention in this article.

⁵ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, pp. 1-2, 6.

⁶ For clarification, the Spanish Nationalists, that are referred to in this paper, can also be known as 'fascists', 'rebels', 'Francoists' and 'insurgents' in other sources; Nowell, *Portugal*, p. 159.

holdings. By the late nineteenth century, the interest in Africa, shown by other European states, forced Portugal to ‘safeguard’ its colonies at the expense of progress and development at home. Portugal suffered from economic and social hardships, and had fallen behind other nations in matters such as education, health, economics and the military.⁷ Since medieval times, Portuguese leadership has had various political arrangements, including absolute monarchies and a Republic with a ‘limited monarchy’ from 1910 until 1926, which preceded the Salazar regime.⁸

The First World War (1914-1918) was a turning point in modern European history. The social and economic misery caused by the war resulted in ‘ideological mobilisation and political militancy’ across Europe. The civil unrest and mobilisation of the ‘political masses’ accompanied demands for alternative political systems to replace the traditional forms of government that were blamed by many, for the suffering in, what seemed to be an illogical war.⁹ These alternative systems included liberal democracy, socialism or fascism, depending on the ideologies and circumstances of the dissidents.¹⁰

The great, autocratic empires of Tsarist Russia, Ottoman Turkey, Hohenzollern Germany and Austria-Hungary, were divided by social conflict during the Great War and faltered as they failed to meet the industrial, social and economic demands that

⁷ Nowell, *Portugal*, pp. xi, 1-4, 24-25, 117-124, 128. Various monarchs and officials of Portugal had been offended when treated as representatives of the ‘poor cousin’ of Europe while promoting their country’s interests abroad.

⁸ Nowell, *Portugal*, pp. xi, 1-2, 62, 79-86, 126-134.

⁹ Francisco Romero, ‘Spain and the First World War’ in Sebastian Balfour and Paul Preston (eds.), *Spain and the Great Powers in the Twentieth Century*, eds. London: Routledge, 1999, p. 32.

¹⁰ Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century*, New York: Vintage, 1998, p. x.

were required to meet the challenge of ‘total war’.¹¹ The Russian Revolution of 1917 was a watershed moment in the war as left-wing political parties across Europe began to assert themselves and hoped that revolution would bring peace; in the case of Russia, a provisional democratic government overthrew the Tsarist autocracy, before the Bolsheviks established a Communist system of government, based on Marxist theory, following a civil war. Further Communist agitation occurred in many cities of Europe, where Communist Party members organised strikes, demonstrations and factory occupations, as social resentments and the revolutionary atmosphere increased after the end of the war in 1918.¹²

The collapse of the great empires also saw an increase in parliamentary democracies across Europe after the First World War. For some of the democracies, the liberal climate proved to be brief, as the Communist threat that emerged from the Russian Revolution cast a westward shadow over the European continent in the 1920s. Democratic values were cast aside as the fear of communism grew, and the hardships of the Great Depression set in from 1929. A new political trend developed as many European governments shifted towards the right, leaving the ‘northern

¹¹ Paxton and Hessler, *Europe in the Twentieth Century*, p. 84. Paxton and Hessler describe ‘total war’ as the mobilisation of the population to produce military equipment and supplies at the expense of regulated civilian consumption.; agriculture and industry are organised to maintain the production of supplies; governments allocate labour towards war production and away from traditional places of work, and public opinion is directed towards the support of the war effort. Although they were severely affected by the First World War, it was Britain and France who were the most successful European states to meet the challenge of total war.

¹² Mazower, *Dark Continent*, pp. 10-14. Mazower contends that Hungary was the only other country where Bolsheviks were able to seize power, although their time in power lasted for only a few months during 1919; Paxton and Hessler, *Europe in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 108, 121, 131-133.

fringes' of Europe as home to some of the only nations with parliamentary democracy intact in the 1930s.¹³

Portugal was amongst the continental nations where attempts at democracy had failed. The Portuguese Republic, which emerged in 1910, was plagued by political and financial instability.¹⁴ Unlike Spain, Portugal was unable to remain neutral during the First World War after pressure from her British ally and increasing anti-German feeling in the country. An unprepared Portugal reluctantly entered the war on the side of the Allied forces from February 1916. As with other European nations, the war expenditure brought financial hardship and shortages, which, together with the loss of life, provoked social tensions within an already politically unstable Portugal.¹⁵ The growing opposition to the weak and ineffective government gathered force in the army and amongst academics at Coimbra University.¹⁶ Eventually, Portuguese Army officers seized power in 1926. By 1928, Portuguese academic, Dr. António de Oliveira Salazar, had

¹³ Mazower, *Dark Continent*, pp. 3-5. Mazower states that before the First World War, there had been three European republics, but by the end of 1918 the number of republics in Europe had risen to thirteen; Paxton and Hessler, *Europe in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 90, 108.

¹⁴ Mazower, *Dark Continent*, pp. 4-5; Paxton and Hessler, *Europe in the Twentieth Century*, p. 225.

¹⁵ Nowell, *Portugal*, pp. 137-139. Some 'skirmishes' between Portuguese and German troops took place along the borders of the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique (which were adjacent to the German territories in Africa) when the Germans mistakenly believed that Portugal had entered the war; Richard Robinson, *Contemporary Portugal: A History*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979, pp. 138-139; Romero, 'Spain and the First World War', pp. 32, 47-48. Romero contends that Spain became isolated and was 'scorned' by the Allies for her neutrality during the First World War. He argues that neutrality could not keep the war's 'ideological, social and economic impact' from entering Spain.

¹⁶ Paxton and Hessler, *Europe in the Twentieth Century*, p. 225. The Portuguese experienced fifteen elections during the sixteen years of the Portuguese Republic.

emerged as the dictator of the new regime, and was believed to be the only leader who could resolve Portugal's financial problems due to his specialisation in the field of economics.¹⁷ The objective of Salazar's authoritarian *Estado Novo* regime, officially installed in 1933, was to provide the Portuguese people with political, social and economic stability, guided by the principles of the Catholic Church. Salazar's policies were constructed to maintain a hierarchical Portuguese society where every person knew their place in a defined social order.¹⁸

Salazar spurned the position of Portuguese president, leaving this task to army generals, but performed his role as the dictator of the regime through his position as the Portuguese prime minister from 1932 to 1968. He also acted as Portugal's foreign minister from 1936 to 1947 in the years of the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War.¹⁹ American historian Charles Nowell, contends that the constitution was manipulated to give Salazar supreme power as a dictator in Portugal.²⁰ This can be seen in 1933 when the newly revised constitution designated Portugal as the *Estado Novo* (New State): a corporative and authoritarian government, which replaced the rights of the individual with organisations that represented the interests of the people. Individual powers were adjusted, political parties were outlawed and the size

¹⁷ Nowell, *Portugal*, pp. 143-145; Paxton and Hessler, *Europe in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 225, 305. Salazar was a conservative economist; he strived to balance Portugal's budget and retain social order through spending cuts, monetary policies to reduce inflation, and repayments of the national debt.

¹⁸ Nowell, *Portugal*, pp. 150-154; Paxton and Hessler, *Europe in the Twentieth Century*, p. 305; Raby, *Fascism and resistance in Portugal*, p. 3.

¹⁹ Paxton and Hessler, *Europe in the Twentieth Century*, p. 305; Richard Robinson, *Contemporary Portugal: A History*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979, p. 85.

²⁰ Nowell, *Portugal*, pp. 157-158; Paxton and Hessler, *Europe in the Twentieth Century*, p. 305.

and capacity of the parliament was greatly reduced.²¹ Changes to industrial relations meant that no strikes or independent unions were permitted, with national guilds replacing the suppressed unions.²² The Portuguese population was also controlled using a system of suppression, which included the use of political police and censorship.²³

Portuguese independence was to be threatened by the political events unfolding in neighbouring Spain in the 1930s.²⁴ With the election of the Spanish Republic in 1931, the *Estado Novo* feared that revolution and communism would spread to Portugal, despite the relative weakness of communism in Spain at the time compared to later years.²⁵ The small Partido Comunista de España (PCE) used the April 1931 election as an opportunity to promote the Communist cause in Spain. Although they understood that their low membership meant that electoral victories were unlikely, the results were still disappointing for the PCE, who received only 60,000 votes throughout Spain. However, the coming of democracy under the Second Republic allowed the PCE to work openly in order to gain a higher profile in Spanish politics.²⁶ In December 1930, PCE membership had stood at around 1500 members,

²¹ Nowell, *Portugal*, 157-158; Paxton and Hessler, *Europe in the Twentieth Century*, p. 305.

²² Mazower, *Dark Continent*, p. 30. Mazower believes that this theoretical, cooperative system was not a practical success. The Catholics' fear of communism curbed their dislike of capitalists and allowed most businessmen to retain their autonomy.

²³ Raby, *Fascism and resistance in Portugal*, p. 3. Raby states that the lack of concentrated mining and industrial populations in Portugal, as well as the low rates of progress compared to other European nations, hindered the development of a mass resistance movement amongst the Portuguese people.

²⁴ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, p. 7.

²⁵ Michael Alpert, *A New International History of the Spanish Civil War*, 2nd ed., Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp. 52-53.

²⁶ Víctor Alba, *The Communist Party in Spain*, New Brunswick: Transaction, 1983, pp. 116-118.

whereas by mid-1931, the numbers had risen to over 7000.²⁷ By 1936, the PCE had some 40,000 members and saw sixteen Communist representatives elected as part of the Popular Front in the February 1936 election. The party strengthened further during the civil war; eventually, the Communist Party became the strongest and most influential political party in the Spanish Republic, which was largely due to the influence of the Communist International and the Soviet Union.²⁸

Salazar viewed the political events in Spain, following the election of the Popular Front Government in February 1936, as a forerunner to revolution, and had been critical of the inability of the Spanish Republic to prevent social unrest in Spain.²⁹ On 17 July 1936, Spanish generals began a powerful military insurrection against the Spanish Republican government, which started the Spanish Civil War.³⁰ Salazar believed that the restoration of Spanish law and order by the Nationalists would be the better option for ensuring the political and social stability of Portugal.³¹ The *Estado Novo* strongly believed that victory for the Spanish Republican forces would ultimately result in a Communist

²⁷ Tim Rees, ‘The Good “Bolsheviks”, The Spanish Communist Party and the Third Period’, in *In Search of Revolution: International Communist Parties in the Third Period*, ed. Matthew Worley, London: I.B. Tauris, 2004, p. 199n. Rees indicates that incomplete or absent records and exaggerated figures make the task of compiling statistics regarding PCE membership difficult. He recommends analysing ‘trends’ from these numbers rather than accepting any PCE membership figures as accurate.

²⁸ Alba, *The Communist Party in Spain*, p. 443; Burnett Bolloten, ‘The Parties of the Left and the Civil War’, in *The Republic and the Civil War in Spain*, ed. Raymond Carr, London: Macmillan, 1971, pp. 129-131; Rees, ‘The Good “Bolsheviks”, p. 183.

²⁹ Alpert, *A New International History of the Spanish Civil War*, p. 53.

³⁰ Enrique Moradiellos, ‘The Allies and the Spanish Civil War’, in *Spain and the Great Powers in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Sebastian Balfour and Paul Preston, London: Routledge, 1999, p. 101.

³¹ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, pp. 7, 12-14.

Portugal, deprived of its independence and its colonies. The support given to the Spanish Republican forces by the Soviets heightened these anxieties; in the decade prior to the civil war, Portuguese concerns had been raised by the rise of the Soviet Union. Salazar was also worried that the Portuguese working class would fall under the influence of the Spanish left and threaten the social order in Portugal. The fears of the regime grew further with rumours of Spanish Republican plans to absorb Portugal into a Spanish-Soviet Republic in the form of a federation of Iberian states. The imprisoned, future Spanish Republican Prime Minister, Largo Caballero had expressed his commitment to this scheme in an interview with the American journalist, Edward Knoblauch, in 1935.³² British scholar, Michael Alpert, states that: 'When the Spanish Communist newspaper *Mundo Obrero* actually forecast a joint Iberian Popular Front, Salazar's fears were confirmed'.³³

Conversely, the Portuguese authorities were aware that Portugal's independence could still be under threat in the event of a Nationalist victory if Spain's past imperial ambitions were revived under Franco. Accounts of Nationalist plans to make Portugal a Spanish province, as well as rumours of plans to return to the 'glory days' of Phillip II of Spain, who had annexed Portugal in 1580, made the Portuguese uneasy about the Spanish Nationalist's future intentions towards them. Despite these concerns, Salazar still believed that a Nationalist Spain would be the preferred means of

³² Alpert, *A New International History of the Spanish Civil War*, pp. 53, 200. Largo Caballero was the Spanish Republican Prime Minister from 5 September 1936 to 17 May 1937; Review of Edward H. Knoblauch, *An American Journalist in Madrid: Correspondent in Spain*, Sheed and Ward, 1938 pp.233. 7s. 6d'. *The Tablet* 8 January 1938, pp. 15-16, Web, Available: <http://archive.thetablet.co.uk/article/8th-january-1938/15/an-american-journalist-in-madrid-correspondent-in-> (4 December 2014); Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, pp. 7, 12-14.

³³ Alpert, *A New International History of the Spanish Civil War*, p. 53.

maintaining social and political stability in Portugal, and continued with his plans to assist the Nationalists.³⁴

In the 1930s, most Portuguese people were Catholic. During the years of the Portuguese Republic, from 1910 until 1926, the Catholic Church in Portugal had suffered from persecution and was disestablished by the Republican leaders.³⁵ Salazar was a pious Catholic who had, at one time, studied for the priesthood. His religious convictions were to play an important role in the direction that the Portuguese response to the Spanish Civil War would take.³⁶ His devoutly Catholic regime was hostile to the idea of a secular, and possibly atheist, society that the threat of communism might bring to Portugal. Salazar was alarmed at reports of the acts of vandalism and desecration that were directed against the Catholic Church in the Spanish Republic, and was further resolved to assist the Nationalists whom he viewed as Portugal's 'co-religionists' in Spain.³⁷

At the outbreak of the war, Portugal became the Spanish Nationalist's first international ally.³⁸ On 1 August 1936, Salazar publicly declared that the Portuguese government would assist the Nationalists by any means necessary.³⁹ Salazar initially provided them with medical equipment, radios and some ammunition; the Portuguese also refuelled Spanish Nationalist seaplanes that were on their way from northern Spain to join Franco in the Straits of

³⁴ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, pp. 12-14.

³⁵ Nowell, *Portugal*, pp. 7-8.

³⁶ Tom Gallagher, *Portugal: A twentieth-century interpretation*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983, p. 86; Nowell, *Portugal*, pp. 150-151, 155. Despite his religious convictions, Salazar was not ashamed of using violence to enforce obedience to the policies of the regime; Paxton and Hessler, *Europe in the Twentieth Century*, p.305.

³⁷ Alpert, *A New International History of the Spanish Civil War*, pp. 126-127; Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, pp. 12-13.

³⁸ Paul Preston, *Franco: A Biography*, London: Harper Collins, 1993, p. 167.

³⁹ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, p. 12.

Gibraltar.⁴⁰ The military aid that Salazar was able to give the Nationalists was small, but he offered alternative means of support, which proved to be valuable. The Nationalists were able to establish the 'black embassy' in a Lisbon hotel; this was an office where propaganda, communication, financial assistance, arms and military supplies for the war were organised by Franco's brother, Nicolás, and the leader of the *Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas* (CEDA), the Spanish Catholic Party, José María Gil Robles.⁴¹ Pro-Spanish Republican political groups who attempted to assemble in Lisbon were suppressed by the Portuguese authorities.⁴² The government also encouraged Portuguese radio stations to exploit the new medium of radio to manufacture propaganda during the Spanish Civil War, and allowed the Portuguese print media to publish pro-Nationalist articles and commentary. These forms of propaganda were valuable ways in which Spanish Nationalist ideologies could be broadcast across the Iberian Peninsula.⁴³

In the early weeks of the civil war, foreign observers soon noted the assistance that Portugal was providing to the Spanish Nationalists. German and Nationalist officials conferred in Lisbon over the supply of arms, while the arrival of German ships transporting armaments for the Nationalists was taking place in

⁴⁰ Alpert, *A New International History of the Spanish Civil War*, p. 54.

⁴¹ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, p. 9; Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, p. 346.

⁴² Judith Keene, *Fighting for Franco: International Volunteers in Nationalist Spain during the Spanish Civil War*, London: Hambledon Continuum, 2001, p. 8.

⁴³ Nelson Riberio, 'Using a new medium for propaganda: The role of trans-border broadcasts during the Spanish Civil War', *Media, War & Conflict*, vol 7, no.1, 2014, pp. 37-39, 48. During the conflict, radio was exploited by both sides of the Spanish Civil War to broadcast strategic information to the Spanish forces, to report from the front lines and to improve morale. Riberio suggests that the use of radio for propaganda during the Spanish Civil War attracted the attention of the Nazi Reich Minister for Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, who was impressed with the manner in which radio could be used to reach 'the masses'; Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, p. 8.

Portuguese ports. The Nationalists, officially commanded by Franco from 21 September 1936, following the death of General José Sanjurjo in a plane crash in Portugal on 20 July 1936, were also assisted by the fascist regimes in Germany and Italy.⁴⁴ As Portugal was not equipped to supply Franco with the kinds of military weaponry that was required to win the civil war, German and Italian-supplied arms were crucial in boosting Franco's military arsenal.⁴⁵

The Spanish Republicans received aid from the Soviet Union, but had also hoped for support from other Western democracies, such as Britain and France. The British resisted these requests for military aid as they wished to confine the war to Spain and maintain a friendly relationship with the victors of the struggle. A French proposal of non-intervention by European powers was accepted by the British in the early weeks of the conflict, and was considered to be the best way to preserve British strategic and commercial interests in their territories in the Mediterranean and the Eastern Atlantic Ocean.⁴⁶

The initial French proposal for non-intervention involved an agreement between France, Britain and Italy. Britain disapproved of this first proposal and sought to include the immediate

⁴⁴ Preston, *Franco: A Biography*, pp. 177-179; Robinson, *Contemporary Portugal*, p. 86. The Portuguese government had allowed the exiled Spaniard, General José Sanjurjo, to create a base for military conspirators, who opposed the Spanish Republic, in Portugal before the war began. General Sanjurjo had spent two years in exile in Portugal before his death. The death of General Sanjurjo in Portugal meant that the Spanish rebels were left without leadership and, subsequently, voted for Franco as their *Generalísimo*; Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, pp. 7-9. Stone states that the Republicans also received some support from France.

⁴⁵ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, 8. Some Portuguese companies did contribute to Franco's arms with gunpowder, grenades, dynamite, cartridges and fuses.

⁴⁶ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, pp. 7-15. In the event of a Franco victory, Britain considered that their financial resources would be sufficient enough to counter the German and Italian influence in Spain.

participation of Germany, Russia and Portugal. To the chagrin of Britain, 'lowly Portugal' now occupied a central position of power in European diplomacy. The policy of non-intervention contradicted the preferred Portuguese reaction to the Spanish conflict, which was to assist Franco and the Nationalists. Portugal hesitated as the government sought assurances of British protection in the event of a threat to Portuguese security. Portugal requested certain conditions: to monitor the use of Tangier as a supply base by Spanish Republican warships, an equal commitment to non-intervention by the Soviet Union and the right to respond to any aggression towards Portugal by Spanish military forces. The British offered support to the Portuguese regarding the situation in Tangier and the Soviet commitment, but were less reassuring about the assistance that they would give Portugal in the event of any Spanish aggression. They argued that the non-intervention of Portugal alongside other European powers would negate an attack from Spain.⁴⁷

The different positions of Britain and Portugal regarding non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War strained the historical Anglo-Portuguese Alliance in the early months of the conflict, as the Portuguese continued to demonstrate a clear preference for a Nationalist victory, and frustrated the British and French by delaying their signing of the NIA.⁴⁸ The British informed the Salazar regime that continuing to delay would jeopardise any request for assistance in the event of Spanish aggression against Portugal. During this period of procrastination, there were reports of food and other supplies reaching the Nationalist forces in Spain,

⁴⁷ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, pp. 2, 8, 17n, 17-18.

⁴⁸ Nowell, *Portugal*, pp. 32-33. An alliance between Portugal and England began in the fourteenth century with King Fernando's support of John of Gaunt's claim to the Castilian throne through marriage. John of Gaunt was the son of Edward III of England; Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, pp. 8, 19.

via Portugal, as the Portuguese government continued to provide assistance to the Nationalists.⁴⁹

On 13 August 1936, Portugal reluctantly agreed to non-intervention, but on condition that its border was not threatened by the war and with the understanding that Portugal's commitment to the agreement would depend upon the interests and judgements of the Portuguese.⁵⁰ Britain also pressured the Portuguese into serving on the NIC, which was to be established in London in September 1936. Portugal gave a public display of adherence to non-intervention by refusing access to Portuguese ports by a German ship, but was soon committing breaches after signing the NIA. German ships, bound for Portugal, were observed loading military supplies that were destined for Spain.⁵¹ On 20 August 1936, the German Minister in Lisbon reported that Salazar had enabled the smooth transition of German war materials to Spain from two German steamships.⁵² On 22 August 1936, the German Chargé d'Affaires in Lisbon informed Berlin that, despite its appearance of neutrality, the Portuguese were committed to supporting the Nationalists. The Spanish Republican politician, Julio Alvarez del Vayo, reported that the Republican's deteriorating situation in the

⁴⁹ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, p. 19. Stone writes that these observations were reported by an American minister in Lisbon, Robert Caldwell, on 17 August 1936.

⁵⁰ Alpert, *A New International History of the Spanish Civil War*, 54; Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, pp. 18-20. The Portuguese also objected to both the enlistment of volunteers and the organisation of fundraisers, which were to aid the Spanish Republic, in countries whose governments had committed to the Non-Intervention Agreement, such as France and Britain; Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, 4th ed., London: Penguin, 2003, p. 377.

⁵¹ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, pp. 8, 21. Stone suggests that the Portuguese refusal to the German ship to access its ports may have been a token display of adherence to the NIA.

⁵² Hugh Thomas in Hugh Kay, *Salazar and Modern Portugal*, London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1970, p. 92.

war, in late August 1936, was largely due to the foreign assistance given to the Nationalists.⁵³

The day after Portugal agreed to support the NIA, the Spanish border city of Badajoz was taken by the rebel forces.⁵⁴ The Spanish Republican Foreign Minister, Julio Alvarez del Vayo, reported that the capture of Badajoz was partly due to the cooperation of the Portuguese frontier authorities who allowed lorries laden with ammunitions to pass through Portuguese ports, as well as handing over escaped Spanish Republicans to the Nationalists.⁵⁵ Jay Allen, of *The Chicago Tribune*, was a foreign journalist who reported on the massacres at Badajoz. Allen's article reports on Portugal's role in the Spanish Civil War and events in Spain along the Portuguese border. Allen stated that since the fall of Badajoz on August 14, 1936:

Thousands of republican, socialist and communist militiamen and militiawomen were butchered after the fall of Badajoz for the crime of defending their republic against the onslaught of the generals and the landowners.⁵⁶

Allen also wrote:

But blackest of all: The Portuguese “international police” in defiance of international usage, are turning back scores and hundreds of republican refugees to certain death by

⁵³ Kay, *Salazar and Modern Portugal*, p. 92.

⁵⁴ Alpert, *A New International History of the Spanish Civil War*, p. 54.

⁵⁵ Alpert, *A New International History of the Spanish Civil War*, pp. 72, 199. The pro-Communist Julio Alvarez del Vayo, who was a socialist, served as the Spanish Republican Foreign Minister twice: from 1936 to 1937, and then from 1938 to 1939; Kay, *Salazar and Modern Portugal*, p. 92.

⁵⁶ Jay Allen, 'Slaughter of 4,000 at Badajoz, "City of Horrors", Is Told by Tribune Man', 30 August 1936, Alan Smith Robertson, *Tales of Extremadura*, n.d., Available: http://www.talesofextremadura.com/the_massacre_of_badajoz (4 September 2014).

rebel firing squads...The day before, the mayor of Badajoz, Madronero, and the socialist deputy, Niceleu de Pablo, were handed over to the rebels. On Tuesday, 40 republican refugees were escorted to the Spanish frontier. Thirty-two were shot the next morning. Four hundred men, women and children were taken by cavalry escorts through the frontier post of Cala to the Spanish lines. Of these, close to 300 were executed.⁵⁷

Allen recorded his conversation with a Portuguese official: ‘A talkative frontier policeman said: “Of course we are handing them back. They are dangerous for us. We can’t have Reds in Portugal at such a moment”’. When Allen questioned him about the handing over of so many Republican refugees to the Spanish Nationalists, the policeman replied: ‘It’s being done all up and down the frontier on orders of Lisbon’.⁵⁸

In *The Oldest Ally: Britain and the Portuguese Connection, 1936-1941* (1994), British historian, Glyn Stone, contends that the Portuguese authorities allowed, and encouraged, Franco’s police and intelligence agents to operate within Portugal.⁵⁹ This access through the borders of Portugal gave the Nationalists a strong strategic advantage.⁶⁰ Nationalist officers were permitted to enter Portugal as they wished, but Republican militants, who crossed the border from Spain, were treated very differently by the Portuguese police. As Allen’s report demonstrated, these captured soldiers were returned to Nationalist-controlled Spain and were frequently murdered by the Nationalists.⁶¹ Recent investigations in Portugal have determined that many villagers from Portuguese border towns aided the Spanish Republican refugees who had escaped across the

⁵⁷ Allen, ‘Slaughter of 4,000 at Badajoz’.

⁵⁸ Allen, ‘Slaughter of 4,000 at Badajoz’.

⁵⁹ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, p. 9.

⁶⁰ Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, p. 319.

⁶¹ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, p. 9.

'750-mile border with Spain'. Some Republican Spaniards were hidden from the Portuguese police by the villagers in order to prevent their deportation back to Spain. Witnesses to the events have indicated that, for the most part, help was given to the Spanish refugees by Portuguese villagers, regardless of their politics.⁶²

Soon after the events at Badajoz, the Portuguese published a 'decree of prohibition and note of adhesion' for the NIA on 27 August 1936, after sustained pressure from the British and French governments. It was agreed within the British foreign office that an understanding of the difficulties faced by Portugal must be taken into account.⁶³ This was expressed by Horace Seymour of the British Foreign Office:

In general, is there not perhaps some excuse, or at any rate some explanation if the Portuguese have not behaved in the last six weeks with entire wisdom? It is one thing to look at these events from London: it is quite another to be in the position of a small country, with a large land frontier to Spain.⁶⁴

The first article of the Portuguese decree was that arms should not be transported to Spain through Portugal. The second article excused Portugal's obligations if it was determined that the enlistment of volunteers or the raising of funds for the Spanish was proved to be taking place within the participating countries of the NIA. The third article stipulated that non-intervention was effective

⁶² 'Portuguese Recall Wartime Tales of Aid to Their Neighbours', *The New York Times*, 28 October 1999, Web. Available:

<http://www.nytimes.com/1999/10/28/world/portuguese-recall-wartime-aid-to-their-neighbours.html> (3 September 2014).

⁶³ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, p. 20.

⁶⁴ Horace Seymour in Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, p. 20.

immediately by the British, French, German, Soviet and Italian governments.⁶⁵

Prior to the publishing of Portugal's decree, foreign newspapers continued to report that military supplies for the Spanish Nationalist forces were being unloaded in Lisbon. The British dismissed these reports on the grounds that the adherence of other European powers to non-intervention would influence the Portuguese to end these activities, and that Portugal, itself, could not offer a significant supply of arms to Spain. Accusations of breaches of the NIA were also levelled at Portugal, Italy and Germany by the Spanish Republican government in September and October of 1936. It was proposed by the British that random investigations on the Spanish-Portuguese frontier should check for breaches of non-intervention, while the Soviets requested that the British and French navies should assume control of Portuguese ports.⁶⁶

Meanwhile, interesting events in Portugal strengthened the Salazar regime's commitment to Franco, and further weakened their commitment to the NIA.⁶⁷ The Portuguese Communist Party had become more influential amongst the working class from the mid-1930s, and became increasingly active in the resistance to the authoritarian *Estado Novo*. Their influence became obvious when they were able to infiltrate the Portuguese armed forces. In early September 1936, they initiated the attempts of the Revolutionary Organisation of the Navy to commandeer three Portuguese warships in the Tagus River in support of the Spanish Republic.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, p. 20.

⁶⁶ Robinson, *Contemporary Portugal*, p. 86; Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, pp. 21, 29-30.

⁶⁷ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, p. 18.

⁶⁸ Nowell, *Portugal*, p. 4. Portugal's capital, Lisbon, is situated on the north bank of the Tagus River; Raby, *Fascism and resistance in Portugal*, pp. 41-42.

The crews of the warships imprisoned the officers and planned to sail the vessels to the Mediterranean in order to join the Republican forces in Spain.⁶⁹ Newspaper reports from London, on 6 September 1936, declared that 'complete calm had been restored' in Lisbon and that: 'Shore batteries killed six and wounded nine of the mutineers...'⁷⁰ Five days later, further media reports from London indicated that revolts had also taken place in Portuguese Army garrisons. These reports were denied by the Portuguese embassy in London who commented that:

In view of the territorial importance of Portugal...those desiring anarchy to reign in the country have naturally redoubled their efforts to aid the Spanish Reds. Portugal has been attacked and insulted by the foreign Press...and the Government, therefore, has been obliged to intensify its offensive against Communism.⁷¹

The mutinies demonstrated that not all political opinions in Portugal, regarding the Spanish war or otherwise, were in agreement with that of the Salazar regime. The Portuguese Foreign Minister, Armindo Monteiro, related to the British Ambassador that:

There were only 17,000 to 20,000 Communists in Lisbon (out of a population of some 700,000); but there were many Radicals of various sorts, whilst there was also much

⁶⁹ Nowell, *Portugal*, p. 159.

⁷⁰ 'Spanish Civil War: Prolonged Struggle For San Sebastian', *The Central Queensland Herald* (Rockhampton, Queensland: 1930-1956) 17 September 1936, p.40. Web. Available: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article70570229> (31 August 2014).

⁷¹ Alpert, *A New International History of the Spanish Civil War*, 55; 'Portugal. Further Mutinies Reported. Army and Navy', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW: 1842-1954) 12 September 1936, p. 17. Web. Available: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article17267446> (31 August 2014).

poverty, so that there existed a favourable field for the subversive propaganda coming from Spain...[sic]⁷²

The *Estado Novo* was forceful in its suppression of the mutiny, but feared further insurrections.⁷³ Other acts of sabotage, committed by Spanish Republican sympathisers, included the damaging of supplies destined for the Nationalist forces in Spain, the ‘blowing up’ of the radio transmitter of the Rádio Clube Português in Parede and an unsuccessful assassination attempt on Salazar.⁷⁴

These incidents proved to Salazar that the internal security of Portugal was under threat and that the *Estado Novo* must strengthen their support of the Spanish Nationalists.⁷⁵ The mutinies also reinforced Salazar’s belief that the Spanish Civil War was not confined to Spain, but was an international struggle where revolutionaries also plotted against the Portuguese government. To counteract these threats, a Portuguese militia was assembled to combat any further danger from Republican Spain. This militia became the Portuguese Legion, which was officially founded on 30 September 1936.⁷⁶ At its peak, the Legion boasted 20,000 members; many were sent as volunteers to fight for Franco, while those who remained in Portugal were occupied with defending their

⁷² W 3358/403/36, Sir C. Wingfield to Mr. A. Eden, 6 April 1936. *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print, Part II: From the First to the Second World War. Series F, Europe, 1919 – 1939, vol 24, Portugal, 1919-1939*, eds. Kenneth Bourne and D. Cameron Watt, Great Britain: University Publications of America, 1993, p. 228.

⁷³ Nowell, *Portugal*, p. 159.

⁷⁴ Robinson, *Contemporary Portugal*, p. 86.

⁷⁵ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, p. 13. Within days, the state’s methods of subduing dissenting individuals or groups were expanded.

⁷⁶ Alpert, *A New International History of the Spanish Civil War*, p. 55; ‘Portugal. Further Mutinies Reported’, p. 17. This report from London stated that: ‘Portugal has repeatedly told Europe that the Spanish Civil War is an international struggle on a national battleground’.

country from the spread of communism.⁷⁷ The numbers of these Portuguese 'volunteers' who fought with the Spanish Nationalist forces has been debated by historians.⁷⁸ Nowell argues that Franco had indicated that the number of Portuguese fighting with his forces was: 'several thousand'.⁷⁹ Stone cites the figures given by the British representative with the Nationalist authorities, Sir Robert Hodgson, as consisting of up to 20,000 Portuguese volunteers, with around 8000 casualties.⁸⁰ Australian historian, Judith Keene, writes that observers have found their exact numbers difficult to assess as the Portuguese soldiers wore no identifying insignia.⁸¹ Nowell states that some Portuguese men also fought with the Spanish Republican forces against the Nationalists.⁸²

As the war progressed, suspicions of Portugal's breaches of the NIA continued. The sudden severing of formal diplomatic ties between the Portuguese and Spanish Republican governments on 23 October 1936, once the Nationalists were in control of the Spanish-Portuguese border, exasperated the British government and complicated the Anglo-Portuguese Alliance further. Notwithstanding, a meeting of the NIC, on 28 October 1936, determined that there was insufficient proof of transgressions by the Portuguese, although the British government was forced to

⁷⁷ Gallagher, *Portugal: A twentieth-century interpretation*, pp. 85-86; Nowell, *Portugal*, p. 159. Portuguese military personnel and civil servants were required to swear oaths of allegiance to the *Estado Novo* and to renounce communism.

⁷⁸ Keene, *Fighting for Franco*, p. 4. Keene states that the Portuguese troops were not volunteers in the 'proper sense of the word', and were present in Spain due to the support given to Franco by the Portuguese government.

⁷⁹ Nowell, *Portugal*, p. 158.

⁸⁰ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, p. 11.

⁸¹ Keene, *Fighting for Franco*, pp. 7-8. The Spanish Foreign Legion recorded 869 Portuguese recruits to their ranks. Keene indicates that Portuguese soldiers also served in the regular Spanish army, and in Carlist and Falangist militias.

⁸² Nowell, *Portugal*, p. 158.

defend the Portuguese from the accusations of British Labour Party Members of Parliament and from objections raised by the Soviets.⁸³

In January 1937, the NIC agreed to install international observers on the non-Spanish side of Spain's borders, and on ships that had departed non-intervention countries for Spain. The Portuguese government refused to allow international observers on its side of the frontier for security reasons, but did eventually agree to the presence of British observers working from the British Embassy in Lisbon. British naval ships were also permitted to patrol the Portuguese coast.⁸⁴ These naval patrols proved to be ineffective and were ultimately abandoned by Portugal, Italy and Germany following unsubstantiated reports of torpedo attacks on a German cruiser in June 1937. The British and the French were then left with the responsibility of these coastal patrols and naval inspections. Portugal used this incident as an opportune time to abandon all observation of their frontier with Spain, which led to the French government declaring that they saw no reason to maintain international control on their Pyrenees border with Spain if control of the Portuguese frontier had ceased. These developments exasperated the British government further.⁸⁵ The British Ambassador to Portugal, Charles Wingfield, expressed these frustrations when he wrote to the British Foreign Minister in February 1937:

But experience had shown us that we could not rely on promises of non-intervention by all the Powers represented on the committee. We all knew that armaments were going to Spain. And though no Power admitted that they were

⁸³ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, pp. 20-21, 31-33; Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, p. 448.

⁸⁴ Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, pp. 563-564.

⁸⁵ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, pp. 39-40; Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, pp. 714-715.

sending them there, they certainly did not come from heaven...⁸⁶

Britain continued to maintain the policy of non-intervention in Spain despite the often-flagrant breaches of the agreement by other European states, including Portugal.⁸⁷ Debates within the British government, and with other foreign powers, failed to get effective frontier control or naval patrols operating again.⁸⁸ In *The Spanish Civil War* (originally published in 1961)⁸⁹ Hugh Thomas states that discussions at the final NIC meetings were centred on plans to withdraw foreign volunteers who were fighting in Spain.⁹⁰ From this point, Thomas indicates that even the British had grown weary of the failed concept of non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War, and they began to 'overlook' repeated breaches of the NIA by Portugal. This change in attitude, in late 1938, reflected the direction that the Spanish war was taking at this time, as well as British preoccupation over tensions brewing amongst the European powers in the lead up to the Second World War.⁹¹

⁸⁶ W2865/7/41, Sir C. Wingfield to Mr. A. Eden, February 3 1937. *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print, Part II: From the First to the Second World War. Series F, Europe, 1919 – 1939, vol 24, Portugal, 1919-1939.* eds. Kenneth Bourne and D. Cameron Watt, Great Britain: University Publications of America, 1993, p. 240.

⁸⁷ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, p. 17.

⁸⁸ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, pp. 44-45; Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, pp. 713-724, The Nyon Conference, convened in Switzerland in September 1937, discussed Italian submarine attacks on foreign vessels in the Mediterranean Sea. These submarines were attempting to prevent Russian ships from reaching the Spanish Republic.

⁸⁹ Robert O. Paxton and Julie Hessler refer to Thomas's book as 'still the most gripping narrative' of the Spanish Civil War.

⁹⁰ Paxton and Hessler, *Europe in the Twentieth Century*, p. 327; Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, pp. 724-726.

⁹¹ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, pp. 45-46; Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, pp. 724-726.

By 1938, the outcome of the Spanish Civil War had become obvious, with a complete victory by Franco expected by most foreign observers. The Portuguese government chose to officially recognise Franco on 28 April 1938, and eventually persuaded the British to do the same in order to reduce the German and Italian influence in Spain. The British finally recognised the Franco regime on 27 February 1939.⁹² This coincided with a reaffirmation of the Anglo-Portuguese Alliance; the British now realised that they could no longer assume that Portugal would comply with Britain's demands as readily as they had done in the past. The British sent a military mission to Portugal to evaluate the urgent need for the rearmament of the Portuguese military and to assist with coastal defences due to the sudden German and Italian interest in Portugal.⁹³ The Portuguese government had become wary of the German and Italian intervention on the side of the Spanish Nationalists during the civil war, and were concerned that the Axis powers would expect to maintain an influential presence throughout the Iberian Peninsula.⁹⁴ Historian, Hugh Kay, claims that Salazar feared the consequences of a fascist Spain dominated by Germany as much as he feared those of a Republican Spain dominated by the Soviet Union.⁹⁵

⁹² Gallagher, *Portugal: A twentieth-century interpretation*, p. 116; Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, p. 45.

⁹³ Robinson, *Contemporary Portugal*, pp. 86-87; Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, p. 6.

⁹⁴ Nowell, *Portugal*, p. 155. Mussolini's deteriorating behaviour offended Salazar, who disapproved of his increasingly ostentatious and 'pagan' conduct. Salazar condemned the extent to which Mussolini was controlled by Hitler. Salazar considered Hitler to be a 'useful barrier' against Soviet Communism, but did not approve of him. This dislike intensified with rumours of a German takeover of the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique. Although Salazar did not have any plans for further imperial expansion, he was not prepared to relinquish Portugal's colonies to Germany; Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, pp. 2, 46.

⁹⁵ Kay, *Salazar and Modern Portugal*, pp. 88, 103. Kay asserts that in late 1936: 'German and Italian troops were now pouring into Spain'.

In *A New International History of the Spanish Civil War* (2004), Michael Alpert indicates that: 'The Non-Intervention Committee held its last meeting on 20 April 1939 to 'wind up business', and questions the achievements of non-intervention.⁹⁶ Alpert posits that in the early days of the war, the NIA had been simply a 'face-saving device' for the British and the French governments, and that non-intervention had probably achieved little more than ensuring the demise of the legal government of Spain. He argues that the weak responses of the Western democracies towards the Spanish Civil War led the European dictatorships to believe that they could behave as they pleased on other matters, and set the scene for the future political events that would culminate in the Second World War.⁹⁷

To determine the nature and reasons for the Portuguese responses to the Spanish Civil War, Hugh Kay, in *Salazar and Modern Portugal* (1970), points to the studies of the Portuguese Under-Secretary for War, Colonel Santos Costa, who examined the positions that the Salazar regime could have taken upon the outbreak of the Civil War in Spain.⁹⁸ The first possibility open to Salazar was either inaction due to indifference, or collaboration with the Spanish Republican government and left wing organisations, including the Spanish Communists. These were impossible options to Salazar who, firstly, could not ignore a

⁹⁶ Alpert, *A New International History of the Spanish Civil War*, p. 197.

⁹⁷ Alpert, *A New International History of the Spanish Civil War*, 59, 197-198.

⁹⁸ Alpert, *A New International History of the Spanish Civil War*, p. 216. In his 'Bibliographical Note' chapter, Alpert indicates (in 1994) that Hugh Kay's study on Portugal and the Salazar regime is one of the few sources of Portugal's situation during the Spanish Civil War that can be found in English; Kay, *Salazar and Modern Portugal*, p. 87. Kay's work was published in 1970, following Salazar's disabling illness in 1968 and during the final years of power of the *Estado Novo*. The book discusses events in Portugal up to 1969, but does not include the death of Salazar in 1970.

bloody civil war on the Iberian Peninsula in the hope that it would have no effect on Portugal, and, secondly, feared being overrun by the Spanish Republicans as a precursor for an eventual Communist takeover of Portugal.⁹⁹

The second possibility for the Salazar regime was to support the Spanish Civil War as a process where Spain would be divided into small, separate states, which Kay identifies as ‘Balkanization.’ As the war progressed, Basque and Catalonia used the conflict as an opportunity to reassert themselves as autonomous states and establish their own governments. Portugal was hesitant in showing support for these independence movements as Salazar regarded a divided Spain, and a ‘Balkanised’ Iberian Peninsula, as yet another avenue for Communist expansion into Portugal.¹⁰⁰

The third possibility, which was the option chosen by Salazar, was to advocate for two strong, independent and allied Catholic nations on the Iberian Peninsula. Santos Costa referred to Salazar’s resolve to pursue this ‘policy of collaboration’ between Portugal and Spain as ‘one of the most brilliant phases of Portuguese diplomatic history’. It culminated in the Iberian Pact of 1939, which the Portuguese signed with the Franco regime, and was a Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression between Portugal and Spain that was to strengthen the defence of the peninsula. The conditions of the treaty were mutual respect for each other’s borders and sovereignty, and the refusal of aid to other powers that threatened or attacked either nation. The new alliance between the Portuguese and the Spanish helped Portugal to remain neutral

⁹⁹ Kay, *Salazar and Modern Portugal*, p. 87. The strategic benefits of Portugal, with its close proximity to the Straits of Gibraltar, offered a prized link to Northern Africa, which could tempt Communist strategists.

¹⁰⁰ Kay, *Salazar and Modern Portugal*, pp. 87-88.

during the Second World War, and allowed the Portuguese to concentrate its armed forces on the defence of its colonies.¹⁰¹

The end of the Spanish Civil War did not change the way that the Salazar regime ruled Portugal. Tom Gallagher states that: 'The repressive features of the *Estado Novo* that were introduced after 1936 took on institutional form and were retained even after the defeat of the major fascist powers at the end of World War II'.¹⁰² Political dissidents were imprisoned in harsh conditions in police custody, Portuguese gaols or the infamous Tarrafal prison camp in the Cape Verde Islands, although the numbers of political prisoners held in these institutions are estimated to be less than 1000 over the course of forty years.¹⁰³

The eventual downfall of the *Estado Novo* regime finally came in 1974 when the Armed Forces Movement overthrew the government after more than forty years in power and following thirteen years of war in the Portuguese colonies of Mozambique,

¹⁰¹ Kay, *Salazar and Modern Portugal*, pp. 87-89. The friendship between Portugal and Franco's Spain assisted them in remaining neutral during the Second World War, and allowed Portugal to concentrate its armed forces on the defence of their colonies; Robinson, *Contemporary Portugal*, p. 87.

¹⁰² Gallagher, *Portugal: A twentieth-century interpretation*, p. 87.

¹⁰³ Raby, *Fascism and resistance in Portugal*, pp. 2-4. Raby considers these numbers of political prisoners to be low compared to the numbers imprisoned by other contemporary fascist regimes. He believes that this leniency gives the impression that the Salazar regime was not fascist, which he claims has been the subject of much academic debate by observers of Portuguese affairs. Raby's study of Portuguese fascism indicates that academic debate has argued against identifying the Salazar regime as fascist due to the non-flamboyant characteristics of Salazar compared to dictators such as Mussolini and Hitler, as well as the lack of organised propagandist rallies and marches that are often associated with fascist regimes. Raby refers to the 'classic' Marxist-Leninist definition of fascism, advanced at the VII Comintern Congress of 1935, as being only partially applicable to Portugal, where fascism is the 'open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital'.

Guinea and Angola.¹⁰⁴ Nowell claims that most scholars agree that the Salazar regime offered Portugal more stability than many previous political arrangements.¹⁰⁵ This opinion is shared by many modern Portuguese people, although the Salazar regime is remembered as oppressive and few traces of the former dictatorship remain visible in modern Portugal. Others prefer to shun the past and look to the future, despite Portugal's recent struggles with corruption and the fact that it remains a poor country.¹⁰⁶

Glyn Stone states that it was 'ideological fears and prejudices' that prompted the Portuguese to assist the Spanish rebels during the Spanish Civil War.¹⁰⁷ The Portuguese government was to make decisions and policies based on the dictator's devout Catholicism, his distrust of democratic government, his hatred of communism, his preference for tradition over progress and his crusade to maintain the independence and sovereignty of Portugal.¹⁰⁸ Salazar had been steadfast in believing that Portugal's survival as a nation would stand a greater chance with a Nationalist victory in Spain, as he preferred the prospect of a political relationship with Franco rather than the Republican government. Stone believes that Salazar's judgement was

¹⁰⁴ Nowell, *Portugal*, pp.165-166. Salazar could no effectively govern from 1968 due to ill health, and was replaced as prime minister by Marcello Caetano; Raby, *Fascism and resistance in Portugal*, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰⁵ Nowell, *Portugal*, p. 153.

¹⁰⁶ Dan Bilefsky, 'Nostalgia for António de Oliveira Salazar divides the Portuguese', *The New York Times*, p. 23 July 2007. Web. Available: <http://www.nytimes.co/2007/07/23/world/Europe/23iht-salazar.4.6790015.html?pagewanted=all> (30 October 2014).

¹⁰⁷ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, pp. 12-13.

¹⁰⁸ Nowell, *Portugal*, 155; Paxton and Hessler, *Europe in the Twentieth Century*, p. 305.

vindicated in 1939 with the signing of the Iberian Pact with Franco.¹⁰⁹

Despite his flaws, Salazar is remembered by many Portuguese as the leader who provided security and a strong sense of national identity to Portugal. Salazar's dedication to Portugal and his successful management of Portuguese affairs during the Spanish Civil War, and then the Second World War, has contributed to his revered status.¹¹⁰ However, the arguments presented here have shown that this national security and stability came at a price. The authoritarian regime imposed a system of oppression upon the population with the intention of controlling the social, political and religious order in Portugal. Incidents of sabotage and resistance during the Spanish Civil War, such as the mutinies on Portuguese warships in support of the Spanish Republic, have demonstrated that political and social tensions existed within Portuguese society despite the appearance of a stable population.¹¹¹

The determination of Portugal to preserve its political and social independence meant that the country had been in dispute with Britain, which endangered the Anglo-Portuguese Alliance.¹¹² This article has shown that Portugal never approved of non-intervention and, like Germany, Italy, the Soviet Union and even France, chose to support and provide aid to one side of the war.¹¹³ It has been seen, here, that this aid was not significant in terms of

¹⁰⁹ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, p. 14; Gallagher, *Portugal: A twentieth-century interpretation*, pp. 86-87.

¹¹⁰ Dan Bilefsky, 'Nostalgia for António de Oliveira Salazar divides the Portuguese'; Nowell, *Portugal*, pp. 153, 158-159; Gallagher, *Portugal: A twentieth-century interpretation*, p. 87.

¹¹¹ Raby, *Fascism and resistance in Portugal*, pp. 1-2, 41.

¹¹² Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, p. 17.

¹¹³ Alpert, *A New International History of the Spanish Civil War*, p. 197; Robinson, *Contemporary Portugal*, p. 86.

armaments and war materials; rather, it was the use of Portuguese ports to receive military supplies, the access across the Portuguese-Spanish border and the opportunity for exiled Nationalists to establish offices in order to administer the war, which had provided important logistical advantages to the Spanish Nationalists during the war.¹¹⁴

The support given to Franco by the Salazar regime indicated to Britain that the circumstances of the Portuguese had to be understood in their own Iberian context, and were not conditional to the desires of the British. Portugal had used the Spanish Civil War as an opportunity to remind the British that they could not expect ‘limitless obedience’ from their ally.¹¹⁵ Although the Salazar regime chose to support and aid the Spanish Nationalists, they remained wary of the possibility of Franco’s imperial ambitions towards them and the increasing influence of the Axis powers on the Iberian Peninsula. Despite these concerns, the threat of communism, which Salazar associated with the Spanish Republic, meant that the Portuguese authorities regarded a Nationalist Spain as the lesser danger to Portugal, and formulated their reactions, accordingly.¹¹⁶ It is clear that, ultimately, the Portuguese response to the Spanish Civil War was implemented based on decisions that were in the best interests of Portugal and the Salazar regime, and not of Franco, Spain or Britain.

¹¹⁴ Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, p. 9; Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, pp. 319, 346.

¹¹⁵ Robinson, *Contemporary Portugal*, p. 86.

¹¹⁶ Nowell, *Portugal*, p. 155; Stone, *The Oldest Ally*, pp. 12-14.

About the Author

Anita Stelmach holds a Bachelor of Applied Science (Medical Laboratory Science) from UniSA/SAIT (1988) and a Bachelor of Arts from Flinders University (2013). She is currently completing a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in History. Anita is interested in Australian history, British colonial history and Modern European history. She thanks the referees and editors of the FJHP for their assistance with this article, and her family for their support.