

Portuguese Contemporary Revolutionarism: A Survey on Numbers and Roots

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Abstract

Characterized by their polysemy and recurrence, revolutions were one of the true drivers of contemporary times, destroying the old world of the *Ancien Régime*, and are thus an excellent thread of any narrative of much of European history over the last two centuries. Stemming from this premise, the aim of this article is to look at the theme of the revolution in 19th and early 20th century Portugal, highlighting the reasons as to why it was also a “hidden *leitmotiv*” (as stated by Hannah Arendt in relation to Europe) of national contemporaneity. To this purpose, some overall numbers of the Portuguese revolutionary activity will be presented, along with six historical roots or general causes that can explain the frequency of Portuguese revolutionarism, from the impact of the French Invasions to the consolidation of the *Estado Novo* (New State) dictatorship.

Key Words: Revolution, revolutionarism, Portugal, liberalism, republicanism, contemporaneity

Introduction

Between the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, the American and the French revolutions introduced in the Western political culture a great part of the ideas and language of which we are still today inheritors, whilst at the same time the Industrial Revolution changed England's economic and social landscape. With different but irreversible rhythms, the age of revolutions abolished the Old Regime and led the Europeans to an era with new coordinates: in politics, constitutional liberalism more or less democratized; in society, class mobility, the ascent of the bourgeoisie and the increase of urban life; and in the economy, the supremacy of industrialism, commerce, high finance and services. All of these novelties came into life within States and societies sometimes through reforms, but especially through the many revolutions contemporaneity was so fertile in.

The analysis of the civilizational rupture that introduced contemporaneity is generally based on the “double revolution” image, which singles out the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution as the most important. But the Industrial Revolution, which originated in England, only became widespread well into the 19th century, while the French Revolution was exported from the very beginning, due to the universal appeal of its ideas and the dynamics with which it crossed borders. Accordingly, Jacques Solé notes that the word “revolution”, with its present meaning, appeared in the France of 1789: ever since, “the revolutionary obsession, either acclaimed or criticised, became a determinant characteristic of the European civilization, with its mystic and compelling virtues” (Solé, 2008, p. 14).² There are legitimate reasons to single out the French case as the founder of the revolutionary culture that would dominate the 19th century.

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² In the French original: “l'obsession révolutionnaire, qu'on la partage ou la dénigre, devient une caractéristique déterminante de la civilisation européenne, aux vertus incantatoires et mystiques”.

In contrast to the American Revolution, which was a modern war of liberation, the French Revolution was an all-out war that mobilized the enthusiastic support or the fierce reaction of a whole continent (Arendt, 1973[1963], p. 17, and Ozouf, 1992, p. 421). For more than one hundred years, until the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, to speak and act in the name of the revolution was the same as speaking and acting according to the French model. And even after 1917, the memory of the revolutionary spirit of the nineteenth century did not disappear. Hannah Arendt stated that the 21st century would learn what the year 1968 had been like “just as we have learned about the year 1848”; and many named 1989 as “the 89 of the 20th century”, comparing the significance of the fall of the Berlin Wall to that once given to the fall of the Bastille Parisian fortress (quoted in Larrère, 2016, pp. 180 and 216).

Although we can pinpoint the beginning of the French Revolution, its demise is still an open debate. François Furet, in one of the best books ever written on the subject, identified the core issue of the revolution in his country and the challenge that most conditioned French politics and society throughout the 19th century. The first volume of that work, entitled *La Révolution Française*, dwells on the Old Regime and the years of the revolution and of the Empire, between 1770 and 1814, that is, from Turgot’s reformism to Napoleon’s first abdication. Furet chose to entitle the second volume *Terminer la Révolution*, where he brings up the years of 1814 to 1880, that is, from the waning of the Napoleonic Empire to the ascent of Jules Ferry. The verb used (“*terminer*”) summarizes much of what happened in France for decades. All the regimes since Napoleon tried to reach a consensus, consolidate, and stabilize the legacy of the revolution, separating its realistic achievements from unacceptable utopias and excesses. And all the radical oppositions, assuming to be heirs to an innovative impetus that was incompatible with moderate reformism, aspired to continue, reopen, revive the revolution, in order to strengthen their achievements, widen their scope and prevent their confiscation by the conservative forces.

Thus, according to Furet, the French Revolution did not end in the American way, with the Constitution of 1787, but it also did not want to last forever, as did the Russian Revolution of 1917. It was an intermediate case: the French Revolution “intended, as the American one and almost at the same time, to lawfully establish a political community of free and equal men; but it never ceased to renew its goals, alternating between failure and success, in an everlasting fear of being stifled” (Furet, 1988, I, p. 7).³

For ten years, from 1789 to 1799, the ongoing revolutionary process showed, according to the famous image of Alexis de Tocqueville, an irreparable confrontation between the passion for liberty and the passion for equality (quoted in Ozouf, 1992, p. 430). After 1799, throughout the Consulate and the Empire, Napoleon Bonaparte regarded the revolution as a necessary step that had opened paths into the future; but it was imperative to choose the best one and consolidate France on that route. As he explained in the Council of State at the end of 1800, “we have finished the romance of revolution, and should now start its history, considering only what revolution entails of reality and possibility in its practical application, and not what there remains speculative or hypothetical. Following a different path would be to philosophy, not to govern” (quoted in Furet, 1992, p. 63).⁴ In fact, François Furet’s title verb was already used by the Emperor, and in exile he reaffirmed it, when he recalled that he had “amalgamated” the old and the new order of things with the intention (although unfinished, he acknowledged), of “accomplishing the revolution” (“*accomplir la révolution*”), to “reconcile it with what its course had not destroyed” (“*la raccomoder avec ce qu’elle n’avait pas détruit*”) (*Mémorial de Sainte Héleine*, I, p. 479, II, p. 149). After the fall of Napoleon in 1815, the directory of powers, meeting in Vienna, redid the map of Europe and re-established the principle of dynastic legitimacy, in reaction against the rights of the peoples. The Vienna “system” thus aimed at preventing the repetition of what Austrian Chancellor Prince Metternich defined as the “revolutionary hydra”. Unlike Napoleon, who was determined to conduct the revolution in order to normalize and finalize it, Metternich and the European monarchs after 1815 thought it was necessary to defeat the revolution and keep it defeated. However, the revolutionary storm had been so strong that it rendered impossible the eradication of the history of the quarter-century span from 1789-1815.

³ In the French original: “Elle a voulu, comme la révolution américaine et quasiment à la même époque, fonder dans la loi un corps politique d’individus libres et égaux; mais elle n’a cessé de reprendre les termes de l’entreprise et d’en reculer l’échéance ou le succès, reproduisant à l’infini la crainte d’avoir être confisquée”.

⁴ In the French original: “Nous avons fini le romain de la révolution: il faut en commencer l’histoire, ne voir ce qu’il y a de réel et de possible dans l’application des principes, et non ce qu’il y a de spéculatif et d’hypothétique. Suivre une autre voie, ce serait philosopher et non pas gouverner”.

As Timothy Blanning summarizes, “once the revolutionary genie was out of the bottle, all the best efforts of the established order could not cram it back in again” (Blanning, 2000, p. 3). The first half of the 19th century, and still part of the second, would thus be the history of the tension between those ideologies stemming from the revolutionary “genie” – liberalism, at the centre, democratic and social radicalism on the left, and conservatism on the right (Nisbet, 2002[1966], pp. 9-16).

Conservatism and liberalism supported the monarchy, wondering whether it should be based on the old divine right of kings or whether it should be a political arrangement that would embrace national sovereignty; on the other hand radicalism was, for decades, synonymous with republic and democracy – a type of regime and its contents abhorred because of the recollection of what Jacobinism had been. While the liberals were anti-revolutionary and the conservatives more to the right were counter-revolutionaries, the radicals always considered themselves the continuers of the revolutionary ideals. For the latter, to stop the revolution was the same as asphyxiating it in some “middle ground” that confiscated the fracturing, mystical and teleological dynamics towards a world that was seen as better than the existing one. According to the revolutionaries, the defeats did not call for moderation, but rather for a new beginning. And that was how in successive waves, from 1820 to 1871, the “revolutionary hydra” bounced back and acted. And even when the “age of capital”, in the aftermath of 1848, moderated the revolutionism that was inherited from the great revolution, its period of dormancy was always short-lived, for the unforgettable recollection that all peoples had the right to make their own laws had become quite entrenched. In 1849 Karl Marx wrote that revolutions were “the locomotive of all history” (quoted in Arendt, 1973[1963], p. 255). It was true: in view of the dynamics with which France had shown the world that the life of nations could be altered by the sheer action of the revolutionaries, no conservative or even moderate order could ever after feel safe from contention.

The history of western contemporaneity therefore had the revolution as a primary instrument. German linguist Reinhart Koselleck recalled once that “few words were so widely disseminated and belong so evidently to the modern political vocabulary as the term revolution” (2006[1979], p. 61). It is a world-word, whose mutability of meaning and recurrence are always referred to. In fact, the revolution, more than pure political science, was (and is) above all historical action led by concrete men, at a concrete moment, fighting for causes and with means that are their own. In so far as the revolutions that multiplied throughout the 19th century and also at the beginning of the 20th century were, largely, the intermittent course of one single and great revolution, of which France was the founding epicentre, Hannah Arendt could write that the memory of the French Revolution had been the “hidden *leitmotif* of the century preceding ours” (1973[1963], p. 255). Even at times when there were no revolutions, the revolutionary state, definable as a restless machination, a subterranean movement, or an intellectual aspiration, acted so as to keep the flame alive. The radicals called this the “permanent revolution” (“*révolution en permanence*”), and it is necessary not to underestimate its strength, as a wish for more effective action. In turn, Alexis de Tocqueville would recall that whenever the revolution restarted, and wherever it restarted, “it is always the same” (“*c’est qu’elle est toujours la même*”) (quoted in Ozouf, 1992, p. 432).

It is true that there were liberal revolutions that had an identifiable term or national histories where continuity surpassed rupture – such as the English case, since 1689, or the US case, since 1787. By contrast, in the old continent, the revolution, whenever it broke out, and its expectation, while it didn’t, was one of the most defining ingredients of contemporaneity. To manage such legacy was as much the consequence of the great franco-centric revolution as was the cause for other local revolutions. In everything, and always, the experience of the “*torrent révolutionnaire*” (Arendt, 1973[1963], p. 48), raised to the category of redemptive historical need, never ceased to be a generalized model, and sustained, according to Robert Nisbet, “by a unique blend of power and freedom, of power and equality, of power and fraternity, and of power and reason” (2002[1966], p. 40).

2. The numbers of the contemporary Portuguese revolutionism.

Having considered the centrality of the liberal revolutions that brought about contemporary Europe, the purpose of this text is to address such an unavoidable topic of international historiography at a national level, by analyzing the revolution through the Portuguese long-term perspective of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century, to understand how, and for what reasons, it was, also in the case of that country, the “hidden *leitmotif*” of much of contemporaneity.

It is only possible to follow the revolutionary phenomenon in Portugal within a time span of approximately 120 years, from 1807-08 until 1928. That does not mean that the country lived through more than a century of continuous revolution. It only states that since the beginning of the 19th century, and especially with the advent of liberalism, “the revolutionary element” (as Alexandre Herculano, one of the leading patriarchs of Portuguese liberalism, wrote), “had come into being as a political formula in the country’s public law” (1983[1867], p. 45), and that is how it remained, with different forms, methods and ideologies, throughout decades.⁵

There aren’t many studies on the long-duration revolutionary phenomenon specifically in Portugal, and about Portugal.⁶ But those that exist provide figures that prove just how difficult it was to terminate it after it became settled in the country. If we delimit the “era of revolutions” to the first half of the 19th century, a chronology established by Isabel Nobre Vargues lists 48 revolutionary events between 1801 and 1851, among insurrections, mutinies, coups, conspiracies or guerrillas – 10 of them still during the Old Regime, until 1817, and 38 between the onset of *vinismo*, the 1820s liberalism, and the insurrection of the Regeneration, in 1851. Another 29 episodes of revolutionary politicization by military forces can be added to that number, with the establishment and movement of battalions of the regular army or national guards (especially in 1808-11, 1814, 1821-23, 1826-34 and 1836-39), 10 cycles of anarchy or endemic social banditry between 1830 and 1850, 8 student revolts between 1820 and 1846, and also a religious schism – the cessation of relations with Rome – which was an outcome of the liberal revolution. Thus, the total of revolutionary episodes adds up to 96 in half a century (Vargues, 1985). Another author, Maria Eugénia Mata, studied the revolutionary activity in contemporary Portugal in a longer time-span, between 1820 and 1975. By counting the victorious movements, which produced changes of government or political regime, and the defeats, which also disrupted national life, the total adds up to 47 major events (21 victories and 26 defeats). The average consists of one revolution and one frustrated revolutionary attempt every decade, with greater incidence during the periods of 1820-51 and 1907-34, that is, during the initial decades of the difficult establishment of the liberal State and during the quarter-century that saw the fall of the Constitutional Monarchy, the unstable existence of the First Republic and the process of emergence of Salazar’s *Estado Novo*, that is, the authoritarian and anti liberal regime that stemmed from the Military Dictatorship (Mata, 1991, pp. 755-756).⁷

Kathleen Schwartzman became interested in the revolutionary statistics of the First Republic, the political regime spanning from 1910 to 1926. Her starting question is not so much the usual “Why did the Republic fall?” but rather “Why was the Republic so shaken by instability and personal rivalries?” The answer: because of the extreme revolutionarism, always present, even if not immediately visible. The average duration of each of the 45 governments of the republican regime did not exceed 125 days and, in fact, from 1916 onwards, and especially in the first half of the 1920s (17 governments with an average of 112 days’ duration each) it decreased. Other corrupting types of instability were added to governmental instability. The average duration of presidential mandates did not exceed two years, of the four legally contemplated. Aside from the elections for the Constituent Assembly, there were 8 electoral acts, which mean an average of 1.8 years for each legislature, instead of the three years enshrined in the 1911 Constitution (Schwartzman, 1981, pp. 158-161).

⁵ In this particular aspect, Portugal was as European as any other European State which underwent liberal or democratic revolutions; and it was very similar to neighbouring Spain, a country that, throughout the 19th century, could not live without “the revolutionary myth, either to unite ruling classes in the defence of social order, or to stir in the people a national conscience – sometimes both reasons at once – deemed necessary to uphold an idea of liberty that had been brought about by contemporary times” (“el mito de la revolución, ya fuera para mantener la unidad de las clases dominantes en la defensa del orden social o para desarrollar en el pueblo la conciencia nacional – a menudo ambas a la vez – necesarias para encarnar una idea de libertad que había nacido con la época contemporánea”) (Fuentes & Fernández Sebastián, 2002, p. 636). For a synthesis on 19th century Spanish revolutionarism, see also Gil Novales, 1985, and Ruiz Torres, 1999.

⁶ Among the few available examples, see Ferreira, 2012, on the evolution of concepts and ideas of Portuguese revolution during the first three quarters of the 19th century.

⁷ Maria Eugénia Mata draws attention to the importance of Lisbon and Oporto, in contrast with the reduced importance of the rest of the country, in the revolutionary actions: of the 21 victorious movements, 12 happened in Lisbon, 6 in Oporto, 2 in Minho (northern Portugal), and one in the Azores (*Ibid.*, 761).

Fernando Rosas also left some important figures regarding the history of the Portuguese revolution that included, but were not limited to, the First Republic. Between 1908 and 1931, with some later projections into 1934 and 1936, Portugal went through an “intermittent civil war”, with Lisbon as the “main and most decisive setting”. It was a unique revolutionary context, which the consolidation of the *Estado Novo* would end, and which would only return much later with the “short insurreccional revival in 1974-75” (Rosas, 2010, p. 15). From 5 October 1910 to the failure of the rebellions in August 1931 (the last serious attempts against the ruling Military Dictatorship), Rosas counts 54 governments, 35 rebellions or insurrections and 4 general strikes – with the rebellions and insurrections predominating during the years after World War I (1919-31), and the strikes during the so-called Old Republic (1910-17) (Rosas, 2010, p. 52).⁸

A strike is not a revolution – unless it is programmatically revolutionary. But the frequency with which they occur is symptomatic of the politicized social tensions and of the stages of popular or professional protest, which were so much the consequence of revolutionary militancy as they were their cause. Until the third quarter of the Portuguese 19th century, there were not too many strikes and they didn’t mobilize many participants. The explosion of the labour protests started at the beginning of the 1870s, with a first important outbreak in 1871-72, an offspring of the Paris Commune and of the rising connections of the Portuguese workers to the *Marxist International*. After that, there was a decline until the end of the 1880s and a new beginning from then on, which culminated in the First Republic. All together, between 1871 and 1920, no less than 4,636 strikes were recorded, of which 140 between 1871 and 1886 (an average of 8.8 per year), 1,428 between 1887 and 1908 (an average of 64.9 per year), and 3,068 between 1909 and 1920 (an average of 255.7 per year, that is, a little more than a strike each day and a half!) (Tengarrinha, 1983, pp. 56-61 and 72).⁹

These are just a few examples, among many others that are possible to gather (especially from opuscles, political memoirs, parliamentary speeches and the press), of statistics or recollections of revolutionary movements, both civil and military, with motivations – isolated or together – of a political, social or economic nature. In a country where reforms didn’t seem to work or were delayed for several reasons, the revolution, within the diversity of its dynamics and motivating ideas, was the most used instrument to change a certain order of things and to build a future.

Studying Portugal from the perspective of the revolution can thus constitute a good synoptic and enlightening vantage point on the 19th and 20th centuries, since the evolution of the Old Regime to the 19th century liberalism, and of the latter to the Republic (1910-1926) and to *salazarismo* (from the 1930s on) was to a considerable extent the history of how the revolution perpetuated itself, appearing, in different generations, as an unfinished or interrupted myth. Liberals and absolutists at first, then liberals and radicals, and monarchists and republicans in the end, they all fuelled a revolutionary tension, with peaks of open military or civil conflict. Then came the First Republic, of which the revolutionary nature, in terms of ideologies and methods, is now a largely accepted characterization (Valente, 1997b, and Ramos, 2003). And for half a century the *Estado Novo* governed against an entire century of revolutionarism, generating an immobility that led to the revolutionary explosion in 1974-75, before democracy and its European stabiliser were able once more to (who knows until when?), end the revolution.

3. The political dynamics of contemporary Portuguese revolutionarism.

The international origin and the semantics of the word “revolution”, as well as some figures that allow for the measurement of its recurrence in Portugal have already been established above. It is now necessary, in the national scenario, to follow the revolution in action or in embryo, as well as the reasons why it advanced and did not cease to resume or why there were those who wanted to slow it down, neutralise it, co-opt it and finally liquidate it.

⁸ Charles Tilly corroborates this unsympathetic portrait, writing that during the first quarter of the 20th century, “Portugal lived a turbulent history: coups, civil wars and rebellions, up to the establishment of a republic in 1910, sixteen more years of intermittent revolutionary situations, and then the consolidation of power by Oliveira Salazar during the late 1920s” (Tilly, 1995, p. 87).

⁹ The geography of all these strikes also singles out the special importance of Lisbon: the capital city of Portugal was the seat for 36.6% of all labour stops between 1871 and 1920; then came Oporto, with 33.8% and, at a distance, Setúbal, with 12.4%, and Faro, with only 4.8% (*Ibid.*, 62).

With an old Nation-State cemented by centuries of history, with no striking ethnic, linguistic, cultural or religious divisions, Portugal did not experience the nationalistic revolutionary drive and the struggles for independence that left a mark in most of contemporary Europe. There were indeed no such divisions; on the contrary, as sociologists remind us, since there was “an unusual degree of national homogeneity” (Martins, 1998[1971], p. 99), it would perhaps be logical to expect a more continuous historical course rather than a rocky one and a more reformist than a revolutionary one. That is not what happened. Especially throughout the first half of the 19th century, in more or less subterranean fluxes during the second half of the 1800s and during the unstable final cycle of the Monarchy, the First Republic and the origins of the *Estado Novo*, open revolution or latent revolutionarism marked the country. This is what motivates the historian to reply to Alexandre Herculano’s diagnosis and question, published in a newspaper article in July 1851: “we are poor, ignorant, we live amidst corruption and abuse [...] We move within the narrow circle of incessant and sterile revolutions; legality has become impossible, governmental action insoluble [...] How is it that the least revolutionary nation in the world lives in a perpetual revolution?” (Herculano, 1983[1851], pp. 145 and 149).

In those countries where issues of nationality were not a *leitmotiv* for revolution, this one emerged from the continuous struggle surrounding forms of government and models of exercise of freedoms. But even this type of revolution had a specific origin in Portugal, different from what happened in other societies. In fact, the discovery and experimentation of the liberal revolution was not the result, in the Portuguese case, of a specific ideological maturation (combined with a long acculturation of the liberal ideology), or of the development of socioeconomic conditions leading to the radical modernisation of the kingdom, notwithstanding some enthusiasm in the public sphere under the influx of the 18th century Enlightenment. Indeed, as historiography stresses, the revolution only reached Portugal at the time and because of the French Invasions (Monteiro & Ramos, 2012, p. 379).

Thus, the beginning of the history of the liberal revolution precedes the military action that brought about its victory in August 1820. It was the French invader and the consequences that the Napoleonic storm scattered throughout the country (more largely, in the Iberian Peninsula, since Spain had a similar revolutionary origin), that set Portugal into a revolutionary future. In a kingdom without a king, deprived of its elites, destabilized and impoverished (since, in 1807-08, D. João VI had moved the Court to Brazil and had invested in the “Americanization” of the Empire), the meagre ruling elite that inherited the wreckage with the arrival of the post-Napoleonic peace rejected the Old Regime and took hold of a liberalism moulded by foreign influences that served as flag for the reconstruction of the country (Valente, 2009, pp. 7-12, and Bonifácio, 2010, pp. 13-14 and 19-21).

It can then be said that both in Portugal as well as in Spain the revolution was above all a means provided by supervening circumstances from abroad to solve the impasses that had befallen the old order. This artificiality of the revolutionary manifestation has always been a weakness that analysts of monarchic constitutionalism greatly insisted on. After the short experience with *vinetismo*, a bloody Civil War, fought between liberals and absolutists, was necessary so that a minority of Portuguese could impose to the silent majority of the nation a regime of monarchic liberal constitutionalism which took a long time to free itself of its imported and exotic character, a regime that won through the use of armed force and was kept by a thin layer of liberal politicians. And because, throughout the 1800s, it was difficult to reach consensus in this liberal regime, there were plenty of “anarchic debates involving everyone” (Martins, 1986[1881], I, p. 372), in an insurrectional atmosphere, until 1851, and utilitarian with a bourgeois inclination during the Regeneration period, after 1851. Drawing attention to the different genesis of the liberal revolution in Portugal should not, however, minimise the important effects it had once it reached the country. It would even seem that Portugal revealed the irony of being a country with few autochthonous basis to be revolutionary – in the sense that liberalism was not the result of massive and national civil uprisings, motivated by the political philosophy of modernity –, but where revolution caused a profound social, political and cultural breach, creating a new order that destroyed any possible continuity of the Old Regime.

From 1807-08, and especially after being officialised by *vinetismo*, the revolution was not always visible. It had cycles of special intensity and there were years in which it hibernated and almost disappeared. The Civil War (1832-34) that gave victory to the liberals was a decisive political and social revolutionary break, due to the radicalisation it provoked and because it was during the course of it that minister Mouzinho da Silveira carried out the great “legal revolution” that delineated the new liberal State.

Between 1834 and 1851, and in spite of the efforts, from 1842 onwards, to tame the September revolution (an up rise of popular and radical power in 1836), Queen D. Maria II's entire reign corresponded to a fierce revolutionary cycle, while the new liberal order was established, in a scenario where issues such as the legitimacy of power, the origin of the constitution, the definition of policy-makers and the State's governing policies took a long time to be solved.

It was the time of the "amazing anarchy", of the "reign of the word and the bullet" or, in a current historic synthesis, the time of the "war of all against all" (Valente, 1993, p. 144, Martins, 1986[1881], II, p. 121, and Bonifácio, 1992). Once the confusing years of 1820-51 came to an end, the Regeneration seemed to have been able to overcome the era of revolutions, replacing the ardent rhetoric of liberty with the country's development needs and reinforcing the State's capacities. With the renovation of the political elite, the reform of the Constitutional Charter, the elimination of extremes and the stabilisation of public finances, 1851 meant the end of years of *implementation* of the liberal order and the beginning of its *consolidation* (Sardica, 2013, pp. 157-59 and 164-70). However, the greatest socio-political stability only lasted a few years.

From the 1858-62 religious issue onwards, which aroused the revolution and made a distinction between monarchic liberalism and anti congregational radicalism, it was evident that bourgeois regenerative peace had not completely silenced revolutionarism, underestimating the dissidence of those who had never renounced the search for democracy and the revolutionary means to achieve it (Bonifácio, 2013, p. 293). In the last quarter of the 19th century, it became fashionable again to be revolutionary and radicalism won new players and banners, through a tendency that was already visible in the urban agitation of the great meetings of the 1860s, and continued through the militancy of the younger generation, that is, of the 70's Generation and its myth of the "unfinished revolution" (Ramos, 2004, p. 127) – the revolution which, for example, socialist and republican writer and poet Antero de Quental appealed to, as a new civic religion of the modern world, which would be the fulfilment of a moral and social reform aimed at overcoming the prevailing decadent public mood.

It is true that the second period of *fontismo*, that is, the governing cycle led by Fontes Pereira de Melo, a conservative monarchist politician, during the 1870s and 1880s, was peaceful, neutralizing the revolutionary impetus through a policy of co-opting opponents and of electoral and constitutional reforms, stealing thus the left's banners and forcing it to part from the most radical stream. But even the *fontista* style – comprehensive and conciliatory – and the antidote of material development administered to the country did not avert periods of tension such as the "democratic campaigns" against King D. Luís, at the end of the 1870s, at the time when republicanism, by exploiting Camões' tercentennial commemorations in 1880, began the period that led to the establishment of the Republic.¹⁰ This path was accelerated by two incidents: the damage caused to the reputation of the monarchy and to King D. Carlos's new reign, because of the ultimatum in 1890¹¹, and the radicalization of the republican revolutionary action, against João Franco's government, in 1906-08, and when it could broaden its sphere of influence, against King D. Manuel II's monarchy, in 1908-10. The revolution was the passion of radical republicanism, which dominated the antimonarchic movement before 5 October 1910.

¹⁰ Luís Vaz de Camões, a Portuguese poet from the 16th century, author of the well-know *Lusíadas*, was popularly cherished as a patriotic symbol of the "golden era" of national history. That memory, politically contrasted with the alleged decadence that constitutional monarchy had brought about in the 19th century, was much used by the Republican Party in the commemorations of 1880, to woo the ruling king and the political system he championed.

¹¹ The "ultimatum" scandal was a much traumatic political and diplomatic question affecting the monarchy's public image and legitimacy. In January 1890, following ever growing conflict in the interior territories of Angola and Mozambique, the British Foreign Office issued a diplomatic note to Lisbon's government ordering the immediate withdrawal of any Portuguese military presence in that hinterland, actually a no man's zone claimed by the British interest to unite Cape (Town) to Cairo, in an vertical territorial axis that clashed against the Portuguese long dreamed horizontal axis, uniting the Atlantic coast of Angola to the Indic coast of Mozambique. Lacking international support, and fearing any hostile military operation by its old and powerful ally, Portugal had to accept the British terms, in a diplomatic surrendering that ignited all patriotic flames, evidently monopolised by all the anti monarchic opposing factions, either republicans or plainly revolutionaries of all sorts.

In 1909, Afonso Costa, one of the leading republican propagandists and towering figure of the coming regime, called for the “love of the revolution” as a “necessary feeling” (*O Mundo*, 25 January 1909, p.1), with the same vehemence that his political companion António José de Almeida had already used to define it as “the sacred vehicle of the redeeming future”, declaring that the Republican Party would be the continuer of the legacy of the *shintista* (1820) and *setembrista* (1836) democratism, and the legitimate interpreter of the heritage of the French revolutionary movement (Almeida, 1933[1907], p. 181).

Therefore, for those who fought for it, the Republic meant a revolutionary *aggiornamento*, that would supposedly bring about true democracy, with participation and development for all; that is, a new and great revolution – not *liberal*, but *radical* and *democratic* – carried out by men for whom the revolution had the mystical force of a devotional surrender. Notwithstanding, from 1910 and until 1926, as a result of its ideological nature, its enemies and a self-inflicted blockade, the republican regime would always be a continuous revolution, incapable of finding a basis of legitimacy other than the radical movement which was its essence and strength – in an international scenario that was, at the dawn of the 20th century, during World War I and through the years that followed, riddled with revolutions, mutinies, coups d'état and constant socioeconomic instability.

After more than a century of recurrent revolutionary activity someone appeared – António de Oliveira Salazar – who decided it was time to liquidate the revolution, more so since he had the right conditions to achieve such aim on a lasting basis. Begun by the Military Dictatorship in 1926, the antirevolutionary outcome became visible in 1928, when the then minister of Finance revealed his authoritarian determination, and four years later, in 1932, when he assumed the leadership of the government and accelerated the process of constitutionalisation and consolidation of the *Estado Novo*, both over the ruins of the republican opposition, and the removal of the threat of the new communist and fascist revolutionarisms. The continuous revolutionarism that Salazar had witnessed, Masonic and embedded in foreign ideas, whose origins he linked to the old 19th century liberalism, convinced him that it was urgent to redeem the country from the reigning division and disorder. To that foundational wish he added a hatred of the liberal culture, seen as the cause of the continuous revolution, so that liquidating the revolution and breaking away from liberalism became synonymous.

The years after 1928 can hence be seen as the *beginning of the end* of the revolution in Portugal, since the rising *Estado Novo* (New State) would become a lasting *revanche* of conservatism and a way of making politics that was not satisfied with less than defeating the revolution and keeping it defeated. Only that would silence the recent effects of the republican regime and the revolutionary path of the 19th century, which was the original root of “evil”. For the new political orthodoxy, the durability of *salazarismo* would be the antidote of deliverance from one hundred years of revolutionary rage. Therefore, the “national revolution” of the dictatorship was after all a “revolution”, but with a different semantics, a “revolution of order” against the “sanguinary confusion”, to end once and for all with all the revolutions and to enable the country to “live normally”, even if that meant – as it did – the denial of freedoms and the repression of oppositions through dictatorial rule (Salazar, 1935, *passim*). As João Ameal, a staunch salazarist, summed up (echoing an old dictum of French absolutist Joseph de Maistre), the Military Dictatorship had started the “reversed revolution” so that later on the *Estado Novo* could be consolidated as the “reverse of the revolution” (Ameal, 1932, pp. 33-36). It is true that revolutionarism would return later on, during the 1960s and 1970s – but in a very different context, when the models of the across-borders revolution proceeded more from the communism of 1917 or the Maoism of 1949 than from the old liberalism of 1789 or 1820, and when the reasons for revolutionary awakening sprang from the perpetuation of the *Estado Novo* in a rapidly changing world.

4. The six roots of contemporary Portuguese revolutionarism

Approximately 120 years separated the beginning of the national revolutionary path with King D. João VI's tribulations at the time of Napoleon, from its end, achieved with Salazar's determination before a public opinion that was tired of revolutions. One could sum up that after the specificities of the transition from the Old Regime to the Revolution, and from the confusing years of the counterrevolution to the Civil War, the long liberal and radical century evolved, oscillating between *managing*, *defeating*, *overcoming*, *awakening*, *neutralizing*, *co-opting*, *completing* and lastly *liquidating* the revolution.

Thus, Salazar and the advent of the *Estado Novo* (up until the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, in the second half on the 1930s) marked the end of the revolution and the emergence of a dictatorial situationism defined as anti-revolutionary because it was anti-liberal and anti-communist. What the above-mentioned verbs, of revolutionary affirmation and of several efforts for its containment, indicate is that, except for the decade of 1850 (when the revolution was overcome), the two *fontista* governments of the 1870s and 1880s (which neutralized the revolution), and a few other calm periods of short duration in the intermediary years of King D. Carlos's reign (when the monarch wanted to co-opt the revolution), revolutionarism, in action or in embryo, actively marked contemporary everyday national life. This does not mean that the revolution was a congenital evil to be destroyed and that all the means would justify such end, but rather that it was the strong *leitmotiv* of 120 years – with every aspect that it implied, negative and positive.

Through the revolutions, with their modernizing impetus, or in spite of them, because of the destabilization they caused, the country progressed enormously – its institutions, its politics, its society and its ideas – but perhaps it progressed without being able to attain the broad internal economic and social development and the external assertion that were the ambition of all revolutions.

The conclusive systematization of the narrative still requires one final set of observations, to indicate six macro causes or roots (beyond the natural and universal human aspiration for a better world), that can explain the already-summarized Portuguese endemic revolutionarism, and also help to find an answer to Alexandre Herculano's above-mentioned question.

A *first* explanatory element of the durability of the Portuguese revolutionarism lies in the socio-cultural backwardness present in the country during the 19th and 20th centuries. Poor schooling and massive illiteracy always forced the vast majority of the country to live in a profound political anomy, alienation and immobility. When Fialho de Almeida looked at and deplored the illiteracy rate, which in 1850 reached 85% and in 1900 was still close to 75% (at the beginning of *Estado Novo*, in the 1930s, it was 60%), he spoke of the people, when the establishment of the Republic took place, as an “acephalous crowd”, “with no conscience whatsoever”, lying in a “state of African bestiality” (!) and with no active influence in the direction the country was taking (Almeida, 1912[1908], p. 97). But if on the whole Portugal was a civically uneducated and amorphous nation, hence not globally very revolutionary, that didn't stop – and quite on the contrary it aggravated – the existence of a strong distance between the “real country”, poor, rural, illiterate and conservative, and the “legal country”, that is, the urban micro world of political debate. Isolated from the rest of the nation, it was this legal country that was committed to the continuous revolution. Thus, all political action took place in a limited, but intense, geographical and sociological sphere, which sparked conflict and revolutions – easily imposed on the country, at least as a *fait accompli*.

Lisbon, especially (not so much Oporto), was a macrocephalous city in relation to the rest of the country. Indeed, it can be stated that the capital's abnormal dimension gave rise to “an imbalance that was manifested as a dysfunction of the political system” (Bonifácio, 2010, p. 177).¹² Such a dysfunction, clearly showing the dualism between the capital and the rest of the country, is a *second* explanatory reason for the longevity of the revolution in Portugal¹³ – in addition to being, as it is presently commented, one of the biggest weaknesses and incongruities of national modernization.

¹² Lisbon's macrocephaly was mainly visible in the fact that its population accounted for c. 44% of all urban Portuguese population at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Oporto only accounted for 20% of that population (Silva, 1997, p. 787). As a means of comparison, today, Lisbon and Oporto's population no longer account for more than 19% of the whole Portuguese urban population (12% in Lisbon and 7% in Oporto), even considering that the coastal demographic predominance remains a characteristic of the country, very much caused by the steady growth of the metropolitan areas of those two cities.

¹³ In the phrasing of Maria de Fátima Bonifácio, “it is hard to believe the destabilizing force of revolution in a country that was not revolutionary and that, quite on the contrary, was staunchly conservative. Such an enigma can only be enlightened if one bears in mind that in a very large manner the country was Lisbon, and that after Lisbon – but at a significant distance – Oporto was the only remaining city that counted” (2010, p. 175).

And it was in fact the socio-cultural backwardness, as well as the dualism between the ignorant majority and the urban minority, that imported ideological slogans completely unrelated to the basic conditions of the country where they were imposed, what the French author Chateaubriand referred to, in the first half of the 19th century, when he wrote about Portugal and Spain: "in these countries, ideas out pass men" ("*dans ces pays les idées dépassent les hommes*") (quoted in Cruz, 2013, p. 205).

The socio-cultural backwardness and the existing dualism (or fracture) between the micro world of the urban elite and the macro world of the rural sphere were in turn linked to a *third* explanatory factor of the endemic Portuguese revolutionarism: the economic backwardness. Such backwardness cannot be explained here (see Reis, 1993), and only its influence on political behaviour will be reported on. In a country with very few natural resources, the collapse of the Atlantic commerce, together with the severe consequences of the French invasions in the economy (at the beginning of the 1800s), led to an explosive connection between "universal poverty" and "anarchy" during the first half of the 19th century, as observed by J. P. Oliveira Martins, one of the chief political chronicler of the time: "nothing exacerbates hatred more than hunger, and then there was hunger among us".

Therefore, "poverty, on a deeper level, and the conflicts of the several liberal parties, on the surface", had been "the causes of the successive revolutions between 1834 and 1851" (Martins, 1986[1881], II, p. 171 and 121, and 1957[1892], p. 306). Later on, with the Regeneration, came industrial development and an increase in public works. But after four decades of material improvement, the *fontista* model failed, ruined by a galloping public debt. The State's financial bankruptcy, in 1892, plunged the economy and society into a crisis, exploited by the republicans to destroy the monarchy, even before they succumbed to it, due to the high cost of national intervention in World War I, between 1916 and 1918.

The broad historical period encompassing the last years of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century was a time when the country lagged behind and deviated from the rhythm of the international economy. The awareness of underdevelopment in relation to the competitive globalization of the "era of the empire" and to the 2nd Industrial Revolution was an important cause of the intense political bellicosity in the years 1890-1926. And the fact that Salazar's ascent to power was based on his image of "financial magician" is not a minor aspect when considering the origins and the victory of *Estado Novo*. As he stated, the resolution of economic, social and political issues depended on the solution of the financial issue; the financial issue resulted directly from "the material backwardness that unfortunately characterizes our country"; and such backwardness was "at the base of some revolutions" (Salazar, 1935, pp. 12 and 88).

A *fourth* factor to consider is a consequence of the double social and economic backwardness – namely, what in the jargon of the 19th century became known as "jobmania" ("*empregomania*"). "Jobmania" was the continuous struggle, undertaken by the politicized middle class, to win a job and to be appointed for any public department or service, through the oligarchic circuits of influence. As the socio-political historiography points out, such phenomenon was the result of "the shortage of economic resources and lack of occupational alternatives" as well as of the "material and/or symbolic advantages attributed to public-sector jobs" (Almeida, 2007, p. 58) – all within a general Portuguese framework in which the State was the main employer.

In fact, for those who wanted to climb the economic and social ladder in order to escape the poverty of the fields, without having to emigrate, the solution was to "go into" the State, thus swelling the civil service. As a result, national State administration became the stage of intense political strife, in an unending partisanship, which sought to "employ" "friends" and confront "enemies". As José de Azevedo, a political observer, warned in 1847, in order to "impose an end to the revolutions" it was necessary "to properly organize the public service", for only that would settle "the great cause of the fighting in which the Portuguese nation has been engaged since 1820" – which was the "ambition of the factions" that "compete among themselves for those public jobs" (Azevedo, 1847, pp. 4-5 and 16). In a way, the young generations attacked the monarchic system because they couldn't find a suitable position in a State already occupied by successive layers of political "friendship". After these revolutionaries came the republicans, whose nobler ideological motivations also hid the socio-economic struggle for positions in the State apparatus. From 1910, the new regime dismissed adversaries and exposed those monarchists who were willing to attach themselves to it, according to republican minister João Chagas's famous teaching: "this is the doctrine: the Republic is for republicans.

Only the republicans will form tomorrow's State [...] The Republic must be composed only of republicans, throughout the whole hierarchy, from its ministers to its magistrates; and as long as this is not the case, there will be no Republic" (Chagas, 1910, V, pp. 89-90). After 1926, the Military Dictatorship and the *Estado Novo* also dismissed (or "compulsively retired") those in opposition in order to employ people of the same faction.

Political and social competition for state jobs and other benefits greatly contributed to a *fifth* cause of the continuous revolutionarism that agitated national life, namely the permanent challenging of the political power and, therefore, its intrinsic instability. There were greater and deeper reasons for the political-institutional instability – and, strictly speaking, this instability was not just a *cause* of the revolutions but also its *consequence*. The fact that the liberal revolution had demolished the institutions of the old monarchy, especially the old nobility, on account of *miguelismo* (the political support to D. Miguel, the absolutist contender during the Civil War of 1832-34), its overwhelming political option, and the Catholic Church, weakened by secularization, had already forced constitutionalism to be born in a "vacuum". The outcome was, as many key 19th political authors stressed, "an ever-vacillating power" whose work was always under threat (Soriano, 1858, p. 94).

In a system where a constitutional agreement took a long time to come into existence and where political debate was almost always violent and bitter, not even the elections had the expected outcome: rather than being regulated mechanisms for the expression of public opinion, they were an occasion for intense fighting and their results were often seen as fraudulent, questionable and, above all, a pretext for more revolutions¹⁴. Once more, Regeneration's political calm, cometh after 1851, subdued hatreds and was better capable of structuring institutions and of guaranteeing that electoral results were respected by those who were defeated. But tension returned by the end of the 19th century, for another decades-long period, which brought back an environment of radical confrontation.

A *sixth* and last cause that explains why political power in Portugal was, for many years in contemporary history, a pawn of continuous revolutions resides in yet another aspect of national life – the militarisation of politics and the politicisation of the military, meaning the ease with which civil factions took hold of military means and manipulated army or marine units for the revolution, thus eternalising socio-political disorder (Marques, 1999, pp. 190-192). The interdependency between the political and the military spheres was taken for granted throughout the 19th and part of the 20th century. All of the first half of the 19th century, until the pacification of the army and the "civilization" of politics undertaken during the initial years of Regeneration, was a time of armed legitimacy and of "political generals" (Valente, 1997a, p. 23) – and so much so that between 1817 and 1851 74 military interventions were registered in Portugal, at an average of more than two per year (Marques, 1999, pp. 280-283). Oliveira Martins substantiated his metaphor of the "reign of the word and the bullet" (1834-1851) on the finding that, in those years, the army, disorganised, ill-equipped, poorly paid and very politicised, was "a party tool", devoid of the "mute and passive character, without which it will become a permanent danger". The conclusion was critical: "taught for many years in the tradition of insurrections, the army was like a continuum of the parties: an armed part of the clientele" (Martins, 1986[1881], II, p. 143).

From 1890 and the republican revolt of 1891, after the interregnum of the Regeneration period, the armed forces once again showed indiscipline and an openness to civil manipulation. It was the republicanisation of the lower ranks of the army and of most of the marine that brought victory on 5 October 1910. Later on, during the 16 years of its term, the First Republic always kept a great proximity to the army, for the latter defended the orthodoxy against the republic's enemies, and because the army was always in a state of "semi-discipline" (Matos, 2010, p. 197). Participation in World War I increased the importance of the armed forces within the regime, giving them a visibility and a voice that turned against it, because of how the army increasingly occupied the political scene since 1918, that is, from Sidónio Pais (the ill-fated president, assassinated in Lisbon in December 1918), onwards.

¹⁴ As Maria de Fátima Bonifácio summarizes, in a broad description of the first decades of monarchic liberalism, "in Portugal, a basic feature of all representative systems did not exist, that is, the general conviction that all State powers were acquired by legal means and through processes obeying to previously established rules, that everyone knew and agreed upon. This circumstance transformed political activity into a permanent guerrilla, and the government into an exercise of party exclusiveness, forging the rejection of all adversaries, that is, the consideration that all opponents were but illegitimate subjects of political life, and thus irreconcilable enemies" (2013, p. 41).

The result of these phenomena came to a total of 37 military interventions in the political arena between October 1910 and the end of 1929 (once again with an average of two episodes per year) (Serra & Matos, 1982, p. 1168). Established by the force of arms one hundred years before, in 1820, the long liberal century also died by the force of arms, from 1926 onwards. It was then up to Salazar to convince the armed forces to retreat from politics, reinforcing the civilian character of the *Estado Novo* dictatorship and offering them the material retirements and ceremonial visibility so as to immunize them against further revolutionary temptations.

5. Conclusion.

Throughout all of the 19th century and still during the first third of the 20th century, the history of Portugal and of the Portuguese revolution revealed those specificities that were delineated. The “how” and the possible “whys” of that endemic revolutionarism are not unique in the contemporary European scene.

The simultaneity of the Iberian histories, from the war against the French until the victory of the anti-liberal duo Salazar/Franco, certainly reveals that the two countries share common characteristics. And a comparison between Portugal and Spain and the rest of Latin or Balkan Europe, extremely revolutionary regions during the 19th and 20th centuries, still has to be made.¹⁵

In a recent newspaper article, Portuguese historian Vasco Pulido Valente wrote that between King D. João VI (at the dawn of the 19th century), and the demilitarization of democracy (achieved through the Constitutional Review of 1982), “no government was legitimate, for the simple reason that it had no legitimacy of origin” – and this legitimacy could only be based on what for decades was the ambition of liberalism: a broad or universal suffrage, the results of which sustaining a legal order accepted by all. Its consequence was that, for much of contemporaneity, political power found serious obstacles that prevented normalization and consensus-building. Furthermore, when during the *Estado Novo* it lived with order and routine, it did so under a dictatorship and not as the outcome of the expression and exercise of liberties. This is one of the least commendable aspects of recent Portuguese history: after more than a century of heated debate on the best form of government and the enjoyment of liberty, government only achieved stability at the cost of silencing liberty, when the *Estado Novo* was established on the claim that “liberty” meant anarchy, and that public order was incompatible with its maintenance.

Hypothetically, it should not have been so: Portuguese history could have found, as it happened in other countries, some point of lasting equilibrium between liberty, order and development. But the desirable was not possible and that is why the 19th and 20th centuries were, in truth, the history of “a myriad of usurpations, revolutions and falsified elections” (*Público*, 9 June 2013, p. 34). In 106 years, from 1820 to 1926, there were 128 governments and 52 general elections – an average of one government every ten months and one election every two years! By broadening the time span to all of contemporary history, Portugal underwent, in the last two hundred years, no less than 10 different political-institutional regimes, some of which being merely uncertain interludes: Absolutism (up until 1820), Liberal Revolution (1820-28), *Miguelismo* (1828-32), Civil War (1832-34), Constitutional Monarchy (1834-1910), First Republic (1910-26), Military Dictatorship (1926-33), *Estado Novo* (1933-74), Revolution (1974-76) and Democracy (1976 onwards, and European since 1986). In the end, Vasco Pulido Valente’s observation can be interpreted as a further call for the utility of better knowing the dynamics of revolution in contemporary Portugal, as well as the reasons and effects of always having been so difficult, for the different regimes and powers, to establish a culture of liberal compromise, and to end that same revolution.

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¹⁵ According to Charles Tilly, Portugal and Spain registered, between 1792 and 1941 (a time-span of around a century and a half), 94 years with at least one revolutionary episode. For that same period, the total registered in the Balkan/Hungarian region was 71 years. At a larger distance, then follows France (14 years containing revolutionary episodes), Russia (13 years), the British Isles (12 years) and the Low Countries (8 years) (Tilly, 1995, p. 290).

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