

ANNALS  
UNIVERSITATIS MARIAE CURIE-SKŁODOWSKA  
LUBLIN – POLONIA

VOL. XXVIII, 2

SECTIO K

2021

---

Valencia Catholic University Saint Vincent Martyr

FEDERICO MARTÍNEZ RODA

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5443-4395>

*The End of the “Spanish Danger” as a Prerequisite for Iberian  
Alignment during the Cold War<sup>1</sup>*

ABSTRACT

This study is based on the paradox that the democratic values sustaining the West during the Cold War were not applied in all anti-Communist countries, specifically in the Iberian countries. For the Iberian Peninsula to be a block, it was necessary for Portugal, which had been part of the Hispanic Monarchy, to abandon the ongoing mistrust of its neighboring country, founded on the so-called *perigo espanhol* (“Spanish danger”). Cordial relations between Salazar and Franco contributed to the Portuguese losing their feeling of mistrust. The reason for this was that the Regime leaders in Spain during the Second World War, as can be seen from Army General Staff documents serving as the basis for this study, saw Portugal as a true friend and believed that both countries had to work together to avoid becoming involved in the war. The Iberian Block survived and when the Cold War started, Portugal sided firmly with the West.

**Keywords:** Iberian Pact, Iberian Block, “Spanish danger”, Salazar, Franco

INTRODUCTION

Thirty years after the fall of that great Cold War symbol, the Berlin Wall, we can now analyze the forty-year period over which it remained standing (1948–1989) from a descriptive and morphological perspective. Looking at this period in relation to other periods in the history of international relations, we can say that the multilateralism that characterized the international order after Westphalia (1648), Utrecht (1714), the

---

<sup>1</sup> This work was supported by Valencia Catholic University Saint Vincent Martyr, under Grant 2017-210-001.

Congress of Vienna (1815) or even after the Treaty of Versailles (1919) was replaced by the highly tense bipolarity that was the main feature of the Cold War. However, such an analysis would be incomplete because this bipolarity reached far beyond international dynamics to also affect internal politics, as electoral processes in Western countries involved the participation of a Communist party, which also affected local conflicts (Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East). Another factor was that humanity was gravely at risk from the widespread disappearance of the values currently underpinning political systems and that justify the existence of political power itself. States based on the rule of law, with free and public elections to form a government, with a certain economic freedom that involves respect for private initiative, were facing a move towards a totalitarian approach led by the Soviet Union and that spread to many other countries after the Second World War (Eastern Europe, China, North Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, Cambodia, newly independent African states and Afghanistan).

All this must be said expressly as we approach the third decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century since, given the basic foundations of Marxism-Leninism, we need to move away from defining the Cold War merely as “an ideological confrontation between democracies and communism”, which is true but incomplete if the types of regimes on each side are not explicitly defined. This is even more true if we then go on to state that “the Western world (adhered to) an excluding and obsessive anti-communism” [Pereira, Campos 2015: 194], as if there had not been a real danger of losing democratic values owing to Soviet influence, which was at its highest point in 1962, but with the additional paradox that these democratic values had to be defended on the Iberian Peninsula by two countries with authoritarian regimes.

#### THE IBERIAN REGIMES AND THEIR STANCE IN WORLD WAR II

In 1962, Spain and Portugal had taken two very different paths to arrive at two very similar political regimes, to the extent that they were both named after their respective leaders. The Salazar and the Franco regimes coincided on the defense of traditional values, on a somewhat regenerationist approach, on pragmatism and also on their “antis”. Both regimes professed to be anti-liberal, also anti-democratic and, above all, anti-communist, which led them to be branded Fascist regimes, especially by their political enemies. The motto of Salazar’s National Union: “Family, God and Homeland”, was very similar to the traditionalist “God, Homeland and King”, to a certain extent taken on by the Franco regime. Plus, both Salazar and Franco also coincided on the idea that many of the strings of international politics were moved by a series of Masonic plots working against the essences of their respective countries. In any case, what is really important is that both regimes regarded each other as similar and this was reflected in their relations.

After the Second World War, the Cold War was a simplification of the three-way conflict so well described by Jean-Baptiste Duroselle in referring to the 1930s: on the

one hand, communism had taken a firm hold in Russia, where the Soviet Union had been created, also including territories of the Czarist Empire in the form of Soviet Republics, but more importantly, the regime presented itself as the culmination of historic evolution and all other countries would have to follow the road to socialism set out by the Third International. Stanley G. Payne recalls that opposition to the revolution "prevailed in Europe – Finland, the Baltic, Hungary, Spain and Greece – and revolutionary uprisings were repressed in the Philippines, Malaysia, Central America and other places" [Payne 2019: 21] until the Cold War, but previously the most overwhelming reaction to communism came from Italian fascism, which came into power in 1921, and from Nazism, the leader of which was appointed German Chancellor in January 1933. With the establishment of totalitarian regimes in Europe, the question was: Which was better for democrats, to side with the Communists against the Nazi-Fascists or side with the latter against the Communists? [Duroselle 1967].

This was the scenario in the 1930s, which was why Portugal under Salazar and Spain under Franco, whose regimes were clearly anti-communist, had the chance to secure good relations with democratic countries in 1939 and in 1948, despite their non-democratic approach to government. For the time being, in August 1939, there was a surprising move in international relations in terms of alliances, with the publication of the German-Soviet Frontier Treaty, minus the secret clauses, which appeared to leave democrats without allies in this "three-way game", but the expansive nature of Nazism led to the break-up of the pact, but not before Poland had been partitioned, to the great displeasure of the Spanish and Portuguese governments. But the major change was that the invasion of the Soviet Union by Nazi Germany portrayed the Second World War as an anti-Fascist conflict [Renouvin 1965: 113], which was detrimental to the Iberian regimes.

This new situation encouraged the most pro-German elements in the Portuguese and Spanish regimes to – unsuccessfully – put pressure on Salazar and Franco to enter the war on the side of the Axis powers, in fact, in Spain no preparation at all was made for this, on the contrary, defenses in the Pyrenees and in the archipelagos were strengthened to fight off any potential attack from outside, whoever it might have come from. Meanwhile in Portugal, as a constant of its external politics, the predominant factor was the preservation of overseas territory threatened by Japanese expansion in Macao and East Timor, which distanced it from the Axis and brought it closer to the Allies. Spain's commitments to Nazi Germany were settled with the sale of tungsten and the dispatch of the Blue Division to Russia [Martínez Roda 2012: 274], which did not imply entering the war as it was done under German recruitment rules, which allowed soldiers of other nationalities to enlist in the *Wehrmacht*.

What both Salazar and Franco realized was that they had to coordinate their foreign policy because if there was war on the Iberian Peninsula, both Portugal and Spain would be dragged into it; this prompted them in March 1939 to sign the Iberian Treaty that led to the formation of the Iberian Block in 1942, when the chances of a German victory were already becoming remote. This alliance was maintained once

the Second World War was over, even during the difficult times of problem of what to do with Spain, which at first seemed doomed to isolation. This was not the case of other neutral countries such as Sweden, which was governed by social-democrats and supplied minerals and other essential raw materials for the German war effort, Switzerland, a refuge for capital from the Third Reich, and Portugal. But only two years after UN Resolutions 32 and 39 of February 1946 condemning it, the very isolation suffered by Franco's Spain became its trump card, as these resolutions had been put forward by the Polish delegate, that is, by the representative of a communist country and stooge of the Soviet Union.

When the 1948 conflicts broke out in Prague, with the seizure of power by the Communists, and in Berlin, with the blockade imposed by Stalin, the Iberian Peninsula appeared as an anti-Communist block that could be relied upon for the new policy of containment of Soviet Union ambitions, despite the non-democratic political nature of both regimes. For this idea of an Iberian block to be possible, it was necessary to put an end once and for all to the prevailing idea in Portugal that a *perigo espanhol* ("Spanish danger") threatened its territorial integrity or even its independence. We need to analyze how the idea of this danger faded away definitively.

For the time being, despite proclaiming its "non-intervention" in the Spanish Civil War of 1936, some eight thousand soldiers, known as *viriatos*, along with sixty officers, came from Portugal to enlist in the Spanish Legion and fight in the self-styled "national" side, enabling Salazar's government to avoid being internationally committed, but in fact to provide help to what became finally known as Franco's Spain. At the farewell to the *viriatos*, in the Plaza Mayor of Salamanca on 4 June 1939, during the ceremony for awarding honors and medals, the bond between the two nations was clearly displayed. In the presence of the Spanish ambassador in Lisbon, Nicolás Franco, and the Portuguese ambassador in Madrid, Pedro Teotónio Pereira, who had also been led to the presidential platform on the arm of General Millán Astray as a gesture of friendship, the Spanish General spoke as follows: "Heroic *viriatos*: as you return to your Portugal, our sister land, having given up your lives and blood for God, for Humanity and for Spain, you carry the token of our affection and with it the heart of your Legion Colonel. Salazar, Salazar, Salazar! Franco, Franco, Franco!" [*Diário de Notícias* n° 26,337. 5 June 1939].

#### THE END OF THE "SPANISH DANGER"

These statements were in themselves the announcement of a structural change in Spanish-Portuguese relations. Since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the time of the secession of Portugal from the Spanish Monarchy, bilateral relations between the two countries had been marred by the idea of the *perigo espanhol* [Torre Gómez 1983], fueled in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when, during the 1910 Portuguese Revolution ending the Bragança monarchy, "the young King Alfonso XIII adopted a belligerent stance in favor of Spanish inter-

vention in the neighboring nation” [Togores Sánchez 2016: 133]. There was also a hint of that danger during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic, when Manuel Azaña and Indalecio Prieto in the first two years of the Republican government (1931–1933) offered members of the Portuguese opposition (Jaime Cortezao, Moura Pinto and Bernardino Machado) the chance to promote an intervention by Spain to overthrow the Salazar regime [Oliveira 1985: 85 ff]. From February 1936 onwards, a series of clashes took place between the new government of Azaña and the Salazar government. The Portuguese press aired the religious persecution happening in Spain as well as the ongoing public disorder that the Populist Front government attempted to suppress. However, according to Hipólito de la Torre Gómez, the beginning of the end of the *perigo espanhol* can be detected in the 1919–1930 period, when the idea of “peninsular friendship” began to gain a footing [Torre Gómez 2013]. The visit to Primo de Rivera’s Spain by Portugal’s President Carmona in 1929 signaled a further step forwards in Portugal’s lessening suspicion of Spain, despite the fact that Republican Spain’s interventionism in Portugal, as referred to earlier, could have resuscitated the idea of the *perigo espanhol*, but this did not happen. On the contrary, the tendency was consolidated during the Civil War, and especially during the Second World War, because both countries coincided on the point that if one entered the war, it would drag the other along with it, so both did their utmost to remain on the margins of the conflict.

The good relations between the Salazar and Franco regimes dated back to before the latter became the leader of the rebel soldiers. The preparation of the military uprising in Spain was supported by Portugal from the outset [Oliveira 1988]. General Sanjurjo, regarded as the natural head of the military uprising, was in Portugal at the time and was killed in an aircraft accident on 20 July 1936 while he was on his way back to Spain to lead it. During the Civil War, the *viriatos* [Rodrigues 1996] fought alongside the “national” side and before the conflict was over the Iberian Pact was signed, a true guarantee of neutrality in the face of the tense situation in Europe. All these elements must be taken into account, which did not prevent the Spanish Army General Staff, despite their friendship, from analyzing Portugal as an international relations element whose behavior might be influenced by another of its allies, especially the United Kingdom, resulting in a distancing from Spain, but even from the Army General Staff reports we can deduce that the aims of the Iberian Pact had to be maintained.

The definitive connection between the two authoritarian regimes, which had remained tacitly loyal to each other since 1936, to the extent that Pena Rodríguez states that Portugal was “Franco’s great ally” [Pena Rodríguez 1998], was explicitly expressed with the signature of the Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression signed on 17 March 1939, known as the Iberian Pact. The Pact marked the start of a structural change in Portugal’s geopolitical and geostrategic discourse and reality and, as a result, in that of the Peninsula as a whole [Jiménez Redondo 2019].

The Iberian Pact represented different things for Spain and for Portugal. For Spain, it meant sincerely and definitively renouncing the imposition of a situation

of hegemony in the Peninsula and, consequently, accepting Portugal as an ally of the United Kingdom; for Portugal, it was the legal guarantee that obliged the nation's traditional enemy to respect the inviolability of peninsular borders, which also meant, even though indirectly, the assurance that Spain relinquished an aggressive Iberian policy. This study will show, using restricted information from the Spanish Army General Staff, the accuracy of Hipólito de la Torre Gómez's thesis, which says that the commitment acquired was stable and was, therefore, not threatened by the development of the Second World War; on the contrary, Iberian lands would remain a neutral space, largely because of the loyalty shown to the terms of the agreement on both sides [Torre Gómez 2013]. This did not prevent the Spanish Army General Staff from monitoring extremely closely everything related to the political situation in Portugal, the activity of its government, especially in terms of the border, and the movements of Portuguese army troops, since the uncertainty at that time meant that Spanish military intelligence services kept watch on Portugal despite being bound by the Iberian Pact of March 1939, referred to earlier.

On 22 September 1939, with the Ministry for National Defense having been split into the Ministries of the Army, Navy and Air Force, the Spanish Head of State, still in Burgos, had signed the Organic Law of the Ministry of the Armed Forces, creating the Army General Staff charged with "studying the organization and preparation of the Armed Forces and the country for war" [Archive of Captain General José Enrique Varela Iglesias – ACGJEVI 170-1]. The classified secret documents issued by the new Army General Staff include an inventory containing a summary of the number of troops in Portugal, with reference to their location, both in urban areas and in the islands (Azores and Madeira) and colonies. The report starts with the statement that "rumors are circulating that Town Councils must have prepared documentation for 5 conscripts" [ACGJEVI 116-2], followed by statistical tables which show that according to information held by the Spanish Army General Staff, the Portuguese Army had, on the peninsula, 17 Infantry regiments and a further 13 battalions; nine Cavalry regiments; eight regiments and four groups of Artillery and four regiments of Engineers, in addition to two groups and one corps of Logistics, one group and a corps of Vehicles and three Medical corps [ACGJEVI 116-3]. In other words, in peninsular Portugal, there were, according to the Spanish Army General Staff, a maximum of around 25,000 soldiers, as doubt is expressed in the inventories on whether some of the regiments actually existed. In addition, some regiments were incomplete as troops were being sent to the islands of Madeira and the Azores as well as to the colonies. In the *Estudio para el Plan de Campaña n° 1 (Study for the Plan of Campaign no. 1)*, the analysis of the Portuguese army goes into much greater detail, beginning with the explanation of how it is organized into five military regions on the peninsula with headquarters in Oporto (First), Coimbra (Second), Tomar (Third), Évora (Fourth) and Lisbon (Fifth); it then goes on to highlight detailed knowledge of the troops, which it quantifies as follows:

The troops are 883 commanders and officers and 10,028 non-commissioned officers, lower ranks and enlisted soldiers (Infantry) (...) the troops are 224 commanders and officers and 2,746 non-commissioned officers, lower ranks and enlisted soldiers (Cavalry) (...) the troops are 371 commanders and officers and 4,508 non-commissioned officers, lower ranks and enlisted soldiers (Artillery) (...) the troops are 155 commanders and officers and 2,630 non-commissioned officers and lower ranks (Engineers) (...) the staff is 163 commanders and officers (Logistics) (...) the staff is 100 commanders and officers (Medical) (...) the staff is 18 commanders and officers (Pharmacy) (...) the staff is 40 commanders and officers (Veterinary). [*Estudio para el Plan de Campaña n° 1*, Paragraph C, p. 4. Document 2803 from the Francisco Franco Foundation Archive]

With this data on Portugal's military potential and the figures obtained from the military attachés in London, Berlin and Paris, in addition to information from the recently restored Captaincy Generals in the Spanish Military Regions, general Carlos Martínez de Campos<sup>2</sup> produced the report dated 8 May 1940<sup>3</sup> addressed to the Army Minister, general Varela and entitled *Consideraciones referentes a la organización del Ejército y su posible intervención en el conflicto europeo* (*Considerations Referring to the Organization of the Army and Its Possible Intervention in the European Conflict*). In the report he emphasized from the outset the statement that "it is in Spain's interest to be neutral at any cost" [ACGJEVI 99-188. Martínez De Campos, C.: *Consideraciones referentes a la organización del Ejército y su posible intervención en el conflicto europeo*. Typewritten report: 2]. Nevertheless, the report set out various cases or possible military scenarios in which Portugal is always present.

The first thing the report emphasizes is the concern for the Portuguese border, to which it devotes an extensive paragraph, considering it to be a vital factor, as "Portugal's policy has been directed for a long time towards England (...) and it is likely that because of this Portugal may be dragged into the international conflict against the Axis". This means that the stance adopted by Spain in the event of its intervention "depends on whether Portugal is our ally or our adversary, and in the latter case the Spanish-Portuguese border would become an exceptionally important theatre of operations" given the geographical fact that "there are no sufficiently strong natural obstacles across most of its area" and, above all, that "there is no organized defense to contain an invasion towards the heart of the peninsula" that Portugal could carry out on its own. Most importantly, however, "a joint offensive

<sup>2</sup> General Carlos Martínez de Campos Serrano, artilleryman, was the Chief of the Army General Staff. He was the grandson of General Serrano and held the title of Duke de la Torre.

<sup>3</sup> On 8 May 1940, although France and the United Kingdom were formally at war with Germany, the German army had not yet penetrated into France nor had Italy yet entered the war. At that time the Spanish army, because of the end of the Civil War, had reduced its numbers from 1.2 million to 450,000 soldiers, although with the possibility of reaching 600,000 if circumstances required.

might be accomplished with allied forces that could be landed in Portugal” [ACGJEVI 99-188. Martínez de Campos, C.: *Consideraciones referentes a la organización del Ejército y su posible intervención en el conflicto europeo*. Typewritten report: 6].

#### THE FORECASTS OF THE SPANISH GENERAL STAFF DURING THE EVOLUTION OF THE WAR

At these times of great uncertainty we can see that the approach was always based on hypothesis, on situations that might take place, which means that there was no strategic plan put in place by high-ranking officials, who in this case would be Army Minister General Varela and the Head of State, Francisco Franco. This explains why references to Portugal were always based on the assumptions mentioned, or to use the terminology of the *Memoria*, on the “various cases that may occur” [ACGJEVI 99-188. Martínez de Campos, C.: *Consideraciones referentes a la organización del Ejército y su posible intervención en el conflicto europeo*. Typewritten report: 9]:

First case: Spain and Italy with the allies and Portugal either neutral or with allies.

Second case: Spain with allies. Italy with the Axis and Portugal either neutral or with allies.

Third case: Spain and Italy with the Axis and Portugal neutral or with allies.

The third case is the only one that raises the possibility of Spain and Portugal facing each other at war. It is consistent with the assertion made that Portuguese foreign policy is closely linked to the United Kingdom, as well as an explanatory resource to show that if Spain entered the war alongside the Axis and Portugal were neutral or pro-Allies, Spain's military situation would be unsustainable. After stating that deployment would be needed in the Pyrenees, the *Memoria* literally says: “The case would become even worse as there would be a need for deployment to be available on the Portuguese border” [ACGJEVI 99-188. Martínez De Campos, C.: *Consideraciones referentes a la organización del Ejército y su posible intervención en el conflicto europeo*. Typewritten report: 12]. Such deployment would be counter-productive to friendly and increasingly closer relations. Not only had the Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression been signed in March 1939, but a little more than one year later, on 10 June 1940, “a solemn ceremony took place in the Throne Room at the Palacio de Oriente to present Franco with the Military Order of the Tower and of the Sword, of Valor, Loyalty and Merit awarded by the President of the Republic of Portugal, General Cardona” [Martínez Roda 2012: 232]. This was not an isolated event, it was part of a series of often repeated ceremonies of mutual appreciation. But these were not just protocol events, there was also cooperation during the famine years, not without a certain amount of pressure from the British on Spain not to enter the war, for example on 22 May 1940, Lord Halifax suggested that Salazar offer Franco's government “a hundred thousand tons of grain stored in the port of Lisbon



in exchange for assurances on the continuity of Spain's neutral position" [Espadas Burgos 1987: 153]. At this time, June 1940, Francisco Franco approached Salazar through his brother Nicolás, who was still the Spanish ambassador in Lisbon, to sign a joint document publicly expressing their wish not to be forced to be at war, and this was done on 26 July 1940, in the form of a protocol attached to the 1939 Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression, emphasizing the concern for the inviolability of their respective territories, which would be the main, if not practically the only, reason that could take them into conflict, as they were not in favor of declaring war.

The quick German victory over France considerably changed the European situation, leading the Army Chief of Staff, General Martínez de Campos, to present another report to the Army Minister dated 30 December 1940, with substantial changes, especially in relation to the fact that France was occupied and German troops, armed with tanks, were in the Pyrenees. The main concern expressed in this report is the possibility of "the unexpected invasion of German forces in our territory". In view of this possibility, the report also sets out several possibilities, although maintaining the idea that "Spain is in no condition to undergo a war", which is why it insists on trying not to become involved in this one. But it does perceive the real risk of a German invasion, which, if it were to happen, would be overwhelming. The report of 30 December 1940 expresses it like this:

The number of German divisions stationed on the other side of the Pyrenean border has little influence on the possibility that the event might take place, as Germany has available at this time the quantity of motorized units and truck units it needs to establish a flow of troops towards our territory (...) it makes little difference whether the head of this flow is in the area of the Pyrenees or dispersed on the outskirts of Berlin. [ACGJEVI 25-292]<sup>4</sup>

Under these circumstances, according to the report, there are two possibilities, or "welcome the intruders as friends", which would lead to a war with the United Kingdom and "very probably with Portugal", or "react against them as enemies", in which case Spain would receive support from British aircraft and would not have to worry about Portugal, but "this new War of Independence would be worse in comparison with the war of 1808 due to the greater disproportion of forces and armaments and because of the current domestic situation of the Peninsula" [ACGJEVI 25-293]. This time, it was not even suggested that Portugal might ally itself with Germany, as had been considered in the Report dated 8 May 1940. It was precisely at this time that the Army General Staff prepared the *Estudio para el Plan de Campaña n° 1* in case Portugal entered the war alongside the Allies, even if it involved a British intervention with the aim of then invading Spain. The *Estudio* reiterated the failings of the Spanish Army and "our meagre naval power" to the extent that "any action

---

<sup>4</sup> The word "event" appears underlined in the original.

we could take with our surface ships against defeat from the British is non-existent” [*Estudio para el Plan de Campaña n° 1*, paragraph E: 4. Document 2803 from the Francisco Franco Foundation Archive]. The *Estudio*, referring to the Army, states that there was a “lack of fodder” for the horses and mules and that “there is no stock of radios for current units” and, more seriously, “the readjustments to the portable weaponry (rifles, muskets and machine guns) are being finalized” [*Estudio para el Plan de Campaña n° 1*, paragraph D: 2], leading to the following conclusion:

The pitiful and painful impression gained from the above has been set aside in favor of drawing up a study-proposal for a plan of operations, because we suppose that even in the case that it had to be carried out in the current conditions, we would be helped in terms of material by the Allied group of countries, since nowadays, wars are fought between groups of Nations. [*Estudio para el Plan de Campaña n° 1*, paragraph D: 4]

The invasion of Greece by Italy in October 1940 once again brought to the fore the possibility that Spain might enter the war with an invasion of Portugal. The Portuguese ambassador in Spain, Teotonio Pereira, in his *Memorias*, mistrusted the Spanish Minister for Governance, Serrano Súñer, who had been appointed as Foreign Affairs precisely in that same month of October 1940, especially when Falange ran a newspaper campaign calling for Portugal to break its alliance with the United Kingdom [Pereira 1973: 226–235], but the ambassador knew perfectly well that in the Spanish Regime there were different “families” which, except for the Falangists, were loyal friends of Salazar’s Portugal, so he was not too concerned. Everything indicates that he was right because in Spanish politics the leading player was the Head of State, who back in July 1940 had opted for getting round Serrano Súñer, his brother-in-law, and accepting the proposals sent by Salazar and received via his brother, Nicolás Franco, the Spanish ambassador in Lisbon. “The result was recorded in the additional protocol in the Treaty of Friendship, signed by Madrid and Lisbon in 1939, which obliged both governments to call their ambassadors for mutual consultation in the event of some kind of threat against their security or their independence” [Payne 2008: 312]. However, in June 1940, according to Portuguese diplomatic documentation, the Portuguese government had doubts about Franco’s intentions. “Several factors contributed to this: from the distant way the Portuguese representatives started to be treated, through the opinion of the press controlled by Serrano Súñer that began a campaign against Portugal’s alliance with the British” [Gómez de las Heras, Sacristán: 1989: 212–213]. The change of “neutrality” to “non-belligerence” on 13 June 1940, and the occupation of Tangiers by Spanish armed forces the next day put the Portuguese on their guard. However, the fact that the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs was a military man, Colonel Beigbeder, set their minds at ease, as that same month, on 10 June, they had given Franco the highest Portuguese honors, leading to the signing of the mutual consultation protocol referred to earlier in July 1940.

In March 1941, a period in which the progress of the war meant that Germany was in its most favorable moment and some unknowns had been clarified, such as Italy's participation alongside the Axis and the subordination of Vichy's France, the Army Chief of Staff, Carlos Martínez de Campos, presented a new report to the Army Minister, José Varela, in which he expressed his concern for German power in relation to Spain. The *Informe de uno de marzo de 1941* report begins with a reference to the fact that both Denmark and Norway were occupied rapidly and by surprise, from which it deduces that "strong British contingents disembarking in Portugal or that German motorized divisions crossing the Pyrenean border (...) could equally occur without any prior warning", prompting it to put forward "a land plan for the Army corps under your orders" [ACGJEVI 28-38].

After this reasoning in the *Informe de uno de marzo de 1941*, which once again reiterated the concerns expressed in the *Estudio para el Plan de Campaña n.º 1* issued in December 1940, emphasizing the importance of a British invasion from Portugal, the report went into the particularly worrying question of the decisions that might be taken in Germany about a possible invasion of Spain. On this subject the report made a general reflection on the progress of the war at a time when the German invasion of the Soviet Union had not yet taken place (22 June 1941) nor had the Japanese yet bombed Pearl Harbor (7 December 1941). It says textually:

Publications prior to 1939 give a perfect idea of the Führer's intentions (...) On the other hand, it does not seem likely that Germany could become strong enough – from both air and naval perspectives – to conquer Great Britain. The Führer will not risk the operation without having at least a 90% chance of success (...) In the meantime, Germany waits and its great land army is still without a definite mission. [ACGJEVI 28-39]

According to M<sup>a</sup> Soledad Gómez de las Heras and Esther Sacristán, in Portuguese diplomatic documentation it is considered to be "a palpable threat for Portugal that German troops cross the Pyrenees to take Gibraltar and, possibly, the Atlantic coasts of Portugal, without Spain opposing them or with its support as an ally" [Gómez de las Heras, Sacristán 1989: 213].

General Martínez de Campos reiterates the idea that in the face of a German invasion, "the uprising would be harsher than in 1808. The disproportion of weapons is much greater", so he addresses issues that are more to do with foreign policy than with military matters:

To rise up against Germany, Spain needs a tacit and extremely firm agreement with France (with the France of Marshall Pétain who is still negotiating in Berlin) (...) united against Germany, France will be able to stave off many blows for us (...) Another similar agreement would be needed with Portugal. It is more difficult to achieve; but the threat of a French-Spanish agreement may make a profound contribution to fostering that agreement. [ACGJEVI 28-41]

It is clear that the Spanish Army Chief of Staff thought that the Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression of March 1939 signed between France and Portugal was insufficient. Reading between the lines, he thought a sign of greater commitment was required and he ended with these final words:

To sum up, Spain, France and Portugal are in the same situation. If they do not give in to Germany they will be embroiled in a war that has no precedents (...) If they do give in, then for a more or less lengthy period they will be part of a continental Europe guided, controlled and guarded by Berlin (and it is in their interest – should they give in – to give in under agreement, which would then reduce the importance of their war against the Anglo-American block). [ACGJEVI 28-41]

As can be seen, it mentions Anglo-American block at a time when the United States of America had not yet entered the war. In any case, there was constant preoccupation with keeping Portugal as an allied nation not only because the Spain-Portugal border was highly vulnerable, as all reports expressly say, but also because the ties between the two regimes were becoming increasingly close, to the extent that Portuguese officers were taking part in courses run by the Army Higher School, managed by General Antonio Aranda, and Portuguese military awards were being granted to Spanish soldiers. Specifically, the course report for 1941 from the Army Higher School shows the Portuguese military attaché as having attended not only lectures but also tactical exercises “with authorization from the Army Minister” [ACGJEVI 107-275]. In January 1942, Portuguese awards were granted to two brigadier generals, a colonel and a lieutenant colonel, who also happened to be part of the Army Ministry team. The Portuguese Grand Cross was awarded to General Camilo Alonso Vega, Sub-Secretary of the Army Ministry, and to General Joaquín García Ballaser, Director General of Industry and Material at the same ministry; to Chief of Staff Colonel Alfonso Fernández with the rank of Grand Officer and to Lieutenant Colonel José Fernández Bacorell, with the rank of Commander [ACGJEVI 107-147 and 148].

To these relations, which went far beyond what might be called that of good neighbors, should be added two significant events that illustrate the collaboration between the two regimes: at the time when German power was at its height, in the second half of 1940, the Spanish government, both with Beigbeder and with Serrano Súñer as Ministers of Foreign Affairs, alerted its neighboring government of possible attacks on Portuguese ports [Espadas Burgos 1991: 153], which clearly showed an order of priorities in Spanish international relations, in which Portugal was an ally to which loyalty was owed. The second event is known thanks to Army General Staff documentation: the purchase of mules by the Spanish army in Portugal in November 1941. No fewer than 2,500 in fact, which would have been unthinkable if there had been any mistrust between the governments of the two countries. Mules were an essential part of logistics in those days, and the sale of these mules by Portugal meant

that its leaders did not expect the animals to be used militarily against them. The most curious aspect of the narration of these events described to the Army Minister by his Sub-Secretary Alonso Vega informing him of the operation, is that they came up against more bureaucratic problems in a civilian ministry than in a military one in terms of arranging the importation. He put it like this: "Having established the agreement, the military commission, led by Lieutenant Colonel Cabanillas, went to make the purchase, and when they arrived in Portugal they found the Army Ministry very well disposed, and some problems in the Ministry of Finance" [ACGJEVI 107-28].

The entry into the war by the United States, both against Japan, the attacking power in Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, and against Germany and Italy, changed the perception of Spanish and Portuguese leaders of how the war would unfold. These changes were reflected in the reports from the Spanish Army General Staff from that same month of December 1941.

In *Boletín* no. 257 of 23 December 1941, referring to the Portuguese Army, it is observed that "the period of instruction which it was forcibly subjected to in previous months has ended, undoubtedly owing to the diminished state of the garrisons in general, as greater or lesser forces have left all of them in expeditionary units" [ACGJEVI 107-365] and this was no exaggeration, as the war had already affected the Portuguese colony of East Timor. A few days earlier, in *Boletín* no. 252 dated 17 December, something very important was recorded: "Disembarkation in Lisbon from the English ship *Waldinje* around fifty British made armored carriers, which were transported to the Material of War Store in Sacavem" [ACGJEVI 107-301].

This disembarkation of material of war produced no reaction at all in Spanish governmental circles, despite concern for possible British landings in peninsular Portugal, because they understood it in the context of the neighboring country, thanks to the Report from the Spanish Military Attaché in Lisbon and, especially, because the East Timor incident<sup>5</sup> seemed to indicate that the concern of the Portuguese Army would be more overseas than metropolitan due to the Japanese advance in China, with the corresponding danger of Macau, where the Portuguese had only one company of machine guns and an artillery battery, and in South-East Asia, affecting East Timor, which with 15,410 square kilometers in two regions separated by what was then Dutch Timor, it only had two companies of scouts, a company of machine guns and mortars and an artillery battery, according to classified information held by the Spanish Army General Staff and dated 7 May 1940 [ACGJEVI 116-4].

---

<sup>5</sup> After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Salazar government had ratified Portugal's neutrality, which meant that it would not cooperate with Holland in the defense of its part of Timor. In view of the need to defend the island as a whole from attack by the Japanese Imperial Army, on 17 December 1941, a combined Dutch and Australian force invaded the Portuguese part of the island without the small garrison offering any resistance. The Portuguese government protested and even prepared to send troops via Mozambique, but the rapid victory of Japanese troops over the Allies (Dutch and Australian) on the island on 19 and 20 February 1942 put an end to the problem for the time being. At the end of the Second World War, Portugal recovered the eastern part of the island and the enclave that made up Portuguese Timor.

In March 1940, the Japanese government requested oil concessions from Portugal in East Timor. When they were not granted, a move was made to threaten a blockade on Macau, however, the blockade never happened and the city was not occupied by the Japanese, unlike the British colony of Hong-Kong on 25 December 1941, to the extent that the Portuguese colony became a city-refuge. The inhabitants of Macau went from 345,000, in 1941, to approximately one million during the war, only 4,000 of whom were Portuguese, plus there was a cholera epidemic in which some 27,000 people died.

Despite existing censorship in Portugal, people's displeasure with the United Kingdom as an allied power that consented the invasion of Portuguese Timor by Australia and Holland, was clearly shown in the main cities. The *Boletín Diario de Información de la Sección Segunda del Estado Mayor del Ejército Español* dated 23 December 1941 reflected this general feeling of unease at the Allied invasion of Portuguese Timor on 17 December: "Anti-British demonstrations took place in Oporto on Monday. Police cordons had to protect the British and North American Consulates from the demonstrators. Today in Lisbon the British Embassy was given extra protection. Protection officers were armed with rifles and machine guns" [ACGJEVI 107-364].

The report sent by the military attaché in Lisbon, Lieutenant Colonel Carlos Taboada Sangro, this same month of December 1941 stressed the political situation rather than military issues. The Timor incident was potentially a political deterioration for the Portuguese authoritarian regime, as was described in the first paragraph of the report: "in the last few days new signs have emerged that democratic propaganda does not cease in its resolve to show that the foreign policy of the Salazar Government goes against Portugal's interests". The report also put even more emphasis on the option of "fluctuating" neutrality, despite the strong ties with the United Kingdom, which also supplied it with weapons. Lieutenant Colonel Carlos Taboada's report ended precisely with this question and concluded by saying:

For this reason the Portuguese government is being excessively prudent and it does not seem possible that it will lean more towards the English side until it sees that the War in the Pacific takes a totally favorable turn for the Anglo-Americans, something that has not only failed to happen until now, but that seems to tend towards the contrary, as the loss of battleships "Prince of Wales" and "Repulse" and of four North American line units rules out any naval action in the Pacific for the time being. [ACGJEVI 107-412. *Informe enviado por nuestro Agregado militar en Lisboa Teniente Coronel D. Carlos Taboada Sangro*. Typewritten report, p. 3]

Salazar's Portuguese government was forced to send troops to East Timor, troops that could not have disembarked when they arrived as the island was in the hands of the Japanese. The Spanish Army General Staff bulletin dated 12 January 1942 reported, confidentially as always, for the eyes of the Spanish authorities who had

access to it, that "the Portuguese passenger ship José Belo has left for Lourenço Marques carrying 1,110 soldiers destined for the Portuguese seizure of Timor" [ACGJEVI 103-92]. On 24 January, the bulletin continued to provide details about the transport of material: "Four field artillery batteries, brand Canet, have embarked in Lisbon, bound for Lorenzo Marques. Four hundred boxes of portable weapons and a few thousand boxes of ammunition"; and troops: "With the same destination as the aforementioned material, one hundred Artillery soldiers" [ACGJEVI 103-17].

The arrival of these troops in East Timor would, in theory, involve the withdrawal of Dutch and Australian forces, at least those were the assurances that, according to the Spanish military attaché in Lisbon, had been given by the British government, although it doubted that they would be kept:

As is logical, the Timor incident is the most worrying aspect of the situation in Portugal. The fact that President Salazar has said that the process continues to resolve the situation created there has given rise to democratic propaganda to spread the rumor that England was making plans so that at the time when reinforcement troops were sent to Timor, the Australians and the Dutch who had occupied it would withdraw (...) England does not want Portugal to be offended (...) but to me it seems impossible that the Australian troops evacuate (...) because this colony is an old ambition of Australia, which has used this moment to take without serious damage. [ACGJEVI 108-96. *Informe del Agregado Militar en Portugal y del Agregado Militar en Londres de fecha 12 de enero de 1942*, p. 2]

In early 1942, tension abroad was at its height: Portugal already had the problem of East Timor, invaded by the Allies in December 1941, and Spain feared an Allied landing, either in the Protectorate of Morocco or in the Balearic Islands or the Canary Islands and even on the mainland, resulting in Salazar and Franco deciding to meet in Seville on 12 February 1942. Following the meeting, the policy of neutrality was restated and "mutual friendship and eternal peace" was assured between the two nations. "For the Government of London it was clear proof that Spain had definitively distanced itself from the temptations of fighting the war alongside Germany" [Espadas Burgos 1991: 298].

#### CONSIDERING AN ALLIED VICTORY

The replacement of Serrano Súñer with General Gómez Jordana, the Count of Jordana, as Minister of Foreign Affairs in September 1942 did not entail any formal change to relations with Portugal, however, Serrano Súñer's disappearance from the Spanish political scene contributed to a greater rapprochement, for example, on 20 December 1942, only a few months after being appointed, Spanish Minister Jordana met with Salazar in Cintra. The meeting was also attended by both ambassadors

Nicolás Franco and Teotonio Pereira. From there he sent a new message in favor of neutrality in which he linked it to the Iberian Pact because it turned the peninsula “into a calm region that the waves of passion flooding the world cannot reach” [Espadas Burgos 1991: 287].

Practically, the entirety of the Portuguese bibliography accepts the idea of Portuguese neutrality, in the form of so-called geometric neutrality. With the exception of a certain recent revisionism, headed by Manuel Loff which, although accepting neutrality as an indisputable and expressly formulated fact, considers that this was biased towards Germany and Italy because Salazar and the Portuguese elites had an ideological empathy with the Axis [Loff 2008]. This thesis of pro-German identity also appears, although less clearly than in Loff, in authors who insist the most on the Fascist connections of the Salazar regime. Other historians, especially António Telo, do not forget the historic, military, diplomatic and financial links between the United Kingdom and Portugal [Telo 1996]. These pro-British connections were strong enough to reduce any Nazi-friendly feelings, which, like in Spain, may have been harbored in some sectors of the regime, so in the end, Portugal kept the idea of “fluctuating” neutrality, which did not prevent it from receiving material of war from the United Kingdom, while it did not have German weaponry. This was the cause of Spanish concern that Portugal might be dragged into the war on the Allied side, expressed in December 1940, in the already mentioned *Estudio para el Plan de Campaña n° 1*, ahead of a possible invasion by Portugal, which led to a project directive by the Chief of Staff’s office in the Generalissimo’s General Barracks that planned for a war with Portugal in the event that the United Kingdom intervened in its peninsular territory. This circumstance should be taken into account in terms of the extent to which the Salazar regime is attributed a pro-German stance during the Second World War. The project directive, which never got beyond the project stage as the war did not spread to peninsular territory, started like this: “The delicate situation of Portugal, in connection with an international conflict involving England, the scarce potentiality of the neighboring country and, above all, the attractiveness of its coasts, from where it is possible to easily disrupt maritime relations, may lead England to try to occupy naval bases in that territory” [*Estudio para el Plan de Campaña n° 1*, paragraph G, p. 1. Document 2803 from the Francisco Franco Foundation Archive].

Plus, practically all Portuguese historians argue that the idea of the “Spanish danger” still continued to apply during this period and they accept that, despite Spain’s neutrality and non-belligerence, Franco, at least until the winter of 1942–1943, did not rule out entering the war, although this never actually materialized. Some historians simply blame Serrano Suñer for the pro-Nazi policy and consider Franco to be less belligerent, while others argue that Franco was part of that pro-war intention, which would have led to the invasion of Portugal, but that he never found the right time to take that definitive step. The documentation held by the Spanish Army General Staff is, therefore, extremely useful for proving that the “underlying feeling of Spanish danger” was simply just that, a feeling, and that there was no effective will on the part



of the Spanish authorities, Franco included, to enter the war. This does not take away from the fact that many times they thought they were going to become embroiled in the war, not because they wanted to voluntarily enter the conflict, but because it was highly probable that they would be dragged into it, especially if Spanish territory, either on the peninsula or on the islands, was invaded.

From the armistice signed by the French government in June 1940, up until the end of the battle of Stalingrad in February 1943, the Spanish government headed by General Francisco Franco suffered a real war of nerves and had many doubts about which foreign policy it was in their interest to pursue owing to uncertainty surrounding the outcome of the war, but in the spring of 1943, it had no doubts whatsoever that Germany would not win. Any doubts there may have been dispelled both in Portugal and in Spain – except in really fanatical circles, whose influence reached even as far as the press – when Allied troops landed in Sicily and Soviet troops advanced westwards after the battle of Stalingrad. In February 1943, the *Afrikakorps* had withdrawn from Tunisia and Libya and the German 6<sup>th</sup> Army had surrendered in Stalingrad. In August 1943, Portugal granted the Lajes Field air base in the Azores to the United Kingdom. This was much more important than taking part in German parades of Portuguese officers in Berlin, and a clear leaning towards those who saw themselves as the victors, the “Anglo-Americans”, in spite of maintaining formal neutrality. It is true that all the negotiations between Portugal and the United Kingdom prior to setting up the bases in the Azores, were carried out without informing the Spanish government, but it is equally true that when agreement was reached that there would be a British base in the Azores, Salazar himself requested a meeting with the Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Count of Jordana. They met in Ciudad Rodrigo (Salamanca) on the same day that British troops were authorized to disembark in the Azores and, after a three-hour meeting, both sides described the discussions as “very satisfactory”, in other words, Spain showed no objection.

#### CONCLUSION

Lastly, the imperial rhetoric of Franco’s regime at that time has also been highlighted, particularly in terms of Portugal in June 1940. This official rhetoric of the Empire which, in fact, permeated one or two sectors or “families” of the new Franco regime, especially Serrano Suñer’s Falangist group, did not affect relations with Portugal. As Ester Sacristán Lucas writes, “Franco always showed great friendship towards Salazar and understood that the only viable way to have a good bilateral policy with Portugal was to respect both its touchy nationalism and that underlying feeling of *Spanish danger*” [Espadas Burgos 1991: 298]. Spanish Army General Staff documentation fully confirms this statement. Despite its dubious moments, including when there was huge pressure on both countries as a consequence of the development of the war in the Atlantic, in Timor and, especially of the arrival of

troops in the Pyrenees and northern Africa, “the understanding between Spain and Portugal presented the Iberian Peninsula as a relatively united block in the face of a world conflagration” [Gómez de las Heras, Sacristán 1989: 209]. Manuel Espadas Burgos confirms this idea and adds the importance of this understanding: “The rapprochement with Portugal, coming out of the support of the Oliveira Salazar government for the rebels against the Republic, but that also had the reference point on the Spanish side of the old »Iberist« programs, was a milestone, becoming the first permanent alliance signed by Spain in the 20<sup>th</sup> century” [Espadas Burgos 1991: 296]. Plus, the evolution of the events leading up to the Cold War meant that this “peninsular alliance” was one of the key parts of the West’s defense strategy, as the southernmost flank of the European continent was very safe. A prerequisite for getting to this situation, Portugal’s fears in terms of Spain had to end, that is, the idea of the *perigo espanhol* had to disappear, as it did, to a great extent, as a result of the formation of the Iberian Block.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Archive of Captain General José Enrique Varela Iglesias, Cádiz.  
*Diário de Notícias* n° 26,337. 5 June 1939.
- Duroselle, J.B. 1967. *Europa. Las relaciones internacionales desde 1800 hasta nuestros días*, Ed. Labor (Colección Nueva Clío), Barcelona.
- Espadas Burgos, M. 1987. *Franquismo y política exterior*, Editorial Rialp, Madrid.
- Espadas Burgos, M. 1991. *Las Relaciones exteriores*, [in:] *La época de Franco. Historia General de España y América*, vol. XIX(2), Editorial Rialp, Madrid.
- Estudio para el Plan de Campaña n° 1*. Foundation Francisco Franco Archive. Document 2803.
- Gómez de las Heras, M<sup>a</sup> S., Sacristán, E. 1989. *España y Portugal durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial*, “Espacio, Tiempo y Forma. Serie V. H<sup>a</sup> Contemporánea”, vol. 2, pp. 209–229.
- Jiménez Redondo, J.C. 2019. *Franco y Salazar. La respuesta dictatorial a los desafíos de un mundo en cambio (1936–1968)*, Sílex, Madrid.
- Loff, M. 2008. *O nosso século é fascista: o mundo visto por Salazar e Franco (1936–1945)*, Campo das Letras, Porto.
- Martínez Roda, F. 2012. *Varela. El general antifascista de Franco*, La Esfera de los Libros, Madrid.
- Oliveira, C. 1988. *Salazar e a Guerra Civil de Espanha*, O Jornal, Lisboa.
- Payne, S.G. 2008. *Franco y Hitler: España, Alemania. La Segunda Guerra Mundial y el Holocausto*, La Esfera de los Libros, Madrid.
- Payne, S.G. 2019. *La Revolución española (1936–1939)*, Espasa, Madrid.
- Pena Rodríguez, A. 1998. *El Gran Aliado de Franco: Portugal y la Guerra Civil española. Prensa, Radio, Cine y Propaganda*, Ediciós Do Castro, Sada, A Coruña.
- Pereira, P.T. 1973. *Memórias. Postos em que servi e algumas recordações pessoais*, 2 vols., Verbo, Lisboa.
- Pereira, J.C., Campos, M.I. 2015. *La política exterior española desde la Guerra civil al franquismo*, [in:] *Historia de la Política Exterior española en los siglos XX y XXI*, CEU Ediciones, Madrid.
- Renouvin, P. 1965. *Histoire des relations internationales*, Armand Colin, Paris.
- Rodrigues, L.N. 1996. *A Legião Portuguesa. A Milícia do Estado Novo (1936–1944)*, Estampa, Lisboa.
- Telo, A.J. 1996. *Portugal en la Segunda Guerra Mundial*, 2 vols., Editora Vega, Lisboa.

- Togores Sánchez, L.E. 2016. *Los efectos de la I Guerra Mundial en el Ejército español*, [in:] *Una generación con nombre de guerra: 1914*, Editorial Universidad Católica de Valencia, Valencia.
- Torre Gómez, H. de la. 1983. *Antagonismo y fractura peninsular. España-Portugal (1910–1919)*, Espasa-Calpe, Madrid.
- Torre Gómez, H. de la. 2013. *Do perigo espanhol à amizade peninsular; 1919–1939*, [in:] *Ibéria. A relação entre Portugal e Espanha no século XX*, J.M. Sardica (ed.), Alêtheia, Lisboa.

#### BIOGRAPHY

**Federico Martínez Roda** graduated in Law and in History in 1972. Seven years later, he completed a PhD in History at the University of Valencia. He expanded his studies at the Universities of Geneva, Sorbonne and Brussels. Retired Professor of Contemporary History. Emeritus of the Valencia Catholic University. He was Director of the Department of Humanities and Secretary-General of the Cardinal Herrera-CEU University (2001–2008) and Vice-Rector of Teaching Staff of the CEU San Pablo University (2011–2013). Dean of the Royal Academy of Valencian Culture (2016–2019) and corresponding member of the Royal Academy of History since 1997. E-mail: [fmroda@icav.es](mailto:fmroda@icav.es)

