

ZUZANA POLÁČKOVÁ – PIETER C. VAN DUIN

Portugal, Slovakia, and the political Counter-Reformation of the twentieth century (1910-1939)

This essay tries to make a comparative analysis of the political dynamics of Portugal and Slovakia in the first half of the twentieth century (1910-1939) in terms of the significance of conservative political Catholicism. The two countries belonged to a group of nations in Europe in which there was a strong reaction to political liberalism, progressive republicanism, cultural secularism, and socialism. This antagonism can arguably be seen as a modern continuation of the historic conflict between the Protestant and humanist Reformation and the Catholic Counter-Reformation. Its twentieth-century manifestation was of course somewhat different from the original sixteenth- and seventeenth-century conflict. After the eighteenth century the historic force of anti-Catholic Reformation was mainly expressed in the form of intellectual Enlightenment, anti-clericalism, and social and cultural progressivism. But it would seem that in many ways the dynamics and aggressive energy of this great cultural confrontation was continued during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, although in a modified ideological and political shape. The years between 1910 and 1940 were the period when the conflict between political progressivism and Catholic conservatism reached its culmination. In Portugal the forces of cultural secularism and liberal republicanism were defeated by the new authoritarian regime led by Salazar. In Slovakia the foundation and then the end of the First Czechoslovak Republic brought the rise and then the victory of the Catholic opposition movement, the Slovak People's Party of Andrej Hlinka and Jozef Tiso. The authors of this essay would argue that a comparison of Portugal and Slovakia is useful in trying to understand the significance of the political force of conservative and anti-liberal Catholicism. From a Slovak point of view, looking at Portugal seems helpful in coming to terms with this European and Slovak phenomenon.

Key words: Political Catholicism; cultural conservatism; authoritarianism; anti-liberalism; fascism

Introduction

The Reformation of the sixteenth century was a major force in European history, but so was the Counter-Reformation of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The 'dialectical

dynamics' of the two tendencies continued during the eighteenth and even the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The age of Enlightenment, secularisation, and the rise of modern political movements saw an ongoing struggle between these mutually antagonistic spiritual, cultural, and social movements even if secularisation and modernisation changed the terms of their confrontation to some extent. How should we define 'Reformation' in this wider historical, political, and cultural sense? And how 'Counter-Reformation'? The Reformation was a cultural revolution in Europe which paved the way for a more autonomous and educated civil society in various countries of the continent. The struggle for the emancipation of European citizens and middle- and lower-class groups continued through the twentieth century. The struggle for the acceptance of critical thought, more democratic and liberal institutions, and political and social emancipation was not always an easy one in Protestant societies either. But it is probably true that, generally speaking, in European (and American) Protestant societies more progress was made in this regard than in Catholic societies, although some Catholic regions proved more conservative and backward than others. Broadly speaking, the Counter-Reformation was a cultural and political movement to fight back against the advance of liberal individualism, civic emancipation, and secular political thought. The old values of religious tradition, social hierarchy, and political and cultural conservatism were to be defended against the onslaught of political and societal fragmentation. In what follows we will define 'political Counter-Reformation' as the reaction of conservative Catholicism to political progressivism, liberalism, republicanism, and cultural secularism. While focusing on conservative Catholicism, it should be realised that there was also another, more modern and more democratic form of political Catholicism: Christian Democracy in various European countries including Germany, the Benelux countries and even Italy. Finally, Catholic conservatism was not the only form of conservatism: there was also a Protestant, an Orthodox, a nationalist, and even a liberal variant of conservatism. But here we are specifically concerned with Catholic conservatism in some of its national political manifestations, namely in Portugal and Slovakia. While there were interesting similarities between the two cases, there were also differences between them in terms of type of political regime in the 1930s and of political programme as formulated by the forces of Catholic opposition before that crucial decade.

Both Portugal and Slovakia belonged to the relatively 'backward zone' of Europe in terms of Catholic conservative domination and backlash against liberal middle-class culture and society. Slovakia had actually experienced the victory of the Lutheran Reformation in the sixteenth and much of the seventeenth century; in other parts of the old Hungarian Kingdom Calvinism had been triumphant. But after the late seventeenth century the Catholic and Habsburg cultural regime had been restored, although a Lutheran minority survived in parts of Slovakia. In Portugal there had never been a successful Reformation but during the first half of the sixteenth century Renaissance humanism had reached a high cultural and intellectual level, which afterwards was largely suppressed by the forces of Counter-Reformation and the Inquisition. Nevertheless, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there emerged some enlightened and secularising politi-

cal and cultural tendencies which seemed to set Portugal on a new course. In many ways this development reached its culmination in the Portuguese First Republic of 1910-26. But then the coming to power of Salazar and the rise of an increasingly fascist-type of regime consolidated the 'political neo-Counter-Reformation' for a long time to come.

In Slovakia the political force of conservative Catholic nationalism (the political movement led by Andrej Hlinka from the early years of the twentieth century) began to attack the liberal and progressive Czechoslovak government soon after the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918. The movement's criticism of Czechoslovak national policy was often legitimate, but its oppositional attitude was much more than that and also embraced a fundamental cultural critique. The Hlinka movement – the autonomist Slovak People's Party – became the strongest political force in Slovakia in the 1920s and 1930s. Its agitation was partly aimed at the 'Hussite' (for them a term of abuse) cultural, religious, and educational policies of the Prague government, in particular the government's attempts to restrict the power and influence of the Catholic Church in Slovak public, political, and cultural life. Both in Slovakia and Portugal the struggle of the political Counter-Reformation against the endeavours of 'neo-Reformist' or anti-clerical secularism, liberal individualism, and progressive republicanism, and against reduction of the Catholic Church to a more marginal and private position in politics and society, was carried on relentlessly. In Portugal this finally resulted in the dictatorship of Salazar and the *Estado Novo* in the early 1930s, in Slovakia in the institution of an autonomist regime in October 1938 and the pro-German Slovak State led by Jozef Tiso some five months later.

Both cases were examples of the ongoing dynamics of the – broadly defined – long-term Counter-Reformation in its twentieth-century political expression. The Counter-Reformation assumed a more modern face, i.e. the shape of a modern political movement or an anti-democratic political regime. It is true that in some parts of Europe there was also another form of political Catholicism: modern Christian Democracy in countries like Germany, Belgium, The Netherlands, Italy, and even Austria (an ambivalent case) and the Czech Lands (especially Moravia).¹ However, Slovakia and Portugal (along with several other countries including Spain, France, and Hungary) represented significant cases of European countries where Counter-Reformation or indeed 'Neo-Inquisition' (a term of Antonio de Figueiredo) traditions and regimes managed to consolidate a long-lasting conservative Catholic domination.

¹ See for example the essays in Lex Heerma van Voss, Patrick Pasture, and Jan De Maeyer (eds.), *Between Cross and Class: Comparative Histories of Christian Labour in Europe 1840-2000* (Bern, 2005). In this work both political-ideological and organised-labour aspects of the 'Catholic alternative' for socialism and liberalism are discussed and analysed.

Portugal

The Catholic tradition among the peasantry and common people of Portugal was naïve and primitive, and therefore could be easily manipulated. According to Antonio de Figueiredo, a rather anti-clerical author who was born in 1929, the religion of Portuguese peasants, ‘which is supposed to be Catholicism, is a form of sub-Christianity, for in their simple minds instead of love there is a superstitious fear of a God of Terror. The local priest, like a tribal witchdoctor, teaches them a doctrine which holds that challenges to the local and national patron saints can be punished with crop failure or the affliction of their animals and children.’² The urban middle classes were of a somewhat different type and had been the social basis of a liberal constitutional, anti-clerical, and even a radical republican movement against the monarchy and the power of the Catholic Church. The republican and secularist agitation at the time of the nineteenth-century constitutional monarchy intensified during the early years of the twentieth century and made the continuation of the monarchical order increasingly difficult. While a democratic republic was seen by some, a socially protective authoritarian regime was seen by others as an alternative to a dysfunctional monarchy. In 1907-8 the dictator João Franco tried to introduce social reforms to help stabilise the monarchical order after parliamentary rule had been suspended. But in February 1908 the Portuguese king, Carlos I, and the heir to the throne were murdered by two republican revolutionaries. Conservative Catholics, including the young António de Oliveira Salazar (1889-1970), were shocked and grew increasingly anxious. Salazar was destined to become the leader of an anti-liberal and Counter-Reformation regime whose origins can be traced to the political crisis of the early years of the twentieth century. In 1908 Salazar had ended his studies at the Seminary of Viseu without proceeding to the priesthood. In 1910, after having acquired the qualifications necessary to enter the Faculty of Law, Salazar moved to the University of Coimbra. He and other Portuguese Catholics were to witness the end of the monarchy itself, as well as the threat of a series of frightening political, social, and cultural changes. On 5 October 1910, indeed, the Republic was proclaimed, with the new Portuguese king, Manuel II, fleeing to London.³

The coup d’état of October 1910, a Lisbon urban revolution, was triggered off by a group of junior military officers influenced by a long-standing republican ideology. The Portuguese republican movement was largely a movement of the professional classes, intellectuals, freemasons, junior army officers (including a group of secretive ‘carbonari’) and anti-clericalists. The greatest republican leader, Afonso Costa, became minister of justice of the Provisional Government and began to curtail religious privileges, which included the banning of clerical dress out-

² Antonio de Figueiredo, *Portugal: Fifty Years of Dictatorship* (Harmondsworth, 1975), p. 11.

³ Figueiredo, *Portugal*, pp. 23-5; David Birmingham, *A Concise History of Portugal*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 2003), p. 148; Hugh Kay, *Salazar and Modern Portugal* (New York, 1970), pp. 10-12; Filipe Ribeiro De Menezes, *Salazar: A Political Biography* (New York, 2009), pp. 12-3.

side of churches, dissolving monasteries, forcing many parish priests to retire, exiling bishops, and encouraging the growth of masonic lodges. On 8 October 1910 a decree was promulgated by the republican government to curb the activities of the Jesuits and other religious orders. Ten days later the religious oath was abolished; on 22 October Catholic teaching in the schools was prohibited; and the next day the Faculty of Theology in the University of Coimbra was closed down. On 26 October 1910 twenty-six holy days became working days. On 3 November divorce was legally established, and shortly afterwards the marriage ceremony became a civil function. These measures were seen by traditional Catholics as 'equivalent to free love' or worse. A Law of Separation of Church and State was being planned whereby Catholicism would cease to be the established religion of Portugal. Under this law all ecclesiastical property would be claimed by the State.⁴ But the ambitious programme of the first republican governments on these and other matters soon led to sharp disagreements between different political figures and different parties, including the Republican Party, the more radical Democratic Party, and the Evolutionist Party, the latter being more moderate or even right-wing. Lay education, divorce, separation of Church and State, limitation of religious orders, and expulsion of monks and nuns were controversial among the republicans themselves, especially as far as the manner and degree of their practical implementation was concerned. Salazar, for his part, always kept in mind the agitation against the Church and its dangerous consequences.⁵ Not only anti-clerical policy itself, but in particular the political and ideological agitation surrounding it, was a danger Salazar and like-minded spirits wished to bring under control in a future post-republican and post-liberal era.

The anti-clerical offensive against the traditional position of the Catholic Church was carried on not only in ideological and political terms by various political parties, freemasons, and others, but also, sometimes, in terms of physical violence. During his years as a student in Coimbra after 1910 Salazar and his Catholic fellow students used to go to the Church of St John to attend the 'Month of Mary' ceremonies with *mocas* (clubs) under their cloaks to defend themselves against their anti-clerical adversaries.⁶ Part of the students at Coimbra University, indeed, were expressing their sympathy for the Republic in sometimes violent or destructive ways. But on the other side there were the more conservative students, organised in the Catholic study group *Centro Academico de Democracia Cristã* (CADC), which had been founded in 1901 and temporarily closed by the republican regime. Many of the CADC members looked to the idealised past and hoped to restore an absolutist monarchy. But they also had ideas about social and political reforms and, increasingly, about a new type of authoritarian regime as an anti-liberal and Catholic alternative. Under the editorship of Manuel Gonçalves Cerejeira, who later, during the rule of

⁴ Birmingham, *A Concise History of Portugal*, pp. 148-53, 159; Figueiredo, *Portugal*, pp. 26-7; for the 'religious question' Vitor Neto, 'A questão religiosa: Estado, Igreja e conflitualidade sócio-religiosa', in Fernando Rosas and Maria Fernanda Rollo (eds.), *História da Primeira República Portuguesa* (Lisbon, 2010), pp. 129-48.

⁵ Figueiredo, *Portugal*, pp. 48-50; Meneses, *Salazar*, p. 14.

⁶ Kay, *Salazar and Modern Portugal*, p. 26; Figueiredo, *Portugal*, p. 30.

Salazar, was to become the Cardinal Patriarch of Lisbon, the CADC published a weekly magazine, *O Imparcial*. Perhaps this name expressed their belief that their views were above the false, subjective, or superficial opinions of others. By 1919 the Catholic students around the Coimbra magazine had become a rather cohesive group of ideologists. The young Portuguese Catholic, monarchist, and conservative thinkers were studying such socio-political guides as Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), but also the works of prominent French right-wing writers and reactionary ideologists such as Charles Maurras. These doctrines offered 'organic' and hierarchical concepts that could be seen as a continuation of the 'corporate' character of medieval and ancient regime society, and as an alternative to the 'excessive' egalitarianism and individualism of the French revolution, liberal parliamentary democracy, republican secularism, atheism, and Marxist internationalism. Some of these ideas were adapted to Portuguese conditions by the traditionalist writer Antonio Sardinha and others who promoted the nationalist doctrine known as 'Lusitanian integralism'. This Portuguese variant of Maurras's integral nationalism was rather spiritualist, sentimental, and romanticising but also based on elitist concepts and an aversion to social change. Some of these ideas had the potential of moving towards a fascist world view. However, it is also true that Salazar and others tended to delimit their Catholic conservatism and anti-liberal authoritarianism from the new fascism of the 1920s, whose pagan, extremist, and violent political practices and ideology they rejected.⁷

Salazar emerged as an important thinker, writer, and Catholic ideologist. He made contributions to the *Imparcial*, the *Revista de Estudos* – similarly connected with the CADC – and newspapers published in Lisbon and Porto. He also wrote a study on labour relations entitled, 'The Peace of Christ among the Working Class', indicating a Catholic approach to the social question and a serious intention to protect the lower classes. In a 'Catholic address' he declared that it was necessary to create 'a strong Portugal, an educated Portugal, a moral Portugal, a hard-working and progressive Portugal.' In his view the conviction that Portugal should be more 'educated' and economically developed was obviously not in conflict with conservative Catholic ideas on the need to preserve traditional social and cultural patterns. A combination of corporatism, authoritarianism with a social face, and controlled modernisation might deliver what Salazar began to see as an alternative future for Portugal. A more responsible and professional economic policy

⁷ Figueiredo, *Portugal*, pp. 27-8; Birmingham, *A Concise History of Portugal*, p. 160. See for the integralist movement of the monarchist right, in many ways the Portuguese equivalent of Maurras's *Action Française*, Carlos Ferrão, *O Integralismo e a República*, 2 vols. (Lisbon, 1964-5); Rivera Martins de Carvalho, *O Pensamento integralista perante o Estado Novo* (Lisbon, 1971). See for some relevant observations on Maurras, conservative Catholic thought and the ideological link with fascism, Edward R. Tannenbaum, *The Action Française* (New York, 1962); F.L. Carsten, *The Rise of Fascism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), pp. 13-17; Juan J. Linz, 'Some Notes Towards a Comparative Study of Fascism in Sociological Historical Perspective', in Walter Laqueur (ed.), *Fascism: A Reader's Guide. Analyses, Interpretations, Bibliography* (Harmondsworth, 1979), pp. 13-78, here esp. p. 67n11; Stanley G. Payne, 'Fascism in Western Europe', in *ibid.*, pp. 300-21, here esp. p. 302; Zeev Sternhell, 'Fascist Ideology', in *ibid.*, pp. 325-406, here esp. pp. 340, 349; Eugen Weber, 'Revolution? Counter-revolution? What Revolution?', in *ibid.*, pp. 488-531, here esp. p. 501. These authors discuss the differences and similarities between the ideas of right-wing Catholicism and those of fascism.

and a right-wing national revolution were to become the pillars for this – to be erected by Salazar himself. In 1914 Salazar graduated in law in the University of Coimbra as one of the best students ever. By 1917 he had become an assistant professor of economic policy and finance at the Law School. In 1918 he obtained his doctorate while already being celebrated in conservative circles as one of Portugal's 'most powerful minds' and best financial and economic experts of 'the new generation.'⁸

Salazar's political views began to crystallise. Secular republicanism, liberal democracy, and left-wing internationalism were to be rejected and to be replaced with a nationalist ideology based upon conservative religious and social principles and a glorification of Portuguese history. In 1921 Salazar was briefly a member of parliament for a Catholic party but was put off by the ruling disorder, which confirmed his conviction that 'liberal individualism' and parliamentarianism had led to the fragmentation of society and a perversion of democracy. Salazar had a nationalist vision stressing the drama of Portuguese struggle and survival – perhaps not much unlike the myth of 'the Slovak struggle for survival' that lasted for a thousand years. But while the Slovaks had to struggle as a stateless nation from the end of Great Moravia in the early tenth century to the end of Great Hungary in 1918, Portugal had continued its historic struggle for survival as an independent kingdom since the twelfth century. Salazar wrote (probably around 1920): 'Crushed in the western strip of the Peninsula, between powerful neighbours and the ocean, our existence is necessarily one long drama: but by the favour of Providence we can count eight centuries of toil and suffering, struggle and liberty, and if the danger remains, the miracle remains also...'⁹ Perhaps it is true that for Salazar and like-minded Catholic nationalists life under the republican regime, with its less exalted views of Portugal's past and its chaotic conditions in the present, was tormenting. Yet progressive republicans and traditionalist Catholics alike agreed on the need to awaken Portugal from its stagnation and decline. The facts were known, including the backward state of popular education.

In 1911 an astonishing 69.7 per cent of the Portuguese population were illiterate (60.8 per cent of men, 77.4 per cent of women). This was the case even though during the first year of the Republic (1910-1911) the number of schools had increased by 20 per cent.¹⁰ Both Republicans and Catholic monarchists felt the need for a national revolution to improve social and cultural conditions. But they differed sharply about the ultimate goal and the nature of such a revolution and also about the causes of the national decline. The republican and left-wing political forces believed that Portugal's monarchist and Catholic past was responsible for the bad state of the country. The traditionalists, on the other hand, blamed the 'libertarian' period of the constitutional monarchy (the political liberalism and reformism since the 1820s), the irresponsible freedom

⁸ Kay, *Salazar and Modern Portugal*, pp. 23-4; Figueiredo, *Portugal*, pp. 29-30.

⁹ Figueiredo, *Portugal*, pp. 34-5; Kay, *Salazar and Modern Portugal*, p. 32.

¹⁰ Figueiredo, *Portugal*, pp. 38-9, 51; Maria Cândida Proença, 'A educação', in Rosas and Rollo (eds.), *História da Primeira República Portuguesa*, pp. 169-89 for the general condition and controversies of education.

of the press, and all the features of parliamentary government which allegedly had ‘carried the seeds of subversion of established social and religious values.’¹¹ In other words, they rejected liberal constitutionalism, unrestricted political freedom, and the weakening of traditional Catholic values. This was identified with the main trends of almost a century of weak monarchical government that was undermined by democratic and republican tendencies.¹² Part of the Catholic conservatives proposed in effect an authoritarian alternative to restore order and confidence in Portugal’s future, and to improve its overall political, economic, and cultural condition. These different aspects were closely interrelated. It is true that the republicans had inherited a humanitarian tradition from the liberals and constitutionalists under the monarchy, including – as early as 1867 – abolition of the death penalty.¹³ But the situation under the republican governments had steadily worsened because of the endemic political unrest, divisions, and instability. The truth is that Portugal’s First Republic – quite in contrast to the First Czechoslovak Republic – had not become a success, neither politically nor economically. The working class was soon disillusioned by the lack of effective social reforms, and massive numbers of Portuguese peasants continued to emigrate overseas, especially to Brazil. Between 1910 and 1925 there were 518 strikes across the country, and these were only the officially registered ones. Salazar and the CADC were closely observing the social agitation and political turmoil, which reinforced their dislike of democratic and parliamentary rule and of the freedom of press and association. The chaos, indiscipline, and subversion – as they saw it – they tried to counter with Catholic Workers’ and Youth Associations, which were linked to Christian social groups in Italy, France, and other countries.¹⁴

What made Salazar extremely indignant, too, was the allegedly indiscriminate arrests of different oppositional figures and groups of people during the republican period. This could be seen as proof of the Republic’s weakness and insecurity but also as a threat to the conservative political forces. When Salazar had to defend himself during a disciplinary inquiry at the University of Coimbra in 1919, he alleged that ‘...in the course of a few years, half the population of Portugal – monarchists, Catholics, democrats, Evolutionists, Camachists, syndicalists, Sidonists, and some with no political views at all – have entered the prisons and fortresses of the republic...’¹⁵

¹¹ Figueiredo, *Portugal*, pp. 39.

¹² In his analysis of nineteenth-century Portugal, David Birmingham speaks of a ‘bourgeois monarchy’, ‘democratic royalists’, ‘liberal ascendancy’, and so on; see Birmingham, *A Concise History of Portugal*, Chapter 5. Fernando Rosas speaks of an ‘oligarchic liberalism’ which dominated the last decades of the monarchy; see Fernando Rosas, ‘A crise do liberalismo oligárquico em Portugal’, in Rosas and Rollo (eds.), *História da Primeira República Portuguesa*, pp. 15-26.

¹³ Figueiredo, *Portugal*, p. 51.

¹⁴ Figueiredo, *Portugal*, pp. 42-3. See for the Catholic trade union and labour movements, for example, Pieter van Duijn and Zuzana Poláčková, ‘“Against the Red Industrial Terror!”: The Struggle of Christian Trade Unions in Austria and Czechoslovakia Against Socialist Trade-Union and Workplace Domination, 1918-1925’, in Heerma van Voss et al. (eds.), *Between Cross and Class: Comparative Histories of Christian Labour in Europe 1840-2000*, pp. 127-171; William Patch, ‘Fascism, Catholic Corporatism, and the Christian Trade Unions of Germany, Austria, and France’, in *ibid.*, pp. 173-201.

¹⁵ Figueiredo, *Portugal*, p. 44. See for the different anti-liberal political groups in Portugal, Ernesto Castro Leal, ‘A transformação política da República: as direitas da direita antiliberal’, in Rosas and Rollo (eds.), *História da Primeira República*

This was an interesting summing up of the various political groups and ideologies on the (broadly defined) Portuguese illiberal Right Wing. If the monarchists, Catholics, more conservative democrats, and right-wing republican Evolutionists could all, with some good will, be counted to the Right, this was arguably also the case with the National Syndicalists (an Iberian type of fascists),¹⁶ the Sidonists (supporters of Major Sidónio Pais, short-lived dictator in 1917-18),¹⁷ and the Camachists (supporters of Brito Camacho, another increasingly right-wing republican leader and founder of the Unionist Party). Salazar was well acquainted with the complex political spectrum in Portugal and may have seen some of these groups as potential allies in a new right-wing movement. But at least as important was a new dynamics in the world of Catholicism. A movement of Catholic resistance to republican anti-clericalism was organised which included claims of apparitions of the Virgin Mary in 1916-7, leading to the cult of 'Our Lady of Fatima' eventually sanctioned by the Bishop of Leiria in 1930. The Virgin had confided to the child shepherds who claimed to have seen her that Portugal would soon be rescued from war and chaos by a 'saviour'. Perhaps not surprisingly, it was a member of the CADC who launched the first issue of a new periodical, *The Voice of Fatima*.¹⁸

A conservative revolution

There were monarchist and military revolts against the republic in 1915, 1917-8 (led by the rather popular Sidónio Pais, president-dictator for one year), 1925, and finally in 1926. The entire period of the republic was marked by violence, disunity, and instability, with political murders committed by both the Left and the Right and large numbers of strikers and protestors shot. During 1910-1926 Portugal had nine presidents, forty-four governments, and twenty-five

Portuguesa, pp. 485-502. Salazar's attitude to the monarchists was complex and ambivalent. He rejected them insofar as they were opposed to the social doctrines espoused by Pope Leo XIII. Apparently, Salazar was never a true monarchist, but he gained the support of most of them even though in 1935 his regime had to suppress a monarchist revolt.

¹⁶ The Portuguese National Syndicalists ('Blue Shirts'), re-organised by Francisco Rolão Preto in 1932, were the only genuine fascist movement in Portugal. In the 1930s they were torn between supporting the Salazar regime and denouncing it as bourgeois. After an abortive revolt in 1934 the movement was dissolved and the extremists among them were silenced. Salazar denounced them as foreign-inspired, un-Portuguese, and stressed the fundamental differences between an exalted and violent fascism and the conservative Catholic corporatism of his Estado Novo. See Kay, *Salazar and Modern Portugal*, p. 55; Howard J. Wiarda, *Corporatism and Development: The Portuguese Experience* (Amherst, MA, 1977), p. 79; Meneses, *Salazar*, pp. 126-30; Payne, 'Fascism in Western Europe', pp. 310-11; Weber, 'Revolution? Counter-revolution? What Revolution?', p. 502, arguing that Salazar established his power (like Antonescu in Romania) 'in traditional terms'. See for the Spanish National Syndicalists (Falange), Carsten, *The Rise of Fascism*, pp. 194-204.

¹⁷ Sidónio Pais, a former freemason and republican, was helped by trade union protests against Portugal's participation in the First World War to take power in 1917. See Birmingham, *A Concise History of Portugal*, pp. 155-6; and on the intriguing phenomenon of 'Sidonism' (a populist social authoritarianism) Maria Alice Samara, 'Sidonismo e restauração da República. Uma "encruzilhada de paixões contraditórias"', in Rosas and Rollo (eds.), *História da Primeira República Portuguesa*, pp. 371-95.

¹⁸ Figueiredo, *Portugal*, pp. 44-7.

uprisings.¹⁹ It is probably true that ‘the conviction spread that only the urgent imposition of a dictatorship would restore social tranquillity and political harmony’, and that the military intervention of 1926 was welcomed by many if not most classes of the population, among whom an authoritarian regime was, at least at first, generally tolerated as the belief in liberal parliamentarianism had seriously declined.²⁰ The coup d’état of 28 May 1926 by Catholic army officers put an end to the republic, to the political anarchy, and to the anti-Catholic agitation. ‘Street power’ (a term of Salazar) could now be ended and law and order imposed. According to Salazar, ‘true liberty can only exist in the spirit of man... there can be absolute authority; there can never be absolute liberty; order has always been the true condition of beauty.’²¹ After 1926 many – but not all – republican and anti-clerical achievements, including in part the secularisation of education, were reversed. But the clock was not turned back a full 100 per cent as far as the monarchy or the position of the Church was concerned, and Salazar did not come to power immediately. Republican protests against new legislation which facilitated the organisation of religious processions were dismissed, but the monarchy was not restored and neither was the property of the Church. In 1928 General Óscar Carmona, actually a republican and freemason, became president of what gradually evolved into a new authoritarian republic supported by the army and the Church. The leader of the coup of 1926, General Gomes da Costa, had already echoed Mussolini: ‘The parliamentary system has outlived its day... what we need is a real National Government which will enable the State to fulfil its mission on a basis of justice and honour. But only the army... can give the citizen liberty – safe and sane liberty of the kind he needs.’²² However, the military dictatorship of the late 1920s remained at first rather chaotic and politically indecisive and only when Salazar was appointed prime minister in 1932 Portugal acquired a leader who brought clarity and direction to the new authoritarian regime.

The time had arrived for Catholic nationalists like Salazar and similar-minded men to come to the fore. One of the youngest and most remarkable right-wing enthusiasts beside Salazar himself was Marcelo Caetano, a Lisbon law student who was destined to be his successor as president and dictator after 1968. Caetano was the editor of a political magazine called the *New Order*, which in its inaugural issue proclaimed a set of principles that were even further to the right than those of the CADC and rather hot-headed if not eccentric. Indeed, it was to be an ‘anti-modern, anti-liberal, anti-democratic, anti-bourgeois, and anti-Bolshevik magazine; counter-revolutionary and reactionary; Catholic, Apostolic and Roman; monarchist, intolerant and intransigent...’ Meanwhile the more experienced men of the ‘integralist’ movement professed the theory of ‘Lusitanianism’, arguing among other things that the Portuguese were racially

¹⁹ José Hermano Saraiva, *Portugal: a companion history*, ed. by Ian Robertson and L.C. Taylor (Manchester, 1997), pp. 108-9; Figueiredo, *Portugal*, pp. 47-50, 58; Kay, *Salazar and Modern Portugal*, p. 26, who speaks of anarchy, violence, ‘arbitrary imprisonment’, and ‘religious persecution’ during the Republic; Wiarda, *Corporatism and Development*, p. 46.

²⁰ Saraiva, *Portugal*, p. 110 for the quotation; see also Wiarda, *Corporatism and Development*, pp. 47, 81-2, 92.

²¹ Quoted in Figueiredo, *Portugal*, p. 51.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 58 for the quotation; see also Meneses, *Salazar*, p. 64.

descended from the pre-Roman tribe of the Lusitanians, who had bravely resisted the Roman occupation.²³ But it was really Salazar who was the coming man. President Carmona invited him to become minister of finance in the new cabinet in 1928 after he had been hailed by the conservative Catholic press as ‘a great intellectual’ and financial expert. In fact, he had already been invited by the dictator Sidónio Pais to join the finance ministry in 1918 but declined the offer while wisely waiting for more auspicious days. Ten years later Salazar described his acceptance to become finance minister as a sacrifice he was willing to make for his country. His position as a financial dictator, effectively decreed in 1928-29, became the basis for wider dictatorial powers. In 1932 Salazar became prime minister, but he continued to pretend that he did not want absolute power. In theory he remained true to what he had said at the First Eucharistic Congress in Braga in 1924: one must not ‘aspire to power as a right, but accept it as a duty, considering the State as God’s Ministry for the common good.’²⁴

It is true that Salazar remained cautious and reticent for a long time as far as ideological statements were concerned. Only in 1939 did he dare to openly proclaim – in an English-language publication – what were his real objective and ideology: ‘We are anti-parliamentarian, anti-democratic, anti-liberal, and we are determined to establish a Corporative State.’²⁵ The junta that came to power in 1926 did not have a clear doctrine or political programme apart from restoring law and order and suppressing democracy. This meant that Salazar had the opportunity, moving step by step, to introduce his own version of the autocratic state, underpinned by a corporatist, conservative Catholic, and nationalist ideology. In 1930, even before he became prime minister, Salazar presented the Manifesto of the National Union, which was to be Portugal’s only legal political organisation and quasi-mass movement.²⁶ It was different from a real, fascist mass movement. Although Salazar became more explicitly anti-democratic, his political philosophy was rooted in an interpretation of the Catholic social doctrine, much like the authoritarian Catholic regime of Engelbert Dollfuss in Austria. The corporatist system he wanted to build was based on similar interpretations of *Rerum Novarum* and its successor *Quadragesimo anno* of Pope Pius XI (1931), which provided a blueprint for a corporatist system. In order to carry out his political project Salazar gradually built his nucleus of close collaborators and national leaders. As noted above, one of them was Marcelo Caetano, who became a professor of law at Lisbon University in 1933, at the age of only twenty-seven. Caetano had written some books on legal and ‘corporate’ matters, and seems to have been instrumental in drafting the 1933 Constitution of

²³ Figueiredo, *Portugal*, p. 57.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-64. The financial and technocratic starting-point of Salazar’s dictatorship is expressed in a variety of epithets such as ‘monetarist autocrat’, ‘technocratic dictator’, ‘petit-bourgeois monocrat’, or ‘paternalist, nationalist autocrat’. See e.g. Birmingham, *A Concise History of Portugal*, pp. 132, 164. Salazar’s profile as a conservative intellectual and financial expert marked him off from other autocrats or semi-fascist leaders.

²⁵ António de Oliveira Salazar, *Doctrine and Action: Internal and Foreign Policy of the New Portugal, 1928-1939* (London, 1939), p. 29.

²⁶ Figueiredo, *Portugal*, p. 66.

the *Estado Novo* ('New State'), in theory a corporatist state representing organic interest groups rather than political parties or individuals. While the national interest was always to have priority over group interests, there was to be a Corporative Chamber in addition to a National Assembly with advisory powers. Portuguese corporatism and authoritarianism were in some ways similar to Italian fascism, but there were also some significant differences in terms of ideology and political culture.

Although Salazar admired Mussolini, he distanced himself from fascism, which he considered a pagan Caesarist political system without legal or moral limits. He said he was opposed to everything that might break up the family, and against irreligion or 'a materialistic conception of life', among other things. Other – if more secondary – leaders of the *Estado Novo* may have had more radical ideas than Salazar himself. The ideas of the 'National Revolution', of a new type of 'Nation-State', and of the Corporatist Constitution were also defined by the right-wing political thinker Martinho Nobre de Melo. In an essay entitled 'Beyond the Revolution', which looked ahead at the tasks of the future in the context of the past, Melo spoke of conserving the 'species' through the institution of the family and maintaining 'a stable and natural order through professional corporations.' Conservatism, nationalism, corporatism, but also cultural isolationism were apparently the key notions. Indeed, Melo stressed the need to 'preserve from deleterious influences', the language, the religion, and the 'social morality and patriotic myths' created by 'the race'. A Mussolini-type of aggressive chauvinism should give the nation hope, courage, and energy. The political leadership had 'to feed the national spirit through the cult of traditions and glories of the past, through the daring hope of national aggrandisement in the future – in short, through the concept of an heroic Nation-State.' This kind of exalted nationalist-revolutionary phraseology brought Portugal close to a fascist world view. Perhaps the influence of right-wing radicals, and the fact that a significant part of the political elite was still anti-clerical, caused Salazar to keep Church and State apart and to prevent the Church from becoming a political factor. He argued that the role of the Church should be social, not political, and that a special Catholic political party was unnecessary (only the National Union was allowed). This is also why some of the earlier republican legislation was not fundamentally altered. Religious teaching in schools remained, strictly speaking, voluntary, civil marriages and divorce were retained, and religious oaths not re-established.²⁷

In April 1934 Salazar gave a speech on the 'New Era', which he said was now awakening the 'national conscience' and the prestige of Portugal. 'To reach our goal we have experienced a far-reaching revolution in economics, politics, ideas, customs, institutions and in our collective life.' The National Union was turned into a hierarchically organised party closely intertwined with the state bureaucracy. A Security Police with full powers and a network of informers which

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 67-8, quoting Melo; see also Meneses, *Salazar*, pp. 76, 162; Kay, *Salazar and Modern Portugal*, pp. 53-5, 63, 68, 359-60; Wiarda, *Corporatism and Development*, pp. 88, 97-8.

included the Church was now in operation.²⁸ The Estado Novo adopted the same principle of the paramountcy of the State over individual interests as did the Italian and German fascist regimes and, indeed, the Soviet communist regime. In October 1938, when the Salazar regime had already been consolidated, the Slovak autonomists of the Slovak People's Party took power in what had been the eastern part of the Czechoslovak Republic. In March 1939 Slovakia became an independent state protected by Nazi Germany, and evolved into an authoritarian state with an ideology that could be described as half-Catholic, half-fascist – perhaps not much unlike Salazar's Portugal. But the course of events in Slovakia during the preceding two decades had been different in some ways from political developments in Portugal.

Slovakia

The proclamation of the Czechoslovak Republic in Prague on 28 October 1918 was followed by a Slovak declaration of independence from Hungary two days later. This happened in the Slovak town of Martin and, most probably, independent of the Prague proclamation. The Slovaks defined themselves at that historic moment as a branch of the 'Czecho-Slovak nation', whose precise meaning was unclear, but with the apparent understanding that the Slovaks were a separate cultural-linguistic nation that wanted to unify with the Czechs in a common state or, perhaps, political nation. The expectation that the common nation was to have a state-political, not a unitary-ethnic character, was expressed by the fact that most Slovaks used the hyphen when speaking of the 'Czecho-Slovak' state or nation, indicating their desire to have a degree of administrative autonomy in addition to retaining their separate language and ethnicity. The Czechs, however, were influenced by the French model of state centralism and were nervous about the autonomist demands of the German and Magyar minorities as well as – potentially – those of the Slovaks and the Ruthenians. By officially absorbing the Slovaks in the leading state-nation, the Czech political leaders constituted a fictional 'Czechoslovak nation' that represented a majority of the total population of the new Czechoslovak Republic. Thus, on grounds of expediency as well as ideology, they promoted a centralistic idea of both the Czechoslovak State and the 'Czechoslovak nation' and rejected using the hyphen when referring to the 'Czecho-Slovak' nation or other autonomist expressions. Some of the Slovaks themselves – those who were closest to the leading Czech politicians – omitted the hyphen as well and supported Czechoslovak centralism and the Czechoslovak idea. But it would seem that most Slovaks continued to cling to the idea of a separate Slovak nationality based on their own language, culture, and historical

²⁸ Figueiredo, *Portugal*, p. 68 for quotation of Salazar; Birmingham, *A Concise History of Portugal*, pp. 164-5, 169 for characterisation of his regime.

experience and associated with the expectation of being granted regional autonomy at some point in the near future.²⁹

However, the question of political administration and Slovak autonomy was just one aspect of what became a complex struggle between ‘Czechoslovakists’ and Slovak nationalists. At least as important as national ideology and the political-administrative structure of the new state, was the antagonism between the politically dominant anti-clerical secularists (mostly Czechs) and the conservative Catholics of Czechoslovakia – especially those of Slovakia, a far more conservative and Catholic-traditionalist land than Bohemia or even Moravia (itself more Catholic and conservative than Bohemia). Views on the Czechoslovak State and cultural-religious profile often overlapped. Thus the most prominent of the centralist Slovaks after October 1918 was Vavro Šrobár, who became the leader of the provisional Czechoslovak administration in Slovakia after having been appointed ‘Minister for Slovakia’ in December 1918. Šrobár – a former Catholic turned anti-clerical – tried to exclude as much as possible the Slovak Catholic politicians from the emerging Czechoslovak political organs, a policy he continued during the following year. Both the question of political administration in the new Slovakia, and the question of culture, education, and the position of the Catholic Church and the Slovak People’s Party in the secularist Czechoslovak Republic, became controversies weakening the Republic. The Slovak People’s Party, led by the Catholic priest Andrej Hlinka, developed into the strongest opposition party in Slovakia, agitating against Prague centralism and ‘Czechoslovakism’ but also against the liberal, secularist, and anti-clerical attitudes of the leading politicians and the ‘anti-Catholic’ policies of the Czechoslovak government. The Slovak People’s Party had been at first a relatively democratic political movement. But its conservative Catholicism gradually began to incorporate anti-democratic and half-fascist features, ending up as the ideological basis for an authoritarian regime ruling Slovakia after 1938.³⁰

²⁹ In this section we will refer to some publications in English, German, and Slovak which are helpful in making international and Portuguese-Slovak comparisons regarding our subject. See Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia: The Struggle for Survival* (New York, 1995) for an English-language work which expresses affinity in a nuanced and reasonable way with the Slovak Catholic and autonomist cause; esp. Chapter 8 for the 1918 revolution and the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918-1938). Still a highly readable work in German, critical of the Republic but not unfair, is Jörg K. Hoensch, *Geschichte der Tschechoslowakischen Republik 1918-1965* (Stuttgart, 1966) with numerous observations on Slovak questions, the author being perhaps the foremost German expert on Slovak history. For other relevant publications, Slovak and other, see below.

³⁰ See for the contested position of Slovakia in the Czechoslovak Republic and for the Slovak People’s Party, the following essays by Jörg K. Hoensch: ‘Tschechoslowakismus oder Autonomie. Die Auseinandersetzung um die Eingliederung der Slowakei in die Tschechoslowakische Republik’, in Hoensch, *Studia Slovaca. Studien zur Geschichte der Slowaken und der Slowakei* (Munich, 2000), pp. 71-106; ‘Die Verfassungsstruktur der ČSR und die slowakische Frage’, in *ibid.*, pp. 107-153; ‘Die Slowakische Volkspartei Hlinkas’, in *ibid.*, pp. 199-220; ‘Die Grundlagen des Programms der Slowakischen Volkspartei vor 1938’, in *ibid.*, pp. 155-98. See for the Slovak People’s Party also, Juraj Kramer, *Slovenské autonomistické hnutie v rokoch 1918-1929* (Bratislava, 1962); Róbert Letz, Peter Mulík, and Alena Bartlová (eds.), *Slovenská ľudová strana v dejinách 1905-1945* (Martin, 2006); James Ramon Felak, “‘At the Price of the Republic’: Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party, 1929-1938 (Pittsburgh, 1994); Dorothea H. El Mallakh, *The Slovak Autonomy Movement, 1935-1939: A Study in Unrelenting Nationalism* (Boulder/New York, 1979).

Following the proclamation of the Czechoslovak Republic in October 1918, a series of anti-clerical and anti-Catholic incidents in Bohemia-Moravia and Slovakia triggered a strong Catholic reaction, especially in Slovakia. On 3 November 1918 an historic statue of the Virgin Mary in Prague was destroyed by a mob. Some of the Czechs sent to Slovakia to take up administrative or teaching posts began to attack the religiosity of the Slovak people, seen by freethinking Czechs as a sign of backwardness or even reactionary mentality. The response of the leaders of Slovak political Catholicism to this and other problems was swift. On 28 November 1918 the Executive Committee of the Catholic Clerical Council in Slovakia met under the leadership of Hlinka, himself a priest with both political and clerical ambitions. Hlinka and the Catholic Council made a number of demands on behalf of the organised Catholic interests in Slovakia that were presented to the Provisional Czechoslovak Government in Prague. In the background there was clearly a sense of apprehension regarding the cultural and religious policy of the predominantly liberal-minded Czech political elite which had taken over in the new Republic. The Slovak demands included Catholic schools, a Slovak ecclesiastical province under a Slovak bishop, and the elimination of civil marriage. On 19 December 1918 the Slovak People's Party was officially re-established (it had been dissolved shortly before the First World War) and tried to prevent being excluded from political power. The men that had been chosen by Prague and by its 'dictator in Slovakia', Vavro Šrobár, to take up positions in the provisional Slovak administration were mostly people belonging to the Lutheran minority (15-20% of the Slovak population). Similarly, on the Revolutionary National Assembly in Prague, Slovak Catholics were strongly underrepresented as well. In January 1919 Karol Kmetko – who two years later became Bishop of Nitra, the most prominent ecclesiastical position in Slovakia – insisted on behalf of the Slovak People's Party that instruction in the primary and secondary schools should be in 'a Slovak and Catholic spirit', and that Church property should remain in the hands of the Church even when it was made available for public purposes. In October 1919 Hlinka was imprisoned after an unsuccessful attempt to address the Paris Peace Conference and demand autonomy for Slovakia. He had pointed to the promises contained in the Pittsburgh Agreement of American Czechs and Slovaks concluded on 30 May 1918, to which the Czechoslovak president Masaryk had been a party. Hlinka was released shortly before the general election in April 1920 and now was seen as a dangerous and irresponsible opposition figure. In September 1921 Šrobár, then Minister of Education, withdrew an earlier promise of the Czechoslovak government to give back to the Catholic Church in Slovakia three secondary schools which had been placed under state supervision. This sensitive controversy, dragging on for several years, caused the Slovak People's Party to become an almost permanent opposition party. The party participated in a centre-right coalition government during the years 1927-29, but went definitively back in the opposition following an even more spectacular controversy over the claim of its leading member Vojtech Tuka that after ten years Slovakia had the legal right to secede from the Czechoslovak Republic. Highly provocative proved to be the institution of an official day of commemoration of Jan Hus

on 6 July 1925, which led the Vatican to break off relations with Prague. In the second general election of November 1925 the Slovak People's Party became the largest party in Slovakia, and it retained this position of relative predominance ever since.³¹ It meant that the political and cultural struggle of Slovak conservative Catholicism against liberal secularism, Czechoslovak progressivism, and Prague centralism was assured of a solid basis.

What were the social, cultural, and political conditions in Slovakia which might explain the dominant position of conservative political Catholicism and the rise of a form of nationalism that appeared to move closer to authoritarianism or even (semi-)fascism? It was certainly not only the Slovak national question and the shortcomings of Prague centralism that were responsible for this, although it is true that Czech insensitivity to Slovak cultural identity and the Slovak desire for national autonomy played an important part. But there was more to it, especially in terms of societal and political culture and lack of democratic tradition. A weak ethnic-Slovak middle class, an undeveloped political culture, and the identification of Prague with freethinking, cosmopolitanism, freemasonry, and anti-clericalism may have reinforced the tendency for Catholic nationalism in Slovakia to evolve into a form of fascism by the 1930s or even earlier. In 1923 Tuka, editor of the press organ of the Slovak People's Party, *Slovák*, founded the paramilitary organisation the *Rodobrana*, which acted as bodyguards for the party's speakers but was prohibited later that year. The *rodobranci* were originally an offshoot of the Catholic youth organisation *Orol*, but they and their successors, the Hlinka Guard, became something rather different. Indeed, by the mid-1930s the Catholic Church took distance from the youth organisations of the Slovak People's Party when activity in this field was growing again. Tuka himself became the centre of the most radical Party faction, which included young nationalists, university students, and Catholic intellectuals in Bratislava who were developing ideas some of which went further than just conservative Catholicism or Slovak autonomism. Tuka was also in contact with extreme right-wing groups in Europe, including Italian fascists and Hungarian irredentist radicals. In 1929 he was imprisoned, but after his release in 1938 he resumed his role as a radical leader. Until the 1930s the Slovak People's Party, although it included pseudo-fascist elements, was led by the priests, Hlinka and later Jozef Tiso, who stood for Slovak autonomy within the Czechoslovak Republic. Later, by 1938, the younger generation in the movement emerged from the new paramilitary organisation, the Hlinka Guard, under the leadership of men like Alexander Mach, Ferdinand Durčanský, and Tuka who advocated separatism, an authoritarian state, and anti-Semitism. Perhaps this Slovak development helps to prove right Ernst Nolte's argument

³¹ Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, pp. 161-168; Felak, "At the Price of the Republic", pp. 20-29, 34-36; El Mallakh, *The Slovak Autonomy Movement*, esp. pp. 37-8; Hoensch, *Geschichte der Tschechoslowakischen Republik*, p. 50; Ismo Nurmi, *Slovakia – a Playground for Nationalism and National Identity. Manifestations of the National Identity of the Slovaks 1918-1920* (Helsinki, 1999), pp. 108-123 for an analysis of the complex religious question in Slovakia during the period of national revolution; Joseph A. Mikuš, *Slovakia: A Political and Constitutional History* (Bratislava, 1995), pp. 163-70 for the 'Memorandum of the Slovaks to the Peace Conference of 1919' (Paris, September 20, 1919), submitted by Hlinka and four other Slovaks.

that Catholicism was the ‘father of fascism’ with, in the case of Slovakia, a potentially fascist Catholic populist movement being turned into real fascism by the ‘second generation’ after the mid-thirties and especially after 1938. Nolte, however, does not seem to consider either Hlinka or Tiso as fascists. Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party can only be listed as a fascist movement after the setting up of the Slovak puppet state in 1939. Even so, the term ‘Clerical Fascism’ which has been applied to the Tiso regime is controversial since some historians deny the fascist character not only of the Hlinka movement but even of the war-time Slovak State. The Hlinka movement was conservative-Catholic, extreme-nationalist, and clerical-authoritarian, perhaps in a unique Slovak pattern. Its ‘fascist’ nature arguably remained ‘immature’, i.e. pseudo-fascist, proto-fascist, or semi-fascist.³²

Catholicism, nationalism, authoritarianism

Although the issue of the relationship between conservative political Catholicism and fascism remains an important one and fascist influences certainly existed, it seems more helpful to regard Slovak nationalist Catholicism as an ideology that should be analysed as largely independent of fascism. Like in the case of Portugal, the most prominent ideological and political leaders of conservative Catholicism in Slovakia should be distinguished from the pure fascists even though some of the former’s (younger) supporters were half-fascists or sympathisers with fascism. Indeed, beside Hlinka the second leading figure of the Slovak People’s Party was Jozef Tiso, whose age, intellect, and career are more comparable to Salazar and his role in Portugal. Tiso was a student for the priesthood in Vienna and was ordained in 1910, but he soon proved his abilities in the field of politics as well. He had become acquainted with the Christian Social movement in Austria, with some of its political leaders, and of course with its Catholic and conservative ideology. Tiso was one of many Catholic priests in Slovak politics and he became a leading ideologist and organiser of the Slovak People’s Party. He saw the nation as having a special purpose in God’s scheme of things, and therefore the Slovak nation was entitled to enjoying an honourable place under the sun, that is, political autonomy or independence. After having held many positions in the Slovak People’s Party and following Hlinka’s death in 1938, Tiso became the new party leader but especially after the release of Vojtech Tuka in the same year, 1938, he also had to deal with the proponents of the more radical, pro-fascist wing, including Tuka himself. The latter, not a priest but a lawyer of sorts, wanted to continue his anti-Czech

³² Felak, “*At the Price of the Republic*”, pp. 30-33; El Mallakh, *The Slovak Autonomy Movement*, pp. 51-2, 82, 210-15; Linz, ‘Some Notes Towards a Comparative Study of Fascism in Sociological Historical Perspective’, pp. 21, 50; Bela Vago, ‘Fascism in Eastern Europe’, in Laqueur (ed.), *Fascism*, pp. 215-47, here pp. 216, 237-8; Ernst Nolte, *Die Faschistischen Bewegungen* (Berlin, 1966), p. 277; Maroš Hertel, ‘Rozpory v HSĽS v 20. rokoch 20. storočia’, in Letz, Mulík, and Bartlová (eds.), *Slovenská ľudová strana*, pp. 181-95 for the internal conflicts in the Slovak People’s Party.

struggle where he had left off in the 1920s when he organised the Rodobrana, which was partly inspired by Italian fascism and whose original success he greatly exaggerated. But while Tuka's ideology appeared increasingly pagan-extremist and fascist, Tiso stuck in the main to his older Catholic and Slovak nationalist ideas. This included, however, a belief in authoritarianism and the legitimacy and necessity of one-party rule. After the Slovak People's Party came to power and the Slovak State (with Tiso as president) was instituted in 1939, it also brought a degree of discrimination and political exclusion of the Slovak Lutherans, although the evidence on this is somewhat contradictory. The discrimination and isolation of Slovak Jews was more clear-cut. The first anti-Jewish decree, already proclaimed on 30 March 1939, forbade the Jews from involvement in the manufacture of Christian symbols of faith. This painful measure seems typical of the mentality of a Catholic authoritarian regime and Tiso himself, but the extent of Slovak-State co-responsibility for the Holocaust remains a contested issue.³³

The ideology of the Slovak People's Party was based on conservative Catholicism and a form of nationalism that was increasingly anti-liberal, exclusivist, and authoritarian. The party began to regard itself as the only legitimate representative of the Slovak people and the Slovak nation. Its principal slogan, 'For God and Nation', expressed its cultural and ideological orientation quite well. Jozef Tiso, the party's principal and arguably most typical and influential ideologist in the 1930s, explained in some articles in *Slovák* in December 1930 that their first and foremost principle was the 'sovereignty of the Slovak nation.' This meant that the concept of nation was of a higher order than the concept of state. Every nation had its own 'moral personality' and historic purpose, which in the case of the Slovaks was attaining political autonomy. Tiso's political and historical philosophy makes us feel that Herderian Romanticism, Catholic thought, and cultural nationalism could well go together. In a lecture given in Prague in 1930 and translated in English as 'The Ideology of the Slovak Populist Party', Tiso described autonomy for Slovakia as the realisation of a thousand-year quest for national self-determination. He placed the Slovak People's Party in the tradition of the Slovak national movement of the nineteenth century, which had demanded recognition of the Slovak nation and political autonomy. Of course he tried to ignore the possible differences between the increasingly plural movement of the nineteenth century and the exclusive claims of the present Slovak People's Party. Tiso's party regarded itself as the only genuine representative of the Slovak nation. For a time – as *Slovák* suggested on 1 January 1933 – it allowed the small Lutheran Slovak National Party to share the distinction of being true representatives of the Slovaks. But at a lecture in Prague in April 1934, Tiso clearly said that 'the Slovak People's Party is the organised political will of the Slovak nation.' The other major parties were said to be controlled by non-Slovak elements – either by the Czechs or by the Russian communists. The propaganda of the Slovak People's Party placed great stress on the idea of national unity, blaming Czechoslovak parties (the Social Democrats, the Agrarian Party etc.) with

³³ Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, pp. 187-8, 192, 197, 203; Jörg K. Hoensch, 'Die Slowakische Republik 1939-1945', in Hoensch, *Studia Slovaca*, pp. 221-47 for the Slovak State, including its Jewish policy.

trying to divide the Slovaks. Another means of trying to get a solid Slovak national bloc behind them was stressing the all-class nature of the Slovak People's Party. While the Czechoslovak parties were said to represent particular social classes (workers, farmers, and so on), the Slovak People's Party claimed to represent all social classes in Slovakia. A group like the Jews, however, was not seen as a group whose support should be sought as well. Those Jews who supported Slovak culture or maintained good relations with party members – and there were some of them – were described with some sympathy. But all other Jews, the great majority of them, were condemned for their Hungarian orientation, their anti-Slovak economic behaviour, or their alleged sympathy for Bolshevism. When in September 1933 the leader of a Jewish organisation in Nitra signed a petition criticising some recent actions of the Slovak People's Party in the area, *Slovák* published some rather extreme articles against the Jews, including 'Jews against the Slovaks' and 'Jews in Slovakia in the Past and Present – They Were Always against the Slovak People, Off Whom They Live.' Such anti-Semitic attacks increased during the 1930s, but the radical party members who controlled the party's press were more hostile to Jews than were moderates.³⁴

The programme of the Slovak People's Party included political-administrative, social-economic, and cultural-religious demands. The party wanted to move towards Slovak autonomy, increase the employment opportunities for Slovaks, and fight for 'Slovak' and Catholic education. In these endeavours it was frequently frustrated by press censorship and a constant degree of government persecution, including periodic arrests of party members whose public speaking was deemed a threat to the public order or state security. Hlinka himself and especially Tuka were major examples of party leaders who were imprisoned for several months or even years. Most sensitive of all were cultural and religious issues. The Slovak People's Party was intensely aware of the crucial role of education in the development of national and cultural consciousness. Its cultural programme laid its main stress on building up a Slovak national education system and actively opposing 'Czechoslovak' ideas (both in a secularist and a national sense) and anti-Catholic ideology. During the First Czechoslovak Republic the education system in Slovakia underwent a spectacular expansion on all levels, but this great progress was accompanied by the arrival of a large number of often anti-clerical Czech teachers and a 'Czechoslovak spirit' in many of the schools, things that were resented by the Catholic Slovak People's Party. To counter the idea of a common Czechoslovak nation, Czechoslovak language (really a mystification), Czechoslovak history, or secular Czechoslovak identity, the party proposed in a proclamation issued in December 1932 the establishment of a Slovak School Council with a view to bringing education into the service of Slovak nationalism. Its ultimate aim, indeed, was the Slovakisation of the education system, including the university in Bratislava. The Slovak People's Party wanted all university

³⁴ Felak, "At the Price of the Republic", pp. 42-45. See Milan S. Ďurica, *Jozef Tiso – slovenský kňaz a štátnik. I: 1887-1939* (Martin, 1992), pp. 153-202 for Tiso's thought on man, family, nation, state, the social question, and the relationship between the Slovak nation and the Czechoslovak State; also for a more pointed summary of Tiso's views, Hoensch, 'Die Grundlagen des Programms der Slowakischen Volkspartei vor 1938', pp. 178-86.

teaching and administration to be carried on in the Slovak language, which was a rather drastic demand given the presence of a large number of Czechs at Bratislava's Comenius University. Indeed, the party was particularly concerned about the philosophical faculty and its Czechoslovak spirit, and demanded the creation of a number of new departments in the faculty, including Slovak language, Slovak literature, and Slovak ethnography. The department of 'Czechoslovak language and literature' was to be abolished and non-Slovak professors should hold their posts only until a suitable Slovak replacement could be found. At the high school ('gymnasium') level the party demanded education in a 'Slovak national spirit', along with Slovak textbooks and, as far as possible, Slovak teachers.³⁵

The question of religion was closely connected with education and the Catholic cultural ideals of the Slovak People's Party. The party advocated the creation of a state-funded parochial school system in Slovakia, which it regarded as 'the basis for the moral development of the nation.' This was quite a demand on the state, which apparently was seen as a necessary pillar for facilitating the religious and cultural ideology of the Slovak nationalists and the Slovak Catholic Church. Of course, the Czechoslovak State would refuse to play this role and even the Slovak State, after March 1939, preferred to keep control over culture and education instead of leaving this to the Church. Nevertheless, Slovak nationalist morality was dressed in the language of Christian and Catholic ethics, however simplistic or tautological. The electoral programme of the Slovak People's Party of October 1929 stated that 'the Slovak way of life is built on Christian ethics, hence there can be no Slovak way of life without Christian ethics, nor are Christian ethics conceivable without the Slovak way of life.' It is easy to understand that the party insisted that the government return to the Catholic Church the three gymnasia that it had seized after 1918. This was obviously the bare minimum Slovak Catholics wished to retain in a situation where secularisation and anti-clericalism had begun to dominate culture, education, and society. But the party also demanded the establishment of a faculty of Catholic theology at the university in Bratislava, as well as an increase in state salaries for Catholic clergymen. Another party demand was the implementation by the Czechoslovak government of the agreement with the Vatican to restore mutual relations after the 'Hussite' crisis of 1925. Although signed in 1927, its implementation had to wait until the early 1930s. The Slovak People's Party was especially apprehensive about the anti-clerical Slovak Social Democrat Ivan Dérer, who in his capacity of minister of education between 1929 and 1934 might unleash a Kulturkampf against Catholic education, an endeavour from which other politicians tried to keep him back. At the same time the Slovak Catholics and nationalists tried to turn a defensive position into an offensive one, and to get more financial support for Slovak cultural institutions. The Slovak People's Party called for increased state support for the Catholic St. Vojtech Society and the Matica slovenská, and for Slovak art and literature. It also demanded the Slovakisation of the Slovak National Theatre, whose pre-

³⁵ Felak, "At the Price of the Republic", pp. 47-8.

dominantly Czech repertoire apparently upset Slovaks from some of the pro-government parties as well as supporters of the Slovak People's Party.³⁶

Differences in outlook and tradition between Slovaks and Czechs were also expressed in other ways. The Slovak People's Party often complained about the thoroughness with which the Czechoslovak tax collectors did their job in Slovakia. But it is true that those Slovaks who did not have much tax money to pay, the party wanted to protect as well. Influenced by the papal encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* (1931), indeed, the party advocated a 'just wage' for workers and employees in Slovakia, that is, enough earnings to cover their material and cultural needs. Employment for the working class and state jobs for the Slovak intelligentsia, but also state contracts for Slovak businessmen and better prices for peasants, all figured in the party's programme. It is interesting that in the field of foreign policy the Slovak People's Party had its own ideas, too. It opposed foreign minister Edvard Beneš's policy of relying on the Western powers, especially France. Long before the fatal Munich Agreement of 1938, the party already warned against such one-sided overreliance. It argued for better relations between the Czechoslovak Republic and authoritarian right-wing states like Poland, Italy, and Austria. Karol Sidor and some other party leaders, citing a common Slavic origin and Catholic faith, called for close relations between Czechoslovakia and Poland. In 1933 Štefan Onderčo, the party's spokesman on foreign policy, proposed the inclusion of Poland in the Little Entente. On the other hand the signing by Czechoslovakia of a treaty of mutual assistance with the Soviet Union in 1935 (partly on the urging of France) was bitterly denounced by the Slovak People's Party. Thus, the Slovak Catholic nationalists developed their own vision on what was the national interest of Slovakia, which was based on their cultural and national ideology and on their strategy of trying to gain short-term advantages whenever circumstances permitted. This actually helped them to prepare for taking power after October 1938. Gaining autonomy or independence for Slovakia and establishing their exclusive power in an authoritarian state had become one and the same thing for the Slovak People's Party. Although Slovakia was forced by circumstances and by Nazi-Germany to proclaim state independence in March 1939, there is little evidence that the leaders and supporters of the party were concerned with trying to preserve parliamentary democracy or even the last remnants of the liberal political order. Of course there were sincere democrats in the Slovak People's Party too, but the ideology and political mentality of a growing number of them had brought them at a large distance from liberal democracy.³⁷

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 48-9.

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 50-54, 215.

Conclusions

The victory of the 'political Counter-Reformation' in Slovakia in 1938-39, which lasted for only six years in contrast to its protracted Portuguese counterpart, was the outcome of a number of factors some of which had a more general European significance and some of which were, perhaps, unique to the Slovak situation or to Central Europe. Of course, the exceptional conditions on the eve of the Second World War was another crucial factor in the case of Slovakia. This historical factor at the end of the period covered by this essay, was less important in the case of Portugal. But in other ways the respective situations in both countries are historically comparable, with both similarities and differences being significant in the context of European, regional, and national political Catholicism. The political dynamics of Catholic Slovak nationalism was fed by a tradition of cultural conservatism which existed in many parts of Europe, including Portugal, Spain, Austria, Poland, and other countries. It was also shaped by the historic Slovak national question, a problem that was typical of the political landscape of East-Central Europe and which was inherited by the First Czechoslovak Republic. The Slovak People's Party was the expression of both of these cultural-political dimensions, that is, the conservative-Catholic and the Slovak-national one. This, of course, is what made it possible for the party to become a major player in the new democratic Slovakia and the Czechoslovak Republic after 1918. The results of the Czechoslovak general elections of 1925 and 1935 show that about half of all ethnic Slovaks – not to be confused with all voters in Slovakia, one third of whom belonged to non-Slovak minorities – tended to support the national and cultural programme of the Slovak People's Party.³⁸ However, the other half did not, and this had a lot to do with the relative success of the Czechoslovak Republic, a stable and democratic state – indeed increasingly exceptional in Central Europe in the inter-war years – which offered new opportunities to its citizens both politically, culturally, and to some extent, economically. The Slovak people, including the supporters of conservative political Catholicism, benefitted a great deal from the modern conditions of the Republic, particularly in terms of the new democratic culture and the building of a more developed system of education. But it was precisely this which also enabled the Slovak People's Party to voice its grievances against those features of the new Republic which it found repulsive: the domination of politics, society, and public culture by the progressivist, anti-clerical political forces and the domination of Slovakia by the Czechs and their Slovak 'Czechoslovakist' supporters, almost all of whom were opponents of political Catholicism and the radical autonomist programme of the Slovak People's Party. In contrast to Portugal, the institutions of the Czechoslovak State were loyal to the republic. Therefore, it took the Central European crisis of the late 1930s, from the viewpoint of Czechoslovakia largely an external one, to provide the Slovak

³⁸ The Slovak social democratic leader Michal Korman had the courage to declare in 1947, during the legal proceedings against Tiso, that after 1935 at least 50 percent of the Slovak population were in favour of autonomy; see Hoensch, 'Die Grundlagen des Programms der Slowakischen Volkspartei vor 1938', p. 176.

autonomists with an historic opportunity to break away from Prague, seize power in Slovakia, and establish an authoritarian regime which has been defined by many historians as ‘clerical fascism’. Quite aside from the merits of this disputed label, this did not mean that there were no legitimate grievances in Slovakia or, indeed, mass support for the Slovak People’s Party’s take-over. The truth is that there was.

The situation in Portugal was rather different in several ways. The Portuguese Republic founded in 1910 was the result of a progressive coup d’état by lower-rank army officers supported by various groups of republican and liberal politicians and anti-clericalists. The level of support for this republican revolution was probably lower than was the level of support among ethnic Slovaks for the Czechoslovak revolution in 1918. Despite the original enthusiasm for the Portuguese Republic in its first months or years, it soon became clear that a substantial proportion of the Portuguese population, especially outside the capital Lisbon, were sceptical about the republican regime, its unfulfilled promises, and its rather extreme anti-clerical course. In Portugal, of course, there was no national issue to mobilise support either for the revolution itself or for its opponents, although both sides claimed to speak on behalf of the true interest of the nation. The republican anti-clerical measures provoked a strong backlash on the part of the conservative section of the Portuguese nation, including prominent Catholic intellectuals and several right-wing groups, and therefore proved divisive to the point of triggering civil war or counter-revolution. The republican politicians themselves were divided as well, and it is an unfortunate fact that the Portuguese First Republic was a chaotic and unstable political regime almost from the start. Although in Slovakia the Czechoslovak anti-clerical policies were divisive too, even the supporters of conservative Catholicism tended at first to welcome the Czechoslovak revolution because it meant the national liberation of the Slovak people from the old Hungarian regime. This attitude tended to change over the course of the years, and the grievances of Slovak conservative Catholics, which had already been expressed at an early stage, were now compounded by their national-autonomist strivings, which helped to increase the number of supporters of the Slovak People’s Party. However, Czechoslovakia as a whole remained under the domination of the Czechs and even the anti-Czechoslovakist Slovaks hesitated for a long time to squarely oppose the existing Republic. In Portugal, on the other hand, the Republic was contested and rather unstable from the start, while some institutions in the country began to sabotage her either openly or in secret.

It was, again, the Portuguese army – if this time the middle and higher ranks – which played a leading part in looking for an alternative to the existing political order, now represented by the increasingly dysfunctional liberal republic. The Catholic Church, some of the (non-liberal and non-urban) dominant classes, and conservative intellectuals like Salazar played their part as well. Salazar and other right-wing, Catholic, and authoritarian thinkers were able to construct an ideological alternative to the failing liberal perspective and divided democratic republicanism of their adversaries. The thought and traditions of the Catholic Church played a significant role in

all of this, especially from a cultural and ideological point of view. However, in Portugal there was no successful mass-political party led by Catholic priests as there was in Slovakia. Instead of a conservative Catholic party similar to the Slovak People's Party led by a charismatic leader like Hlinka, Salazar used other political techniques to gain power between 1926 and 1932. The groups and individuals he got behind him included conservative army officers, state bureaucrats, and anti-liberal or even anti-democratic political figures. For Salazar the Church had a social, cultural, and ideological function, not primarily a political one. The same held true for one or other Catholic political party, which he preferred to replace with a national party on a broader and more authoritarian political basis. After seizing power in 1938-39, the Slovak People's Party became in fact a kind of national or state party as well, but in Slovakia there was a closer historical link between Church and party based on the older Central European tradition of political Catholicism, in which priests played a leading role in terms of party organisation and political ideology. This social, political, and cultural tradition of political Catholicism could assume the character of modern Christian Democracy or that of a more anti-liberal and anti-modern right-wing movement. In Slovakia the anti-liberal and right-wing tendency was reinforced by the dynamics of the national question during the First Czechoslovak Republic, although fascist or pseudo-fascist influences played a part as well. Fascist influences, both foreign and Portuguese, were important in Portugal too, but both in Portugal and Slovakia there was a difference between the real fascists on one side and the authoritarian 'political Counter-Reformers' on the other side.

The worldview of these protagonists and ideologists of the political Counter-Reformation, and the political conditions of the first half of the twentieth century that may explain it, is what was supposed to constitute the principal topic of this essay. As far as the authors of this article are aware, an explicit comparison of Portugal and Slovakia in terms of this problem has never been attempted before, although pieces of relevant historical material are mentioned by analysts of comparative fascism. We want to repeat that conservative or anti-liberal Catholic movements are not necessarily the same thing as fascist movements. To argue otherwise would be tantamount to historical simplification and lazy thinking. However, it is also true that the two types of movement overlapped to some extent, particularly as far as ideas on social order (corporatism, enforced social peace), hierarchy (authoritarianism, political inequality), and anti-liberalism (rejection of individualism or even of multi-party democracy) are concerned. Of course, there were variants of Catholic authoritarianism in different countries at different historical moments, and the degree to which it resembled forms of fascism varied as well. The core ideas of Catholic political philosophy could be interpreted in different ways, dependent on individual thinkers and different historical and political situations. There was a basic difference between those Catholic movements which developed into modern Christian Democracy, and those which could not resist the old temptation of hierarchical thinking and anti-liberalism. In countries where democratic traditions were weak but the Catholic tradition strong, the anti-democratic alternative could become a serious option. Both Portugal and Slovakia were examples of this, and the fact that at one

point the anti-clerical enemies of political and cultural Catholicism began to assert themselves meant that the conservative Catholic political forces had to organise a new Counter-Reformation movement. This new political movement could be a political party as in Slovakia, or a coalition of traditionalist and anti-liberal groups as in Portugal. This type of Catholic movement proved able to influence the course of modern European history. The question is whether similar (religious) or competing (neo-fascist) types of anti-liberal alternative have new chances in our own time.

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