

*English-Language Books Censored during Wartime in Estado Novo Portugal*¹

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Abstract. In contrast to press censorship, books published in *Estado Novo* Portugal were not subject to *a priori* censorship, but rather post-publication censorship. Additionally, imported books along with other publications were rigorously examined by custom officials, and private mailing of certain individuals was also monitored by post office clerks. Theoretically, no foreign book could easily enter the country without official inspection. Based on the censorship reports, it seems, however, that the degree of censorship was often fluctuating and uneven. The varying rigor, for the most part, can be put down to historical and political factors such as wars and other domestic conflicts, but there were indeed other types of inconsistencies. Through an exhaustive analysis of selected case studies, the paper also provides detailed insights into the mechanisms of censorship that operated in Salazar-Caetano regime Portugal.

Keywords: book censorship; books in English; translation; *Estado Novo* Portugal; Spanish Civil War; Second World War; Portuguese Colonial War

So presently the world was at war again
This time the destruction was so complete...
That nothing at all was left in the world
 Except one man
 And one woman
 And one flower

James Thurber, *The Last Flower*
(banned in Portugal in 1971)

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Introduction

The present study aims to trace the changing attitudes towards translations and foreign book imports in *Estado Novo* Portugal by concentrating mostly on non-periodical publications in English. The regime's ambivalent and at the same time deferential attitude towards democratic Great Britain poses various questions. Although António de Oliveira Salazar's sympathies with Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany were quite obvious from the beginning, the diplomatic relationship between Portugal and her old ally remained largely intact before and during the Second World War (Rosas 2002: 268–282 and Meneses 2010: 222–273).² Moreover, despite the fact that recent scholarship on translation history in *Estado Novo* Portugal has confirmed the increasing dominance of translations of prose fiction in English from the second half of the twentieth century (Seruya 2009, 2010), Anglophone literature as well as other works in English could be still subject to severe censorship if they contained any reference that could have been considered detrimental to the state or to the public decorum.

Based on the censorship reports, however, it is quite clear, that the degree of censorship imposed on books did vary throughout the years. The changing rigour, for the most part, depended on external as well as internal conflicts such as the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), the Second World War (1939–1945), and the Portuguese Colonial War (1961–1974). With these particular periods in mind, the article sets out to outline a panoramic view of the position of books in English along with the political importance attached to them in Salazar-Caetano regime Portugal.

Book censorship in *Estado Novo* Portugal

In contrast to theatre and press censorship, books were not subject to prior censorship in Portugal, but rather post-publication censorship, which meant

² Diplomatic relations between the two countries date back as early as 1294, when Portugal first entered into a commercial treaty with England. In 1386, the Treaty of Windsor was signed by Dom João I and Richard II, assuring perpetual peace and friendship between England and Portugal. The Old Alliance was later revived by the Methuen Treaty in 1703, which gave mutual trade advantages to Portuguese wines and English woollen cloth, but technically enabled the English to gain almost total control of Portuguese foreign trade in a short period of time and make Portugal politically and economically dependent on England (for further information, see: Stone 1994, Shaw 1998, and Bullon-Fernandez 2008).

that as a rule, contentious books were prohibited and confiscated after being published. In some cases, however, certain publishers presented a copy of the literary work they wished to publish in advance, since confiscation of books after being published could easily mean bankruptcy to the privately-owned publishing houses. This also served as a deterrent, and was a conscious mechanism of repression. In addition, imported books, newspapers, and magazines were regularly checked by customs officers, and the private mailing of dissident individuals was also under constant surveillance (Azevedo 1999: 77).

Non-periodical publications were sent to the *Secção de Livros* [Department for Books], which began to function as early as 1934 (Gomes 2006, 115). The locations of the censorship organs remained almost the same throughout their existence. The three main censorship boards were located in Lisbon (Southern Zone), Oporto (Northern Zone), and Coimbra (Central Zone). The three zones were further subdivided into 29 *delegações* [delegations], including smaller cities, among others, Beja, Évora, Ponta Delgada, Funchal (Southern Zone), Aveiro, Caldas da Rainha, Viseu (Central Zone), and Braga, Viana do Castelo, and Vila Real (Northern Zone) (Gomes 2006: 47–48, and Spirk 2014: 9).

The censors were mainly military officers. Most of them were captains, then majors, colonels, lieutenants and lieutenant-colonels. The first non-military civilians joined the censorship brigade only around the end of the Second World War in 1944. Intriguingly, contrary to the general expectation that military officers were somehow be less educated, several of them appeared to be remarkably intelligent and widely-read men with a good command of foreign languages, which was highly uncharacteristic of the Portuguese population of the era (Seruya and Moniz 2008: 10).

The censorship reports issued between 1934 and 1974 are currently stored at the National Archives of the *Torre do Tombo*. The archive series “Relatórios de livros censurados” [Book censorship reports] contain 10,011 reports, and their digitalised images are also available online, which is mainly due to Teresa Seruya and Maria Lin Moniz’ strenuous efforts as well as the generous financial support of the Research Centre for Communication and Culture.³ Regrettably, 22.4% of the reports are still missing from the Archives, which hinders research to a serious degree. Notwithstanding this hiatus, the corpus available is still a large one, and can be regarded as representative. Moreover, reasonable hopes

³ For more information, visit the site at <http://digitarq.dgarq.gov.pt/details?id=4331832> (accessed 30 August 2016).

still remain that the missing archival documents might be located in the near future.⁴

The Spanish Civil War

Salazar's fellow feeling for General Francisco Franco was an open secret right from the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. Although Portugal also signed the Non-Intervention Agreement in 1936, Salazar continued to support the rebel nationalist forces either by sending Portuguese volunteers to fight on Franco's side or by facilitating arms trafficking from Nazi Germany via Portugal to the nationalist troops in Spain (Stone 1994: 10–11). Besides direct military help, the *Estado Novo* also backed the rebels by manipulation of mass public opinion at home as well as in Spain through pro-Nationalist propaganda and information control.

The Spanish Civil War posed the first serious challenge to the freshly established censorship offices. The number of books examined increased radically during the Civil War period. Most interestingly, according to Seruya's findings, the actual number of the non-periodical publications on the Spanish Civil War was relatively low throughout the war, but the works in Spanish or related to Spain that were sent for official inspection doubled from the beginning of the Spanish conflict (Seruya 2017).⁵ Theoretically, all books that defended the Republican cause were labelled as Communist propaganda, and were to be proscribed by the Portuguese censorship office.

As far as literature in English is concerned, there is no information available whether the Portuguese readers of the period, or at least, a limited number of them, had access to Arthur Koestler's *Spanish Testament* or George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*. The conspicuous absence of these memoirs from the Portuguese book market, however, suggests that these anti-Fascist works – despite Orwell's severe criticism of the Communist Party and the Soviet involvement in the war – might not have been welcomed by the otherwise pro-Franco Portuguese publishers and booksellers.

The one and only eyewitness account of the Spanish conflict whose author wrote in English and was subject to censorship in Portugal was *Searchlight on*

⁴ A small number of reports believed to have belonged to the National Archives collection appeared in the Portuguese politician, José Pacheco Pereira's internet blog. See: <https://ephemerajpp.com/indices-especificos/indice-nucleo-da-censura/> (accessed 30 August 2016).

⁵ I am very grateful to Teresa Seruya for allowing me to read her article prior to publication.

Spain (1938) by Katharine Marjory Stewart-Murray, the Duchess of Atholl. Indeed, both the original English and French versions of the book were banned by the Portuguese authorities as early as 1938 (R690/1938 and R692/1938). The Duchess of Atholl was an ex-Conservative Member of the Parliament, who visited Spain in 1937, and witnessed the devastation caused by the German Luftwaffe. Her role was also essential in that the government allowed 4000 children from war-ravaged towns in northern Spain to come to Britain for safety. Despite being a Tory, she was a fierce advocate of the Republican government and a strong opponent of the Non-Intervention Agreement (for more information, see: Jackson 2004 and Knox 2006).⁶

The reasons for banning her book are not disclosed in the Portuguese censorship report. The only piece of information given is that the book was read by the director himself. Seruya infers that because of Salazar's diplomatic commitment to convincing London that General Franco should be the right political leader to restore order in violent and chaotic Red Spain, the book received particular attention from the Portuguese censorship authorities (Seruya 2016: 10).

The Second World War

During the Second World War, Salazar's foremost preoccupation was to keep the country away from war and maintain Portuguese neutrality at any cost. Although his political attitude cannot, clearly, be regarded as pro-Axis, with reference to information control, the regime's propaganda and censorship apparatus occasionally revealed a less favourable attitude towards the Allies. Although press censorship was reinforced as early as 1939 to guarantee that the news coverage would not offend either belligerent side, Figueiredo states that while listening to BBC broadcasts and British and American newspapers and magazines were suppressed, the Third Reich was allowed to broadcast its propaganda and Agfacolor films with little or no restrictions (Figueiredo 1976: 92).

Moreover, despite draconian wartime censorship in Portugal, the semi-official newspaper, *Diário de Manhã*, for instance, was flagrantly pro-Nazi, and it was only after the Normandy landings in 1944 that its markedly pro-German

⁶ Following the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, a Non-Intervention Agreement was drawn up and signed by twenty-seven countries in order to prevent a proxy war and potential expansion of the war to other nations. The agreement was, however, being blatantly violated by Italy, Germany, Portugal and Russia throughout the conflict.

bias began to slightly decline. Also, almost until the end of the war, *Alerta*, a Fascist weekly, was authorised to be published in the country without restrictions. Gallagher argues that Salazar did not pay particular attention to the propaganda of the extreme right, as he regarded it relatively harmless. Conversely, in case of a Nazi victory, Salazar had high hopes that Germany would be in a strong position to act as a safeguard against Communism in Europe. Moreover, he might also have been temperamentally unwilling to check those extremists whose anti-Communism took the form of veneration of the Führer (1990: 170–171).

Since 20.74% of the book censorship files submitted to censorship between 1 September 1939 and 2 September 1945 are still missing from the National Archives, the numbers presented in this study should not be considered as complete, but only as indicative of the general attitude and common practices adopted by the Portuguese censorship authorities. The corpus under scrutiny contains 73 non-periodical publications that could be considered as pro-Allies propaganda either because of showing support towards Great Britain and the United States or because of putting forward a hostile viewpoint of the opposing belligerent countries such as Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The corpus encompasses, among others, political treatises, official reports, statements, bulletins, collected speeches, memoirs, and biographies which were originally written in English, independently of the author's nationality. Portuguese translations as well as other renderings in other languages have also been included.

According to the available censorship reports, approximately half of the propaganda works were authorised (49%), while 39% were prohibited and 12% were approved after cuts (see: Figure 1). Interestingly, prohibition was always limited to texts containing offensive content towards the Axis Powers or their leaders, but offensive passages alone did not always form the basis for banning a particular work. 9 out of the 36 authorised propaganda works did include potentially adverse comments on Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy. It seems that collective speeches by political leaders such as Churchill or Hitler, in spite of their possibly insulting references were spared censorship. So were propaganda works describing victorious offensive or defensive battles in detail from the respective belligerent party's perspective on the grounds that information on the war events were already available to readers in the Portuguese journals. However, detailed descriptions of the devastation and human sufferings caused by the Nazi invasion in already occupied European countries such as Poland, Czechoslovakia or the Netherlands continued to be strictly forbidden.

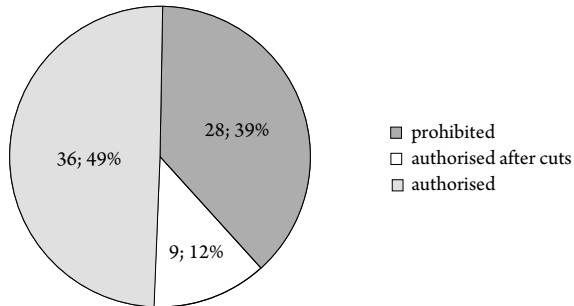


Fig. 1: Pro-Allies non-periodical publications censored in *Estado Novo* Portugal between 1939 and 1945

As regards Salazar's pro-Nazi sympathies, regardless of his possible admiration for the Führer's military and political genius, Salazar was more of a traditional dictator, who was genuinely frightened by Hitler's driving territorial ambitions and his gross violation of the rule of law. Salazar was acutely aware of Portugal's military weakness as well as the fact that in case of a German victory Portugal would lose its status as an independent country with its individual characteristics and traditions (Rosas 2002: 268–282 and Meneses 2009: 223–274). Historians also concur that despite Salazar's ostensibly ambiguous relationship with the Allies on certain occasions as well as various concessions to Nazi Germany, the *Estado Novo's* foreign politics reveals more of a pro-British stance during the Second World War than of a pro-German one (cf. Gallagher 1990, Rosas 2002, Meneses 2009).

Even if by and large book censorship practices do not seem to reflect any strong bias with respect to the belligerent powers – in spite of some censor officers' blatantly pro-German sentiments – after the turning of the tide in 1943, when a German victory became more and more doubtful, superior decisions on banning pro-German works began to change. For instance, the open letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury written by a Swedish priest, Hjalmar Pöhl (R2414/1943) was prohibited, despite the fact that a similar letter written by the Finnish archbishop, Erkki Kaila was authorised in 1941 (R1452/1941).⁷ Moreover, in 1944, a volume commemorating Adolf Hitler's 55th birthday was also suppressed by a superintendent, regardless of the fact that the reviewer did not find any offensive reference in the publication (R2598/1944).

⁷ The authors of the letters protested that the Archbishop of Canterbury had publicly prayed for the victory of the Russian Army.

The Colonial War

The *Guerra do Ultramar*, the Portuguese Colonial War started in the country's African colonies in 1961, and was ended by the Carnation Revolution of 1974, which, in fact, also put an end to the *Estado Novo* regime. During these 13 years, 3779 non-periodical publications were sent for inspection, and although a comparatively higher percentage of the files of the period under study is missing, that is, 34%, the remaining reports provide penetrating insights into the general principles and directions upon the censors acted in wartime Portugal.

With reference to literary works in English, 58, that is, 53% of the works submitted to censorship were prohibited, which suggests a draconian political control over the Portuguese book industry and culture. It is important to note, however, that only 4 out of the 58 proscribed works were banned on political grounds such as *Clock Without Hands* and *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* by Carson McCullers, the former for its racist references and the latter for its Communist ideology (R8560/1969), (R8566/1969), James Thurber's anti-war parable, *The Last Flower* for being antimilitarist propaganda (R8974/1971) and *Cry, the Beloved Country* by the South African writer and anti-apartheid activist, Alan Paton for its anti-colonial advocacy (R7525/1964). Indeed, the overwhelming majority of the works, that is, 54, among others, Updike's *Couples* (R8490/1969) and *Rabbit, Run* (R8561/1969), *Lady Chatterley's Lover* by D. H. Lawrence (R8969/1971), Norman Mailer's *An American Dream* (R8777/1969) and Harold Robbins's *The Inheritors* (R8976/1971) were suppressed because of their allegedly immoral contents.

Anti-colonialism and pacifism are two political censorship categories that were frequently referred to by the Portuguese censors in the reports on prohibited non-fictional works. As a rule critical works on the Portuguese colonies by authors in English were also to be proscribed, e.g., *Portugal and the End of Ultra-Colonialism* by the British scholar, Perry Anderson (R8577/1969) or *Trade and Conflict in Angola* by the historian, David Birmingham (R8134/1967) for their anti-Portuguese attitude. All works against the friendly Apartheid regime in South Africa were also banned such as *Tell Freedom* by Peter Abrahams (R6962/1961) and Nobel-laureate Albert Lutuli's *Let My People Go* (R7242/1962). Vietnam was also a sensitive topic, however, not all works related to the conflict were deemed to be politically dangerous by the censors. Wilfred Burchett's works were of course strictly prohibited (R8205/1968), (R8687/1970), but *Vietnam* by Mary McCarthy (R8967/1971), for instance – in spite of the author's disapproving stance on the war – was authorised by the Portuguese censor based on the naïve and hypocritical argument that no direct

parallel could be drawn between the USA's involvement in the Vietnam War and the Portuguese Colonial War:

But, since “our war” is not only not conducted in foreign territory, but also does not use mass destruction and indiscriminate methods as they do in Vietnam, an honest reader cannot, in any way, draw comparison between Vietnam and Angola or Guinea, for example (R8967/1971).⁸

Strategies for Evading Censorship

The assumption that pre-publication censorship imposed on books was not completely efficient is also confirmed by several censorship reports admitting the authorities' inability to control the book industry. For instance, reluctantly though, censors often authorised previously published books that had circulated unnoticed in the country for years such as the pro-Republican *For Whom the Bell Tolls* by Hemingway in view of the fact that the novel had been circulated in the country for years (R4261/1949). In 1955, six years after the censorship report was issued, another report was written by a different Portuguese censor on the same novel, albeit not on the Portuguese, but on a French translation (R5449/1955). The case also shows the lack of improper coordination and communication among the censorship officers themselves.

Seruya also suggests that in the absence of pre-publication censorship, publishers could more easily stand a chance of publishing politically contentious authors without being censored, as the political police could not possibly pay close attention to every single book published in the country. Moreover, publishing houses also had their own methods to evade censorship. For example, when in 1966, Burchett's *Vietnam. Inside Story of the Guerilla War* was eventually prohibited in Portugal, it was already in its second edition. The censor of the volume complained in the report that although he had repeatedly tried to purchase the book, the volume was not available in any Portuguese bookshop at the time. Later he learnt that the democratic leaning publishing house *Seara Nova* had distributed its publications first to its subscribers and supporters ((R7925/1966) quoted in Seruya 2010: 138–139).

⁸ Mas, como a “nossa guerra” não só não é conduzida em território estrangeiro, como também não usa métodos de ataque em massa e indiscriminados que no Vietnam são usados, o leitor honesto não poderá, de forma alguma, estabelecer qualquer paralelo entre o Vietnam e Angola ou Guiné, por exemplo (R8967/1971). All translations are mine.

Additionally, book confiscation was such a complex and difficult task that it might have taken years for the authorities to locate all the copies of a banned book in the bookstores. Indeed, there were a limited number of bookshops in larger cities such as in Lisbon, Oporto and Coimbra where booksellers always hid these proscribed books along with other suspect publications and then clandestinely sold them to their reliable domestic customers (Seruya 2010: 138, Barata Queiros 1994: S1–S4).

Conclusion

These inconsistencies on the part of the Portuguese authorities as well as the absence of systematic monitoring of the book industry clearly reveals that the regime did not attach particular importance to books and literature in its political apparatus. Seemingly, they did not regard literature as a powerful propaganda instrument in a country where, in fact, the vast majority of the population was still illiterate.⁹ Although “Translations were feared because they were “available to those belonging to the less-learned classes, who might be exposed to harmful effects by reading them”” (Seruya and Moniz 2008: 18), the regime showed a far more indulgent attitude towards printed literature than, for example, towards other written media.

The Spanish Civil War was the first political conflict that without doubt fully tested the limits of the newly established book censorship system. All works imported from or related directly or indirectly to Spain became the object of utmost suspicion during the period. All pro-Republican material was to be proscribed, since Salazar was perfectly aware that the survival of his recently created right-wing *Estado Novo* crucially depended on the Nationalist victory in Spain. Even if the number of potentially perilous political works submitted to censorship is relatively low, it seems that the information control on periodical and non-periodical publications along with the rebel-friendly propaganda was quite effective in forcing a unilateral perspective of the conflict on the Portuguese public.

The neutrality laws introduced during the Second World War were necessary evils, but certainly helped to keep Portugal out of the war. The censors’ pro-Nazi sympathies are evident in their discourses on certain occasions, but as a rule they did not interfere with the final decision as to banning or authorising a book in question. Indeed, only by the end of the war, when the Allies attained

⁹ In 1930, 68.1% of the Portuguese population was illiterate, while in 1970 the illiteracy rate was 25% (Crafts and Toniolo 1996: 351).

a more favourable position with respect to winning the war, did the attitude of the censorship office take a turn, and became more Pro-British than pro-Axis.

The Colonial War – despite stricter censorship practices adopted – ultimately brought the dictatorial regime to an end in Portugal and brought independence to the colonies. The *Estado Novo*'s antagonistic stance towards foreign pacifist or freedom fighting movements such as anti-Vietnam War activism in the USA or the anti-apartheid political struggles in South Africa are quite evident from the reports. Nevertheless, the low number of political works published on the subject, and consequently, subjected to inspection suggests a high level of self-censorship on the part of the Portuguese publishers. Indeed, as far as literary works are concerned, the vast majority of books in English were not banned on political, but on moral grounds (cf. Gombár 2011). The dominance of non-political works undoubtedly suited the *Estado Novo* regime's conformist expectations, but it also contributed to the aesthetic and cultural impoverishment of cultural life in the country.

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