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## USING A NEW MEDIUM FOR PROPAGANDA: THE ROLE OF TRANSBORDER BROADCASTS DURING THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

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### Introduction

After the establishment of shortwave broadcasts in foreign languages by both authoritarian and democratic regimes, the Spanish Civil War, which pitted the Republicans in power against the Nationalists led by Franco, became 'the first great political event in which radio played a major part' (Whitton and Herz, 1942: 24). In fact, when the Nationalist uprising took place in Morocco in July 1936, radio was already becoming a cross-border medium. The development of international broadcasting was then shaped by 'the perceived power of the medium to influence public opinion' (Hendy, 2000: 21). As a new technology that could cross borders, radio became 'a major instrument of foreign propaganda' (Quintero, 1993: 270) that attracted the attention of all those interested in its potential as a means of ideological dissemination.

Beside its potential as a transnational medium, radio was also the first electronic medium to enter people's homes, reaching individuals in their private environment. Furthermore, contrary to the press, which only impacted on those who were able to read, radio was a universal medium in the sense that its content could be understood by different publics. Against this background, the aims of this article are to analyze the role of international radio propaganda during the initial phase of the Spanish Civil War and to demonstrate how Portuguese broadcasters played a major role in the war, despite Portugal's official position of neutrality – a position defined by the Lisbon government led by Oliveira Salazar, which had close ideological connections with the Spanish Nationalists. The focus on the radio stations

broadcasting from Portugal is explained by the fact that these were the most important foreign broadcasters used to disseminate Nationalist propaganda during the early stages of the war. Moreover, the article will also demonstrate how the Spanish Civil War was a particularly important event for the development of radio's potential as a conveyor of propaganda.

The pejorative connotation that the word 'propaganda' still carries today already existed in 1936, since it had arisen after World War I when the first negative definitions of the word were created. It was then presented as an activity intended to deceive the masses, with its sole aim being to defend the interests of its sender, without any ethical concern whatsoever about the use of false information. For Harold Lasswell, writing in 1927, 'propaganda is concerned with the management of opinions and attitudes by the direct manipulation of social suggestion' (p. 9).

Due to this negative connotation acquired after 1918, in the period between the two world wars the use of the word 'propaganda' was abandoned by democratic governments. It would, however, continue to be habitually used in countries under dictatorships that even developed organizations specifically dedicated to propaganda activities. Mussolini, Goebbels, and Lenin did not have any problem in using the term 'propaganda' to describe their attempts to mold opinion. In Portugal and Spain, neither Salazar nor Franco objected to the word. Moreover, in Germany, Hitler invested heavily in propaganda to gain and maintain power as the Führer, and propaganda became one of the foundations of the Nazi regime. As soon as Hitler entered the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP) in 1921, his first task was to organize propaganda, which he considered the most important job in the party (Hitler, 1976[1933]). In fact, the central role of propaganda in Hitler's rise to power explains the interest of the Nazi regime in assessing the potential of radio as a weapon of war. Such an assessment was done, not exclusively, but also during the Spanish Civil War, as described below.

This analysis is founded on document-based research. The documents analyzed cover correspondence between the Portuguese state-owned

broadcaster and the Head of Government as well as internal memos in which the broadcasts concerning the Spanish Civil War were problematized and discussed. Transcripts of the broadcasts were also used as sources to assess the editorial line of the stations under analysis: the privately owned Rádio Clube Português (RCP) and state-owned Emissora Nacional.

### **The role of propaganda in the Spanish Civil War**

Propaganda acquired extreme importance during the Spanish Civil War and this was quickly recognized by both forces involved in the conflict. In August 1936, the Nationalists created an office responsible for controlling the press, while the Republicans, who controlled the Madrid government, created a Ministry of Propaganda in November 1936. In addition to radio, the Republicans also used the cinema to disseminate their ideological messages through newsreels and documentaries. Campaigns intended to combat illiteracy and promote readership were also launched to acquaint people with the views of the Madrid government. Similarly, in August 1936, the Nationalists also created a bureau that was initially responsible for controlling the press. However, its powers were increased to include all types of internal and external propaganda, leading to it being renamed the National Delegation for Press and Propaganda.

At first, the Nationalists did not control as many radio stations as the Republicans. Nonetheless, this did not mean that they did not consider radio propaganda to be crucial and, between July 1936 and February 1938, General Queipo de Llano presented daily talks on Unión Radio Sevilla, which was one of the first stations to come under Franco's control. During this period, not only did Queipo de Llano encourage the Nationalists to pursue their aim of conquering Spain but he also tried to terrorize and demoralize the enemy forces: a technique that would be used later on by the Axis and the Allies during World War II. Furthermore, as highlighted by the war correspondent of the Portuguese newspaper *O Século*, Radio Sevilla and the Portuguese station RCP were the main propaganda tools available to the Nationalists during the initial months of the conflict (Nunes, 1936). The Italian

Radio Verdad, which later on would have a crucial role in supporting the Nationalist forces, only started to operate in February 1937. Similarly, Radio Nacional de España (Spanish National Radio) only began broadcasting in January 1937. This station, which was controlled by the forces of General Franco, transmitted from Salamanca and was created with the support of the Italians, Germans and Portuguese (Quintero, 1993: 360–366).

Hitler and Mussolini had officially recognized Franco on 18 November 1936. Both supported his revolt against the Spanish Republic in several ways, including through radio propaganda. The first transmitter used by Radio Nacional de España was sent from Germany, as mentioned in Goebbels' diary:

The supply of a large-scale transmitter is the correct course of action ... Franco must send four men to Germany to be trained in my Ministry of Propaganda ... We shall dub German anti-Bolshevik films into Spanish. I will invest more money for propaganda there ... The large majority of the Spanish public does not comprehend anything of that which is occurring (Quintero, 1993: 355).

The German propaganda strategist was particularly interested in gaining a comprehension of the role that radio could play in the mobilization of the masses during wartime, and the Spanish Civil War created a context in which this could be understood. Goebbels was already by then an enthusiast for radio's ability to persuade the masses. It was his belief in the effectiveness of broadcasting as a means of propaganda that led him to state, in 1933, that 'what the press was to the 19th century, radio will be to the twentieth' (Goebbels, quoted in Bergmeier and Lotz, 1997: 6).

Taking into account the interest that existed at that time in the development of new techniques that could be used to persuade the masses, one might say that the Spanish Civil War functioned as a testing ground for World War II in respect to propaganda in general, and radio propaganda in particular. In addition to the broadcasts produced by both Republican and Nationalist forces, several foreign stations broadcast to Spain during the war, namely the

Portuguese RCP, Radio Moscow, the German Reichs Rundfunk Gesellschaft and the Italian Radio Verdad (Ribeiro, 2005: 55–56). Only the Soviet station supported the Republicans who, in the meantime, were also involved in the production of anti-Fascist broadcasts to Italy, transmitted from Barcelona (Quintero, 1993: 364–365). The foreign stations that transmitted to Spain during the war had a relevant role in stimulating ‘hope or despair to those directly affected by combat’ (Deacon, 2008: 13) and, in some cases, did manage to influence military operations. In fact, radio broadcasting played a decisive role in the war since it was a crucial source of both propaganda and counter-propaganda attacking and denying statements made by the other side. While RCP and Radio Sevilla exposed false news aired by Radio Madrid and Radio Barcelona, the latter would uncover fallacious news disseminated by the stations that supported or were controlled by the Nationalists.

#### **A private station used for propaganda: The case of RCP**

As mentioned above, during the first period of the war, Radio Sevilla and RCP were the main stations undertaking the dissemination of Nationalist propaganda (Nunes, 1936). The latter was a privately owned station controlled by the Botelho Moniz family that was well known for its close connections with Salazar’s dictatorship. The founder of the station, Jorge Botelho Moniz, belonged to the military and would become a member of parliament during the 1940s and 1950s.

Despite the fact that Portugal stayed neutral in the war that was taking place in its neighboring country, this did not prevent RCP from assuming its unconditional support of the Nationalist forces. During the Spanish Civil War, it broadcast pro-Nationalist ‘news’ and Fascist songs, including one that referred to the ‘Fascist saviour’, attacking the ‘destructive Bolshevism’.<sup>1</sup> Propaganda programmes were aired in Spanish together with military information, which proved to be especially vital during the first few months of the conflict, particularly as it was quite easy to tune in to RCP in the Spanish regions of Extremadura, Andalucia, Castilla Leon and Castilla La Mancha. Jorge Botelho Moniz himself frequently appeared at the microphones exalting

the Nationalist forces.<sup>2</sup>

On the first day of the Nationalist uprising in Morocco, RCP aired its first extra broadcast with an expanded news bulletin on the military operations that were taking place. It did not take long for the station to go further than simply broadcasting news. It began focusing on propaganda and on becoming an important weapon in the service of the Nationalists. Botelho Moniz explained in an interview in 1936 how he had decided to use RCP to counter-attack the statements being made by the Republicans over the airwaves:

At the start, RCP provided the news unaccompanied by any commentary. Then we started to listen to the Spanish Government stations and we became aware not only of the scale of the movement but also of the Iberian intentions of the Marxists. Afterwards, the insults aimed at our country and at Rádio Clube Português started. We reacted, to show that we did not fear them ... Thus, the 'Reds' were the ones that showed us the path to take (Nunes, 1936).

This was in fact the period in which RCP started an innovative trend on the Iberian Peninsula: radio reporting. The fact that the owner of the station belonged to the military and fought on the Nationalist side as a volunteer enabled RCP to keep in 'permanent contact with the front lines and to generate, from among the different battle sites, exact knowledge of the movements taking place on the different fronts' (*Antena 9*, 1 July 1965). It was a real revolution in the provision of information via radio which had up to then been limited to reproducing the news published in newspapers (Figueiredo, 1936). The war would effectively be the engine for the development of a new style of news reporting on the radio, which began broadcasting, with a slight delay, news items originating from the front lines that would also be reported later on by both newspaper and news agencies (Pena, 2009: 85).

The long newscasts devoted to the Spanish Nationalist forces were closely monitored in the areas of conflict as they served as an important link between the various nuclei of rebels scattered throughout Spain. RCP would prove to be the only source of information and encouragement for many of these nuclei

from the beginning of the revolt since the majority of Spanish newspapers and radio stations were controlled by the Republicans. In fact, the significant support given by RCP was soon recognized by the Franquist forces. On 8 August 1936, the Portuguese consul in Huelva (a city controlled by Franco) reported to the Lisbon government the friendly attitude that then existed toward Portugal, which was mostly due to RCP transmissions (Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, 1964: 104).

The station's extensive commitment to the Nationalist cause was not limited to the production of news bulletins specifically dedicated to the military developments taking place in Spain. During the first month of the insurrection, RCP made its position clear by ferociously attacking the Madrid government and all the Portuguese who hesitated in giving support to the forces led by Franco. According to the Spanish Ambassador in Lisbon, Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz, the RCP broadcasts intimidated all those who were not openly on the side of the Falange:

There was a time when this station was operating for 36 hours without interruption, using the same vulgar and insulting tone, not only towards the Madrid government but all the Portuguese who wished their victory, who it threatened, and threatens on a daily basis, to reveal publicly, so that the police may increase the already large number of arrests and deportations of Portuguese citizens who, in a cafe or at a news stand full of fantastic news, express their doubts regarding the truth of such information (Martin, 1995: 158).

Curiously the ambassador had been at the RCP studios a few weeks before the insurrection in Morocco, where he gave a speech targeted at the Spanish exiles living in Portugal. He then appealed to their good judgment at a time when many were already involved in conspiracy movements against the Second Republic (p. 22). Shortly afterwards, the ambassador's relationship with the broadcaster changed radically, and he would repeatedly protest against the tone of the transmissions. The Portuguese government would always answer his protests stating that it could do nothing since RCP was a private station. This was, of course, an ironic response since at the time Portugal was under a dictatorship and all information was controlled by

censorship, forms of ownership and repression (Ribeiro, 2011). Furthermore, a few months before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, the government had passed new legislation intended to increase their control over all the news disseminated in the country, which resulted in tight limitations on the liberty of expression (Pena, 2007: 36).

Despite all the British pressure put on Portugal for it to stay neutral, Salazar never hid his satisfaction with the end of the Spanish Republic. It was in this light that Jorge Botelho Moniz considered that the RCP, by defending the insurrection in Spain, was mainly fighting for Portuguese interests. He himself assumed that this was how he perceived the role of his radio station:

'Daddy' Stalin sent his messenger Tito to Spain, well accompanied in order to try to implant a communist Iberia. In this situation, Rádio Clube Português took sides. And this is when the true war of the airwaves started. But we did not take sides with any Spanish faction. We fought for Portugal and for all those embodying ideas common to the two countries.<sup>3</sup>

The Nationalist and patriotic discourse was at the center of the ideology irradiated by RCP. Jorge Botelho Moniz, as a high ranking official of the Estado Novo, considered communism a threat to mankind and particularly to Portugal. This led him to not only openly combat communism through the airwaves, but also to participate in several anticommunist rallies that took place in Lisbon and Porto during the summer of 1936 (Santos, 2003: 64). Furthermore, he also became involved in the foundation of the Portuguese militia – Legião Portuguesa – and of the 'Viriatos': a corp of volunteers that participated on the side of Franco in the Spanish Civil War.

The RCP news provided extremely important strategic guidelines regarding the progress of the Nationalist forces in the direction of Madrid. An emblematic example of this took place during the siege of the Alcazar of Toledo, where an insurgent group loyal to Franco was located. At a time when the stations owned by the Madrid government were already reporting victory in Toledo, RCP intercepted a speech by a Communist MP in Madrid which

mentioned that Toledo had not yet been conquered by the Republicans as claimed by the stations in their possession. The Portuguese station rushed to air the news:

The brave defenders of the Alcazar of Toledo have put to flight all the attacking 'reds'. Foreign war correspondents in Madrid are prohibited from visiting the front at Toledo, to ensure they do not become aware of the daily series of defeats.<sup>4</sup>

It was a decisive piece of news in the counter-propaganda effort and gave new impetus to those loyal to Franco. As Jorge Botelho Moniz stated, this was the most significant episode in the participation of RCP in the Spanish Civil War:

What impressed me most, to date, of all the episodes of this war was the undisputed fact that Rádio Clube Português will be forever linked to the biggest event of the war of reconquest: the already legendary resistance of the Alcazar of Toledo! On the day that the government forces savagely blew up the first mine at the Alcazar of Toledo they fed the red broadcasters the news that it had surrendered. As Toledo was not a key objective in the march on Madrid and the only motive was to arrive in time to save the heroic defenders of the Alcazar – General Franco ordered the suspension of the advance. This was when we intercepted a speech in Madrid by Margarida Nelken, a Communist MP, encouraging the militiamen departing for Toledo, which ended by saying: 'Now boys, let's go to conquer the Alcazar.' Obviously if they had to go and conquer the Alcazar this was because the Alcazar was not yet won ... Radio Clube broke the news, and the troops resumed their advance towards Toledo (*Rádio Semanal*, 28 November 1936).

In a war of counter-propaganda, the information broadcast by RCP proved decisive for the Franquists. After it became known that the Republicans had not yet succeeded in their attempt to conquer the city, a Nationalist military unit led by General Varela moved toward the Alcazar and joined the rebels who were struggling to repel the forces loyal to the Madrid government. In addition to its reports refuting that Toledo had fallen to the Republicans, RCP encouraged the forces loyal to Franco to continue their struggle: 'We have secure information to believe that the heroic defence continues beneath the

ruins of Alcazar. And, if so, the flag of the “reds” will soon disappear’ (*Antena* 11, 1 August 1965).

This case clearly illustrates the value of radio as an instrument of counter-propaganda. It was common, at various stages of the conflict, for RCP to deny news reported by the stations held by Republicans, including Radio Madrid, Radio Barcelona, and Radio Valencia. These, in turn, contradicted much of the information broadcast by the stations serving the Falange. This clearly demonstrates the real ‘war of the air waves’, which was then a totally new phenomenon. Before the Spanish Civil War, no one could have foreseen how important broadcasting would become in the development of military operations. But after the outbreak of the war, this was recognized by a Portuguese journalist, Leopoldo Nunes, who reported the advances of the Nationalists for the newspaper *O Século* and who did not hide his fascination with the role that was then being played by radio:

Nobody foresaw, I am certain, the enormous and decisive role of broadcasting in the nationalist revolution. In between the records, the talks on literature or on science, [and] the concerts ... and during the news bulletins ... who could foresee that a hideous struggle ... between falsehood and truth would take place? Who would say that through the wireless the world or even the Spanish in their own homes would be deceived or enlightened? How could one imagine that the news aired by ‘Rádio Clube Português’ would ... save the stronghold of Toledo and its heroic defenders? (Nunes, 1936: 8–9)

RCP’s support for the Nationalist forces remained unchanged to the end of the war, as it frequently reported on military movements and military attacks on Republicans, whom it dubbed ‘barbarians’, ‘reds’, ‘anti-Nationalists’, ‘Marxists’, ‘Muscovites’, etc. The station, as a rule, emphasized all war atrocities committed by the Republican forces, especially attacks on churches and houses of charity, seeking to demonstrate that the war pitted civilization against barbarism, Christianity against atheist Marxism. This Crusade ideal was in fact central to the propaganda of Franco’s forces (Deacon, 2008: 14) and it was heavily echoed by the RCP broadcasts.

The language used to characterize the two fighting forces was quite different. While the Republicans were regarded as barbarians who destroyed all and everyone that opposed them, the forces of Franco were generally characterized as having a strong human component, which led them to fight for the pacification of Spain, and they were considered true 'patriots' and 'saviours'. Such language was similar to that which would also be used by Radio Verdad after the start of its transmissions on medium wave in February 1937. This station would become one of the most important sources of information on the Franco forces. Radio Verdad relied on 'black propaganda', hiding its origins and trying to lead listeners to believe that it broadcast from Salamanca (Quintero, 1993: 366). This technique would be used later on by several stations during World War II.

Moreover, the use of readers from the countries to which broadcasts were addressed – a practice that also became common during World War II – was tested during the Spanish Civil War. RCP hired several Spanish speakers, two of whom, Marisabel de La Torre de Colomina and Santiago Tarodo Fortes, became well known for their performance at the microphone reporting on the evolution of the conflict. The former was particularly emblematic and, in September 1936, she was given the honour of appearing on the front page of *Rádío Semanal*, a weekly publication specializing in radio (*Rádío Semanal*, 12 September 1936).

Well-known pro-Franco Spanish intellectuals and officials of the Falange also appeared frequently at the microphones delivering patriotic speeches (Pena, 2009: 78, 81). The use of Spanish nationals in RCP's broadcasts had two crucial advantages: not only did they communicate in Spanish – solving any possible difficulties of understanding – but they also established a stronger relationship with their Spanish listeners, avoiding the popularization of the idea that they were strangers demonstrating against the Second Republic. In this field, the Spanish Civil War also served as a testing ground to better harness the potential of radio broadcasting as a propaganda tool.

During the military conflict, the station also became known for organizing charity campaigns aimed at collecting donations to be sent to the Spanish population living in territories under the control of the Falange (*Antena* 14, 15 September 1965). During the winters of 1937, 1938 and 1939, several appeals were launched for the Portuguese to help their neighboring country that was 'fighting against the communist occupation'.

RCP's commitment was soon recognized by the Nationalist press. Less than one month after the military uprising had taken place in Morocco, the newspaper *O Faro de Vigo* published an article in which it exalted the Portuguese station and its founder:

Among all these stations there is Rádio Clube Português, where a glorious retired captain of the Portuguese army spends hours every day and night telling Portugal, Spain and the world how the Spaniards are fighting, the advance of events, how the nationalist army is progressing, recovering and pacifying Spain and how all the nations are reacting to the event. This brave and glorious Portuguese military man sitting before the microphone in Lisbon has given over his brain, heart and soul to describing to the world how the Spaniards are fighting for the cause of civilization and culture of the Iberian Peninsula, placing his life at the service of humanity through radio ... Portugal's Broadcasters: You are doing a great service to Spain. You are letting the world know how the Portuguese soul vibrates with the gesture of the nationalists who inhabit our lands (*Faro de Vigo*, 14 August 1936).

As recognized by Jorge Botelho Moniz, all the help given by RCP to the Falange received 'the kind support of many official entities' (*Antena* 10, 15 July 1965). In fact, although the Portuguese government did not publicly state its support of the propaganda being undertaken by RCP, off-the-record, Salazar's regime praised everything that was done to promote Franco's victory. Moreover, despite the Lisbon regime's attempt to erase from history the Portuguese involvement in the Spanish Civil War, after Franco's rise to power, the role played by Botelho Moniz would not be forgotten, and he was paid tribute in Salamanca.

## **Portuguese state-owned broadcaster: Praising Franco and promoting neutrality**

Compared to RCP, the state-owned Emissora Nacional had a much more modest role in the Spanish Civil War since its actions were tied to the official government strategy of non-intervention, despite the fact that the adoption of this position by Salazar had 'less to do with principles and more with the need to avoid greater evils' (Salazar, 1943: 313).

In practical terms, the Emissora Nacional adopted a less biased standing in terms of news but, at the same time, it greatly increased anti-Communist propaganda. Moreover, the length of newscasts was increased in October 1936 and later on, in 1937, a daily news bulletin entirely devoted to the Spanish war was created. These special bulletins were read by a Spanish citizen who had previously been working in the station's music section (Abreu, 1996: 130).

All the news concerning the Spanish Civil War would be written in order to make it clear that the victory of the Falange was extremely important since it was usually framed as being the only way to save the Iberian peninsula from the dangers of communism. Emissora Nacional's alignment with Franco was quite visible since, as mentioned by the chairman of the station in a letter addressed to Salazar, all news pieces considered inconvenient would not be broadcast. Nevertheless, contrary to RCP, and in order to avoid diplomatic incidents, on some occasions Emissora Nacional also broadcast news of advances of the Nationalist forces, which enabled the Portuguese state to maintain its appearance of neutrality at least at times considered more sensitive:

It was my understanding that since Emissora Nacional was an official post, news about the events should be given so as to serve the political interests of Portugal ... but in a manner that releases the Portuguese Government, prudently, from diplomatic complaints ... So, having been the first to know of the disaster suffered by General Sanjurjo, we hid the news since it seemed inconvenient for us. On the other hand, we

have avoided giving news of the rebels that seemed to us to be inconvenient owing to the complaints that could arise from the Spanish Government ... Anyway, we could not mimic or even slightly follow the processes of Radio Club, however sympathetic they are from the point of view of our idealism ... All news favourable to the Government of Madrid is eliminated.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the news bulletins, a daily 'Military Chronicle' was aired at 8 pm authored by Lieutenant Paiva de Magalhães who struggled to preserve some impartiality due to Portugal's official neutrality. In 1937, he was replaced by Captain Alexandre de Morais who recorded his dispatches from Spanish territory. The talks were then impregnated with Nationalist convictions which led Alexandre de Morais to praise, whenever possible, the 'pure nationalism that we must all follow, which does not look at ways but only aims to make the Homeland greater: "Portuguese Nationalism"'.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, contrary to the editorials aired on RCP, the state broadcaster's military chronicles used a more sober language, even though they did not hide the author's ideological connections with the Falange. In other editorials aired on the station, the desire for Franco's victory would also be openly mentioned. As an example, in the 'Chronicle of international events' broadcast on 22 August 1937, while commenting on Portugal's position inside the League of Nations, the author made it clear that, although officially neutral, the country was biased toward the side of the Nationalists:

The final victory of the forces of disorder that are stirring up trouble in Spain is today not very probable. But we do not have the right to exclude that probability, without encountering the most serious, the greatest of responsibilities to generations to whom we have the duty to pass on intact the heritage of national freedom.<sup>7</sup>

Dubbed as 'reds', the Republicans would be criticized on several occasions. Moreover, Emissora Nacional always gave significant broadcasting time to anti-Communist propaganda in which the Communist regime was described as having only one objective:

The sole enrichment of the State, with gold amassed by the efforts of

factory workers, reduced to slavery, the most ignorant of forms of slavery ... They'll eat whatever is distributed to them and work continuously, with the only stimulus for work being to remain alive (Matos, 1938).

Due to the Christian affiliation of most of the Portuguese population, another strategy used by the state broadcaster to disseminate the importance of Franco's victory among its listeners was to describe alleged atrocities committed by the Republicans during the war, particularly those against priests and religious buildings:

The atrocities of the Reds cannot be compared, even slightly, with the most barbaric acts committed by the wildest of peoples. Here are just a few examples: the communists murdered 180 people with axes and knives at Baena convent, including the priest of St. Maria Mayor, women and children. Two peasants from Malaga relate the murder of over 400 people, who were thrown into wells with weights on their feet or tied to the tails of horses and dragged through the streets. The communists burned 40 people in a closed church in Rosal de la Frontera. The special correspondent of 'Journal', Emile Gondroyer, states that the Reds locked 30 men, women and children in the prison, threw petrol through a window and then threw in lighted matches, burning everything. The archbishop of Tarragona and the bishop of Lérida were murdered. In Tarragona, eight priests were shot: the communists smashed the belly of a friar with their feet and then shot him. Priests were beheaded and their heads dragged through the streets. Often, children took part in the killings ... In Barcelona, the Cathedral of Santa Ana was burned. The fifteenth century church of Santa Maria del Mar was destroyed. The world is looking at Spain. The wires run between Moscow and Madrid, and the target is a universal revolution.<sup>8</sup>

While these chronicles indicated total alignment with the Nationalists, in internal reports Emissora Nacional would always mention that it was being quite impartial in its news coverage of the events taking place in Spain. Nevertheless, after the end of the war, several chronicles mentioned that Portugal, including its State broadcaster, had a very discreet but very important role in the outcome of the war (*Rádio Nacional*, 29 January 1939). By doing so, Emissora Nacional publicly assumed the double role that it had played during the military conflict: promoting the Falange and simultaneously

being the visible facet of Salazar's non-intervention policy that had been agreed after strong British diplomatic pressure. Moreover, after the war, there was clear interest in covering the action of the new regime implemented in Spain, which explains why news bulletins occupied 17 per cent of the state broadcaster's programming in 1939, compared with the previous years and the ones that followed, when that percentage was always under 10 per cent (Ribeiro, 2005: 285–286).

## **Conclusion**

The use of radio as a means of spreading propaganda and counter-propaganda was tested during the Spanish Civil War since it was a technology whose potential was not yet fully known. Another new trail blazed by this new medium at that time was that it opened the way for the implementation of propaganda strategies that enabled countries to directly interfere in military conflicts taking place outside their borders.

The case of RCP illustrates how foreign stations were able to take an active part in conflicts taking place in other states, spreading news of strategic importance to one side of the conflict and information that sought to demoralize the enemy forces. In the case of the Spanish Civil War, this was visible with the Portuguese stations, whose broadcasts could be listened to in most Spanish provinces as well as other stations, namely the Italian Radio Verdad and the German Reichs Rundfunk Gesellschaft (RRG). In actual fact, the immediacy of its action and the ease of crossing borders would make radio a potent means for the promotion of ideologies in the international arena. This capacity reached its pinnacle during World War II, when various lessons learned from the Spanish Civil War were used.

One of these lessons was the use of nationals from the countries targeted by the broadcasts, which proved to be highly successful in creating a more intimate connection between the station and its foreign listeners. This technique, which is probably best known for its use on the RRG's British service, clearly had a positive effect on how the broadcasts from RCP were

received in Spain. Although in the case of Lord Haw-Haw the goals determined by the Nazi propagandists were not achieved, this lack of success had more to do with organizational problems and conflicting hierarchies inside the Third Reich (Doherty, 2000: 184; Doob, 1985: 127–129) than with the presence of British nationals or English native speakers (in the case of William Joyce) inside the German broadcasting service.

Although the Nazi international propaganda strategy was not very successful, as has been demonstrated by many historians of the war, all the propaganda techniques used during the Nationalists' conquest of Spain were followed with particular interest by Goebbels, who was very interested in understanding how radio could be used to achieve maximum effect in persuading and mobilizing the masses: two ideas that Hitler had placed at the centre of his regime. During the Spanish Civil War, it was almost impossible to draw a line between the truths and lies that were disseminated by radio. Both the Nationalists and the Republicans clearly recovered Napoleon's maxim: 'the truth is not half so important as what people think to be true' (Marlin, 2002: 57). This same line of thought was followed by Goebbels, for whom the importance of propaganda was crucial, irrespective of whether the statements on which that propaganda was based were true or false.

Two other conclusions can be drawn from the role of Portuguese broadcasters during the Spanish Civil War. The first is that the military conflict that opposed the Nationalists and the Republicans made a vital contribution to radio developing its own news style, namely reports from the war front. For the first time in Portugal, radio used its potential as an instantaneous medium and news became something more than just the regurgitation of newspaper news. Secondly, and also important in order to understand the political strategy of the Portuguese dictatorship, it was also during the Spanish Civil War that Salazar tested his neutrality policy that meant giving in to British demands to not officially support any of the parties involved in the conflict while maintaining close relations with those with which Portugal shared ideological connections. While this was clearly the case during the Spanish Civil War, it also became a strategy that the Portuguese regime would adopt

during World War II.

As this case demonstrates, and despite the pioneering broadcasts in foreign languages by the Soviet Union that began in 1929, in the mid-1930s, there was a strong emergence of the use of media to spread ideas and ideologies that could reach large transnational audiences without having to deal with the constraints imposed by borders. Since then, during times of war, many countries have used both radio and television broadcasting – and more recently the internet – to persuade foreigners of the fairness of their political views. Several examples come to mind, namely, World War II, the Cold War, and the War in Iraq, to cite just a few. In fact, although the use of transborder media to win the support of foreigners and demoralize the enemy can be traced back to the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it continues to remain a prevalent and powerful practice.

## Notes

1. RCP broadcasts in 1936 (Ventura, 1985).
2. Jorge Botelho Moniz, speech broadcast on RCP, 18 July 1936 (Ventura, 1985).
3. Jorge Botelho Moniz, speech broadcast on RCP, 18 July 1957 (*Antena 9*, 1 July 1965).
4. Excerpt from a news item broadcast by Rádio Clube Português (*Antena 10*, 15 July 1965).
5. Henrique Galvão, letter sent to Salazar (Abreu, 1996: 130).
6. Captain Alexandre de Moraes, transcript of a chronicle broadcast on Emissora Nacional (*Rádio Nacional*, 9 April 1939).
7. Transcript of a chronicle broadcast on Emissora Nacional (*Rádio Nacional*, 29 August 1937).
8. Mário Mata e Silva, transcript of a chronicle broadcast on Emissora Nacional (*Rádio Nacional*, 19 September 1937).

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