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**THE WAR OF THE AIRWAVES IN PORTUGAL:  
FOREIGN PROPAGANDA ON SHORT AND MEDIUM WAVES, 1933-1945**

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**Abstract:**

This article focuses on the start of the "war of the airwaves" in Portugal. It provides data on the first foreign shortwave broadcasts in Portuguese, describing the background to those initial broadcasts and also analyzing their impact on Portuguese public opinion, as well as the degree of importance afforded such broadcasts by the Allies and the Axis Powers during World War II. Moreover, the article also details some of the strategies used by the warring nations to influence the editorial line of Portuguese radio stations.

**KEYWORDS:** BBC, Oliveira Salazar; Propaganda; Radio Moscow; RRG; Transborder Broadcasts.

The "war of the airwaves", which peaked during the first half of the 1940s when the propaganda and counter-propaganda strategies of the Axis and Allied powers reached full throttle, first appeared in Portugal before the outbreak of World War II. Interest in influencing Portuguese public opinion led a number of countries to seek out special relations with Portuguese radio stations and to produce shortwave broadcasts that could be listened to throughout the country, under the rule of an authoritarian regime – the Estado Novo (New State) led by Oliveira Salazar - since 1933.

On the political front, the Estado Novo was a single-party regime with the União Nacional party holding the monopoly on political activity. As Braga da Cruz states, the period of construction of the Estado Novo was marked “by the evident authoritarianism of the State, by political and socio-economic orientated leadership, administrative and police repression and by political control on the movement of workers and political opposition.”<sup>1</sup> Even so, this type of authoritarianism was different to all others since Oliveira Salazar did not see the State as an omnipotent entity. The arrangement was that the State’s power should be limited by Catholic morals, without which it would transform into a regime similar to Nazism which was deemed by Portugal’s Head of Government to be permeated with an “aggressive, excessive, hateful nationalism”.<sup>2</sup>

The Constitution approved in 1933 established a series of rights including the freedom of expression, but in practice individual rights were very limited and censorship was one of the regime’s pillars. Censorship was managed by the military from the beginning and it prevented a large share of the news from reaching the public. Texts that were totally or partially censored in the press had to be replaced since the publication of pages with blank spaces was not allowed. The public was to remain unaware of the quantity of news that was being suppressed. Between 1932 and 1936 the opposition press was totally silenced and the daily censorship routine was established.<sup>3</sup>

During the initial period of Salazar’s rule, radio broadcasting was not a main concern for the regime. In addition to the small number of receivers in the country, radio stations were mainly amateur and reached a very limited number of people.<sup>4</sup> For this reason, censorship of broadcasting only became law in April 1936. The radio landscape was then dominated by two main stations: the State-run Emissora Nacional and privately owned Rádio Clube Português. All the information broadcast by State radio was controlled and this was tightened up after the outbreak of World War II. All international news had to be authorised for broadcast by the station’s chairman. On the other hand, besides the internal censorship operating inside the station, the main news sources used by State radio were news agencies whose telegrams were also subject to censorship.

In Rádio Clube Português the control of information was also guaranteed *a priori* since the station was controlled by the Botelho Moniz family, a supporter of the regime. Rádio Clube Português played a decisive news role during the Spanish Civil War, taking the side of the nationalist forces led by General Franco against the Spanish Republic (Ribeiro: 2008).

By the start of World War II, the only other station to broadcast news, besides Rádio Clube Português and Emissora Nacional, was the Church-owned Rádio Renascença. The news bulletins of that station were a summary of the news reported in the newspapers since the station did not have its own reporters. All the other smaller stations were forbidden from broadcasting news bulletins<sup>5</sup> and all texts read during programmes that could be considered news had to be authorised in advance by the station's censor. A censor on the station staff became mandatory following a decree law published on 21 September 1939. In fact, the regime took advantage of the outbreak of World War II to exercise greater control over the radio stations. The new legislation limited private broadcasting to those stations holding special authorisation from the Government, and compelled such stations to "bear the costs of having a Government inspector permanently on their premises."<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the smaller stations that operated in the regions of Lisbon and Porto were forced to share the same frequency, dividing the broadcasting schedule among them.

This media landscape paved the way for foreign broadcasts to achieve widespread recognition in Portugal. If it had not been for Salazar's censorship-based media policies the public could have relied on news aired by the local stations or published in the local press. However, since both newspapers and radio stations only reported the news permitted by the censors, a thirst for more news was created and that could only be satisfied by listening to foreign stations. The BBC was "by far the most popular"<sup>7</sup> of all those broadcasting to Portugal, as will be detailed below.

## **The First Foreign Broadcasts**

The Soviet Union had been the first country to broadcast in foreign languages and it was also the first to broadcast in Portuguese. Lenin swiftly understood the importance that radio could acquire as a means of internal and external propaganda. He fervently promoted the development of broadcasting through the creation of a radio laboratory that started experimental broadcasts in 1919 (Wasburn, 1992: 3).

A decade later, a department for foreign languages was created within the Soviet broadcasting system and Radio Moscow was formally inaugurated in October 1929. By the end of that year the foreign section of Radio Moscow aired programmes in French, English and German and broadcasts in those languages became daily during 1930. "Within three years, regular broadcasts in Czech, Hungarian, Italian, Spanish, and Swedish had been added, along with occasional programmes in Turkish and Portuguese" (Wasburn, 1992: 5).

There is not much evidence to demonstrate how Radio Moscow was received in Portugal at the time. Its popularity was not noticeable for several reasons. Firstly, broadcasts were occasional and did not create listening habits. Secondly, Soviet foreign broadcasts did not generally "take account of different national and cultural conditions and ways of life" (Whitton, 1942: 6). They were dedicated to spreading the Bolshevik ideology, which made them mostly of interest to those who supported communism which had been identified by Salazar as the main threat to humanity. Moreover, after the political police imprisoned the main communist leaders in Portugal in 1935, the Communist Party would remain poorly organised up to the beginning of the 1940s (Pereira, 1999: 145-146).

To support the idea that broadcasts from Moscow played no important role in Portugal at the time, the official history of the Portuguese Communist Party does not make any mention of any significant role for Radio Moscow during the 1930s. Furthermore, during the early 1930s the number of radio receivers in Portugal was so small that no station could have had many regular listeners. In

1933, when the first news bulletins in Portuguese were broadcast,<sup>8</sup> only 15,973 receivers were legally registered in the entire country (Ribeiro, 2005: 140). Even so, in the months that preceded the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, which was a period when the Estado Novo shifted to a more reactionary phase, the political police issued a warning that Radio Moscow was broadcasting in Portuguese once a week, on Thursdays at 10:30 pm.<sup>9</sup> The broadcasts were directed through shortwave transmitters and also reached the African colonies.

### **The Start of Broadcasts by the Axis Powers**

Broadcasting would also play a particularly important role in Germany in the internal and external championing of the new regime, just as it had in the Soviet Union. Following Hitler's rise to power in 1933, Goebbels set up a gigantic propaganda structure aimed at cultivating confidence in the National-Socialist regime and cementing its recognition in the international arena. The Olympic Games of 1936 were used, considering the need for international recognition, as a means of showing the world the supremacy of the Aryan race and the German system of organisation. The heavy investment made in the Games included them being broadcast on radio. "During the 16 days of the Olympic Games 2500 reports were broadcast in 28 languages" (Zeman, 1964: 110), including Portuguese. It was an incredible vehicle for propaganda, particularly since it was the first time arrangements had been made for the simultaneous reporting of the Games.

The shortwave system, which was used "to supplement the reports of foreign broadcasters and to enlighten those countries who did not send their own reporters" (Zeman, 1964: 111), was a success for the National Socialists who received messages of praise from several foreign radio representatives. Furthermore, the Portuguese considered the reporting work of the Germans to be proof of German superiority in radio broadcasting. The 20 June edition of the *Rádio Semanal* (a weekly publication specialising in medium and shortwave broadcasts) did not hold back in its praise for the previously unknown capacity of German radio to broadcast the Games to almost the entire planet.<sup>10</sup>

Besides being the country that invested most in broadcasts in Portuguese during the 1930s, Germany was the most interested of all the major powers in developing regular contact with the State-run Emissora Nacional station. The Germans clearly dominated this period of propaganda, with a reach that extended beyond radio to include other cultural activities. Throughout the 1930s, the German diplomatic representation invested in the production of literature for different types of target public. The main target public was “military personnel and the forces of public order, those connected to universities and technical fields, and those working in the tax field. Journalists and artists were also targeted, but the Germans’ had less success since those groups predominantly supported the English” (Telo, 1989: 14). Moreover, employees of the Emissora Nacional and the National Propaganda Secretariat (SPN) visited Germany and staff of the German radio station also made visits to Lisbon (Ribeiro, 2005: 201-203). Fernando Pessa, one of the first presenters of Portugal’s official radio station, was invited to visit the *Reichs Rundfunk Gesellschaft* (RRG) in 1938, after having receiving training in the Latin-American section of the BBC in February and March of that year. He later related that he was very impressed with German radio’s organisation.<sup>11</sup>

German shortwave broadcasts in Portuguese started in 1936 and were the first to have any impact on Portugal. The actual impact was, however, limited to a restricted group of people since the number of people owning radio sets at the time was still very small. Nevertheless, the German broadcasts in Portuguese were reported in the press and they received considerable attention from radio enthusiasts. Following the end of the Berlin Games, the transmission of news bulletins in Portuguese resumed in 1937 (Balfour, 1979: 37). Besides reaching the African colonies, the broadcasts could also be tuned into mainland Portugal. The same was true for the broadcasts transmitted to Brazil. It is, however, difficult to accurately know if reception conditions were satisfactory since all historical sources, particularly the Estado Novo’s official archives and newspapers published at the time, only began to focus on the broadcasts from Berlin in the months preceding the outbreak of war. By the beginning of 1939, the schedules for shortwave broadcasts published in *Rádio Semanal* mentioned a daily news bulletin aired during the evening that could be listened to in

Portugal.<sup>12</sup> On a number of occasions, the British Ambassador in Lisbon expressed his concern regarding this bulletin and the impact it could have on influencing the Portuguese public opinion.

As the “phoney” war was coming to an end and Hitler was preparing his attack on Britain, the Germans started to advertise their broadcasts to Portugal in the main national newspapers<sup>13</sup> as well as in the German propaganda magazine, *A Esfera*. Investment in broadcasts also rose sharply during this period. There were two news bulletins of fifteen minutes each at the beginning of August 1940, at 6:45 pm and 9:45 pm. A few weeks later the service had already grown to four news bulletins (also of fifteen minutes) at 6:45 pm, 9:45 pm, midnight and 2:00 am and two programmes on current affairs at 11:30 pm and 2:15 am.<sup>14</sup> Later in that year, in December, the broadcasting hours were much improved for both news (5:45 pm, 7:32 pm, 8:45 pm, 11 pm and 1 am) and programmes (9:30 pm, 10:30 pm and 1:15 am).<sup>15</sup> This shift in schedule allowed German radio to broadcast two news bulletins and one programme during the peak radio listening hours of that time.

The Axis powers’ shortwave broadcasts to Portugal were not limited to those produced by the RRG. The Italians had been broadcasting a news bulletin in Portuguese since January 1938. Radio Roma, which was devised for broadcast to Latin America, had a nightly programming schedule that included a news bulletin in Portuguese. The broadcasting time frequently oscillated between 11 pm and 12:30 am. Despite the increase of the number of bulletins in Portuguese during the war, the number of listeners was low and would remain so throughout the war. The same was true for the two broadcasts in Portuguese made by the Vichy government during the period of Nazi occupation.<sup>16</sup>

### **The British Response**

The British response to the German and Italian broadcasts in Portuguese was very effective. Nevertheless, it is also a fact that the BBC broadcasts to Portugal appeared much later than those of the Axis powers. Although the BBC Empire Service was one of the first in the world to produce regular broadcasts

aimed abroad, the usage of radio broadcasting in foreign languages for propaganda purposes was considered to be something that only dictatorships did and not democratic regimes, due to the derogatory meaning that the concept of “propaganda” had acquired following the First World War. This fact explains why an ongoing debate on the nature of the concept of propaganda took place within the BBC during the second half of the 1930s and the first year of the Second World War. This discussion set those who believed propaganda to be beneficial against those who considered it to solely and exclusively produce negative results (Briggs, 1970: 177). Moreover, the heavy investment in propaganda, particularly radio propaganda, by the Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini dictatorships generated a direct association in people’s minds between “dictatorship” and “propaganda”.

The association of these two concepts explains why the BBC only started to broadcast in a foreign language in January 1938, beginning with its Arabic Service. This Service was created to counterattack Radio Bari (Winston, 2005: 286), a station operated by the Italians that, besides promoting the fascist ideology, frequently reported events that had not taken place. Such a strategy was based on Goebbels’ philosophy, where the fact that the information was true or false was totally inconsequential provided that the lie could not be exposed. According to the Propaganda Minister of the Third Reich, “the policy of the news [...] is a weapon of war; its purpose is to wage war and not to give out information” (Doob, 1985: 139).

The BBC, on the other hand, advertised itself as opposing policies such as the airing of false news. Furthermore, contrary to its rival stations, the BBC had to deal with a funding shortage, which meant that each language service it established “involved discussion on a supplementary budget” with the Foreign Office (Briggs, 1970: 177).<sup>17</sup> The first broadcasts in Spanish and Portuguese began in March 1938, following one such discussion. Those broadcasts were directed towards Latin America with the goal of attacking the anti-British propaganda that was being disseminated in the region at that time by the Germans. Nonetheless, of the three hours of programmes broadcast to Latin



America only the news bulletins were in the local languages - all the talks and discussions were aired in English (Whitton, 1942: 34).

Later on, Chamberlain's speech during the Munich crisis was broadcast on 27 September 1938 in French, German and Italian (Salt, 1942: 39). "The BBC, for the first time, directly addressed Germans and Italians" (Whitton, 1942: 40) and, from then onwards, broadcasts to Europe were a regular occurrence as the Corporation finally established its European Service. Nevertheless, despite the multiple foreign services that were created in the months that preceded the beginning of World War II, the BBC had to deal with a lack of transmitters and also a lack of qualified staff to work on the foreign broadcasts, in particular "English switch censors who could understand foreign languages and English sub-editors" (Briggs, 1970: 177). Despite the issues that were raised inside the BBC, the range of countries covered by the broadcasts rose from six to fourteen during 1939, including Portugal and Spain, with the aim being to counterattack the German RRG. In actual fact, shortwave broadcasts to the Iberian Peninsula only began on 4 June 1939.

In the months preceding the start up of those broadcasts, the creation of the new service was the focus of attention of both the British and Portuguese authorities for different reasons. The Ambassador in Lisbon, Sir Walford Selby, was aware of the effective work that the Germans were doing on the propaganda front in Portugal and issued several alerts regarding the low profile of the work being carried out by the British in this field. At the end of 1938, he requested that the Foreign Office put pressure on the BBC to broadcast, at the very least, a regular news bulletin to Portugal.

The situation in Portugal is fittingly described by Asa Briggs' statement referring to other regions, "it was from the Empire not from Westminster that the first cries of alarm about the deficiencies of the British propaganda were heard" (Briggs, 1970: 7). Before the matter became a concern in London it already existed in the Lisbon Embassy and in other British embassies throughout Europe.

Influencing Portuguese public opinion was a critical area of focus for all foreign propaganda services operating in Portugal. On the British side, besides counterattacking German propaganda, getting the message across to the Portuguese public was particularly important for two very important reasons. First of all, the Estado Novo seemed to be ideologically closer to the continental authoritarian regimes, a fact that made it possible for some sections of the Portuguese elite to advocate a closer relationship with Germany. On the other hand, London was well aware of Franco's proposal to Salazar to sign a Treaty of Non-Aggression. This proposal, which was submitted in September 1938 to the Head of the Portuguese Government, was very well received by the British authorities. Besides establishing that no attack should be launched against Spain from Portuguese territory and vice-versa, the proposed text also mentioned Franco's intention of remaining neutral if a war in Europe were to take place (Telo, 1987: 35).

Salazar's delay in answering that proposal led the British Government to question the Portuguese Ambassador in London, Armindo Monteiro, on the subject and to put a certain degree of pressure on Portugal to sign the deal, since it would guarantee a neutral Peninsula. It was only after the intervention by the Foreign Office in January 1939 that Salazar agreed to negotiate with Franco. That fact was a clear signal that Lisbon was giving "priority to the alliance with England" (Telo, 1998: 138). The official signing ceremony of the Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression took place on 17 March 1939, giving Portugal the role of "an intermediary between Spain and the western democracies" (Telo, 1998:10).

Against that background, Sir Walford Selby considered broadcasts by the BBC to be essential for strengthening propaganda activities in Portugal. This issue was also on the agenda of the Foreign Office, which deemed the expansion of shortwave broadcasts to Portugal, as well as to other European countries, to be essential:

His Majesty's Ambassador at Lisbon has recently urged the B.B.C. should do broadcasts in Portuguese for Portugal. The

Germans broadcast every evening extremely propagandist material and Sir Walford Selby thinks it would be of the greatest advantage if the B.B.C. could follow these German broadcasts in Portuguese with a news bulletin on our usual objective and accurate line.<sup>18</sup>

For the British Government the need to compete with German transmissions was urgent, despite the fact that the RRG broadcasts were neither well known nor much appreciated in Portugal. Nevertheless, German propaganda supremacy in Lisbon had reached the London press, as pointed out by Armindo Monteiro in his correspondence with Salazar:

The Foreign Office's aim with the creation of this service is to counteract German propaganda in Portugal, which a number of newspapers here – such as the front page of today's edition of the *News Chronicle*, for example – are reporting to be insistent, widespread and insidious. The B.B.C. shall adopt German methods, distributing programmes in Portugal of its broadcasts recorded in Portuguese. It seems that the same system is going to be used in Spain.<sup>19</sup>

While the BBC was waiting for the arrival of transmitters that would enable broadcasts to more countries, the Foreign Office did not want to wait and was very interested in the possibility of “broadcasts in Portuguese for Portugal even before the new shortwave transmitters were available by the rearrangement of programmes”.<sup>20</sup> This possible course of action was being analysed while the British Government was attentively monitoring Lisbon's stance towards the Treaty proposal made by Franco. The issue of broadcasting to Portugal was discussed at the BBC Board meeting on 12 January, at which the Governors decided to inform the Foreign Office that they were ready to undertake the broadcasts as soon as the Government expressed its official interest in the service and made the financial arrangements considered necessary to support it.<sup>21</sup>

Besides the internal problems which had to be solved before the launch of broadcasts to Portugal, the BBC was also concerned with the lack of shortwave receivers available in the country. This issue led Sir Noel Ashbridge, Controller of Engineering, to warn that the potential number of listeners that could be reached in Portugal was very low.<sup>22</sup> The problem was on the agenda of Malcolm Frost, Director of the BBC's Overseas Intelligence Department, who visited Lisbon during January 1939, discussing the matter with the staff of the British Embassy. Fearing that Frost might advise otherwise, Sir Walford dispatched a telegram to the Foreign Office in which he strongly advocated daily Portuguese news bulletin on shortwave as soon as possible. The Ambassador stated that it was considered to be high priority in Lisbon since the Germans were already transmitting a daily bulletin to Portugal, which aired from 8.45 pm to 9 pm.<sup>23</sup>

Both the German and British interest in Portugal can only be explained by the nature of its political regime, its geographical location and by its relationship with Franco's Spain. The number of wireless receivers was low compared to most European countries and if the number of potential listeners were indeed the only significant factor then broadcasts to Portugal would not have been considered priority. According to official figures, Portugal possessed a total of 89,300 receivers in 1939, which meant an average of one set per 76 individuals. It is known that this number is not accurate since many individuals did not register their sets to avoid paying ownership tax. In any case, even taking into account the existence of a few thousand clandestine receivers, it is clear that the number of potential listeners was not as high as that of other countries since Portugal had the lowest number of radio sets in Western Europe with the sole exception of Luxembourg.<sup>24</sup>

Therefore the swift investment made in the BBC Portuguese Service was politically motivated, a hypothesis backed by the fact that the British Embassy in Lisbon was very concerned that the Estado Novo might not support the British in the crisis situation that was becoming more inevitable and foreseeable as time progressed. Since the Portuguese press was under the absolute control of the official censor, receiving instructions directly from the Ministry of the Interior,

“if the Portuguese Government were in the grip of its Germanophile elements, broadcasting would be the only means of reaching the Portuguese public.”<sup>25</sup>

In February 1939, a committee appointed by Sir Walford Selby provided a written synthesis of the importance of British broadcasts to Portugal. The committee was composed of the Consul A.H.W. King; M. Cheke, Press Attaché to the Lisbon Embassy; S. G. West, Director of the British Institute; and Malcolm Frost, Director of the BBC's Overseas Intelligence Department. The report analysed the political situation in Lisbon at the time, and it stated that it would be very easy for the press to become dominated by pro-German elements due to the limited amount of British news available in Portugal at the time. According to the report, only one newspaper received a barebone Reuters' service, which made it very difficult for the Portuguese to learn British views.

The committee considered a daily Portuguese news bulletin by the BBC to be highly desirable underlining that it “would be of special importance in the early days of a crisis when the position of Portugal might hang in the balance.”<sup>26</sup> It therefore recommended that broadcasts should be preceded and accompanied by advertising in local papers so that they might reach as many listeners as possible from the outset.

The preparations for the broadcasts started in March. The aim was to produce a daily fifteen minute news bulletin for broadcast at 10 pm, which seemed to be the best available time that did not coincide with transmissions in other European languages. The time slot was proposed by the committee appointed by Sir Walford Selby, which meant that it was also a suitable hour for those that would presumably listen in Portugal.

The BBC broadcasts, despite their late start compared to those of the RRG, achieved widespread acceptance and a large audience right from the beginning. This fact was emphasized by Artur Agostinho, who worked as a presenter for a number of Lisbon stations during World War II:

The BBC had a large audience. It had a great deal of impact. It was listened to a lot. As soon as the BBC had Fernando Pessa it was listened to more than ever. [...] The public was fundamentally pro-Allies. [...] German broadcasts never had a large audience and had, compared to the BBC, much less influence. [...] The BBC was deemed to be the “voice of truth”. [...] It had a great deal of credibility. [...] BBC meant “you can believe it” and the BBC’s impact was very different to that of the German broadcaster which, as a matter of fact, was hardly listened to in Portugal (Artur Agostinho, interview, 9 June 2006).

The BBC’s investment in broadcasts to Portugal increased as the war progressed, as was also the case with the RRG. From September 1939 the BBC began to broadcast an information bulletin at lunchtime in addition to a news bulletin after dinnertime. Nonetheless, the growth of investment in broadcasts to Portugal was especially evident from 1941 when the Voice of London began to regularly broadcast talks and variety programmes besides the news. These new programmes began to form part of the lunchtime broadcasts from February of that year, and from 27 April they were also included in the night-time broadcasts.<sup>27</sup> The space allocated in both cases was fifteen minutes immediately following the news bulletins. The number of broadcasts to Portugal was expanded later on to three, in May 1942, and four in October 1943.<sup>28</sup>

In March 1943 the Portuguese Service underwent a major change. On 29 March, the evening news bulletin was rescheduled to 9:45 pm while the programme that followed was taken off the air and replaced by a re-broadcast of programmes in Portuguese received from the United States.<sup>29</sup> This led to protests from regular listeners as well as from the Ambassador Sir Ronald Campbell,<sup>30</sup> who had replaced Sir Walford Selby in the Lisbon Embassy in December 1940. The matter was later discussed in Washington by Viscount Halifax.<sup>31</sup> As a result, the American broadcasts were suspended in May.<sup>32</sup> In the meantime, the USA had begun its own shortwave broadcasts to Portugal at the end of 1942.<sup>33</sup> The Voice of America’s broadcasts never generated great interest and the number of listeners is estimated to have been quite low.<sup>34</sup>

## **British and German Influence on Portuguese Radio Stations**

The “war of the airwaves” also encompassed local Portuguese radio stations besides shortwave broadcasts. In addition to the exchange of programmes between foreign stations and the Emissora Nacional, which primarily occurred during the initial years of the war, (Ribeiro, 2005: 292) both the Germans and the British tried to influence the editorial orientation of Portuguese stations. These attempts, however, proved to be almost impossible with the three largest Portuguese broadcasters that operated during the entire Estado Novo regime: Emissora Nacional, Rádio Clube Português and Rádio Renascença. While Emissora Nacional was state-funded, the other two stations were the only ones authorised to broadcast advertising. This fact made them less permeable to foreign influence since they had their own guaranteed source of revenue.

The situation with regard to the smaller broadcasters was however very different - the financial difficulties they faced and the political orientation of their owners made them targets for the British and Germans, who offered subsidies in exchange for propaganda services. The stations most plagued in this regard were the member stations of the Emissores Associados de Lisboa [Lisbon Broadcasters Association], created as a result of the government decree of 1939 that forced smaller radio stations in the Lisbon region to share the same frequency. The same decree was passed with respect to Porto, where the local stations were forced to club together to establish the Emissores do Norte Reunidos [North United Broadcasters] (Ribeiro, 2005: 224).

The broadcasting of advertising by these radio station associations was forbidden, making their financial survival quite difficult and turning them into relatively easy targets for agents of foreign propaganda. Nonetheless, since all spoken content had to be approved by the censor in advance, music was the only way that the stations could show their allegiance with one of the warring sides:

Advertising on the smaller stations was not permitted. So how did the Germans and the English carry out their war of information? Through music. As the stations were poor and had meagre record collections they were supplied with music records. The British Embassy provided Anglo-Saxon music and the German Legation provided German music. [...] Music was a means of influencing people (Artur Agostinho, interview, 9 June 2006).

The British won the first “battle of music” since, similar to the situation with the press, the majority of those in charge of radio stations were pro-Allies. In fact, it was the British supremacy in conquering the support of the small radio stations that led the Germans to change their strategy. Since it was forbidden for foreigners to own radio stations, the Germans used front persons who acquired dominant positions in the small stations that belonged to Emissores Associados de Lisboa. The first broadcaster to fall under the direct influence of the Germans was Rádio Luso: this was the station where Artur Agostinho, who would later on become an announcer at Emissora Nacional, started his career:

They ended up buying the broadcasters. Rádio Luso was sold to the Germans, not directly because that was forbidden, but through a puppet – a man called Vicente Alcântara, who was working in the cinema field. I was all for the English side and so I left. [...] The British wielded heavy influence in Clube Radiofónico de Portugal and in Rádio Peninsular. [...] Clube Radiofónico was [...] owned by the Staff of Lisbon Civil Hospitals and everyone was on the British and Allied side (Artur Agostinho, interview, 9 June 2006).

Besides Rádio Luso, the Germans also acquired a dominant position in Rádio Voz de Lisboa by means of a contract that was signed with the station during the early years of the war. Both stations aired many German songs in their regular programming.



The British propaganda machine in Lisbon was, of course, uncomfortable with this situation. In 1943, following the favourable military developments for the Allies, the British managed to reverse the bond that existed between the owner of Rádio Voz de Lisboa and the Germans. Using an editor of the *O Século* newspaper, who was put in charge of broadcasts during 1943, the British managed to influence the editorial line of the station, which publicly presented its new programming strategy in September of that year. The station took on the mission of producing “Atlanticist” programmes; i.e. those which would serve the purpose of creating proximity between the nations that had an Atlantic shoreline. The broadcast that inaugurated this new programming strategy was widely advertised in the *O Século* newspaper and it was attended by representatives from Brazil and the USA.<sup>35</sup>

Following the alteration of its editorial line, the station requested official authorisation to change its name to Emissões Atlântico (Atlantic Broadcasts). The request was not granted and therefore the station started to present itself as “Rádio Voz de Lisboa – Emissões Atlântico”, which was subsequently considered to be an infringement of the law. As a consequence, the station was placed under the regime of “total censorship” for an entire month:

Once the State had satisfactorily concluded that the “Voz de Lisboa” station had deliberately disobeyed prevailing orders, its programmes were placed under total advance censorship, from the introductory words to the closing piece. All content had to be submitted to and approved by the official censor at least 48 hours before airing. This imposition shall remain in place for a set period of time, long enough to assure us of the station’s good conduct.<sup>36</sup>

Despite the problems that the station’s alignment with the Allies was causing, Rádio Voz de Lisboa continued to challenge the local authorities over the months that followed. In November, it organised a party to celebrate the inauguration of its new studios. Representatives of the countries “with an Atlantic Ocean shoreline” were invited.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, the station logo was an image of a caravel sailing in the Atlantic Ocean. Only four countries were

identified on the logo, besides the name of the ocean: Portugal, Britain, United States and Brazil. Moreover, the station's name had the words "Voz de Lisboa" in small letters and "Emissões Atlântico" in capital letters, a fact that was a clear contravention of the findings of Inspector Diogo Vaz Couceiro da Costa, who was in charge of the censorship of Emissores Associados de Lisboa.

This blatant anglophile tendency of Rádio Voz de Lisboa led the authorities to take even greater control of the station's broadcasts. The conflict became unsolvable and culminated in the transfer of the broadcasting rights of Rádio Voz de Lisboa to Rádio Peninsular, also a member of Emissores Associados de Lisboa.<sup>38</sup> The latter station started to broadcast in two different time slots, occupying its own broadcasting time and that which had belonged to Rádio Voz de Lisboa.

## **Conclusion**

The broadcasts by the Germans to Portugal were the first to have any significant impact, despite broadcasts from the Soviet Union being the first to reach Portugal. The Germans had a propaganda structure in Lisbon at the start of World War II that was far superior to that of Great Britain and the transborder broadcasts in Portuguese were no exception to the rule. Furthermore, German diplomacy in Portugal was able to exert influence on the music played by various radio stations in the Lisbon region, with the aim of disseminating interest for German music and culture. The Nazi propaganda structures were well implanted in Portugal at the time that discussions in London on the creation of the Ministry of Information were still ongoing.

The Foreign Office only became interested in broadcasts by the BBC to Portugal when the Germans were broadcasting in Portuguese on a daily basis, a fact that greatly concerned the British Ambassador in Portugal. Nonetheless, the British response to the German head-start in radio propaganda would prove to be quite effective, partly fuelled by the lack of credibility of the broadcasts from Berlin which primarily focused on propaganda objectives. Moreover, the mainly pro-Allies sentiment that prevailed among the Portuguese public opinion

allowed the Voice of London to become the most listened to station during the war and also led to various stations in the Lisbon region forging links with the British Embassy and British interests in Portugal.

Portugal's neutrality as well as its geographical location and its relations with neighbouring Spain made it a principal propaganda target for both the Allies and Axis powers. This propaganda reached its apex in the radio field, given that this was the communication means that reached the largest number of people and had a degree of influence that was considerably superior to the press or cinema. Radio was the media of choice because 52% of the population were illiterate (Candeias & Simões, 1999)<sup>39</sup> and newspapers tended to arrive late outside the districts of Lisbon and Porto, due to the poor transport connections. Furthermore, films were only shown in a few cinemas in the major cities and all films had to be authorised by the censorship. Newsreels also had to be approved by the censor and they were frequently edited before being projected. Shortwave broadcasts on the other hand, besides reaching a larger number of people since the potential audience included the illiterate, were the only media not controlled by the local censorship apparatus, which explains the heavy investment in broadcasts in Portuguese, especially by the Germans and British.

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<sup>1</sup> Manuel Braga da Cruz, *O Partido e o Estado no Salazarismo*, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Oliveira Salazar, *Discursos 1935-1937*, p. 285.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Jorge Ramos do Ó, “Censura”, in Fernando Rosas and J.M. Brandão de Brito, *Dicionário do Estado Novo*, Vol. I, p. 140.

<sup>4</sup> In December 1935 there were 40,409 registered receivers in Portugal.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Decree Law 29.937, 21 September 1939.

<sup>6</sup> *Idem*, Article 3.

<sup>7</sup> Foreign Office internal report, 1944, National Archives, FO 371/39616.

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<sup>8</sup> Other sources mention 1934. It is not possible to give an exact date due to the inexistence of references to Radio Moscow in the official history of the Estado Novo. The Voice of Russia, successor to Radio Moscow, indicates 1934 as the year in which the Soviet station first broadcast in Portuguese.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Letter from Captain Agostinho Lourenço to the Ministry of Public Works and Communications, 8 July 1936, in Oliveira Salazar Archive(AOS) CO/IN-8A.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Rádio Semanal*, 20 June 1936.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Rádio Semanal*, 29 October 1938.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Idem*, 18 February 1939.

<sup>13</sup> In the major Portuguese newspaper *Diário de Notícias* the first advertisement of RRG broadcasts to Portugal was published on 27 July 1940.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Rádio Nacional*, 18 August 1940; cf. *A Esfera*, 20 August 1940.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *A Esfera*, 20 December 1940.

<sup>16</sup> Whenever advertising or commenting on the impact of foreign broadcasts in Portuguese during the war, the local papers mention two main broadcasters: the BBC and RRG.

<sup>17</sup> The BBC's shortwave operation "was financed not by the licence fee but by a direct grant from the Treasury" (Winston, 2005: 286).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Minutes from the Foreign Office, January 1939, in the National Archives, FO 395/625.

<sup>19</sup> Letter from Monteiro to Salazar, 3 March 1939, in Historic Diplomatic Archive M 97CP. The concern with reaching the Portuguese audience took precedence over the desire to broadcast to Spain. In fact, the BBC's interest in broadcasts to Spain first appeared at the time when the organization of the Portuguese Service was being considered.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Letter from Leeper (F.O.) to Graves (BBC), 6 January 1939, in the National Archives, FO 395/625.

<sup>21</sup> Letter from Graves to Leeper, 13 January 1939, in the National Archives, FO 395/625.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Letter from Leeper to Graves, 6 January 1939, in the National Archives, FO 395/625.

<sup>23</sup> Letter from Leeper to Graves, 31 January 1939, in the National Archives, FO 395/625.

<sup>24</sup> Luxembourg possessed a total of 36,945 receivers in 1939. The European country with most radio sets was Germany with nearly 14 million, followed by the United Kingdom where the number surpassed 9 million (Cf. *Rádio Nacional*, 17 March 1940).

<sup>25</sup> Letter from Selby to Leeper, 30 January 1939, in the National Archives, FO 395/625.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Report from February 1939, in the National Archives, FO 395/625.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. "Development of Portuguese Service for Europe", 1943, in the BBC Written Archives, E2/490.

<sup>28</sup> "BBC Survey of European Audiences – Portugal", from May 1943 to December 1944, in BBC Written Archives, E2/198.

<sup>29</sup> Simultaneously, the 11.45 am news bulletin was rescheduled to 08.45 am (Cf. "Development of Portuguese Service for Europe", 1943 in the BBC Written Archives, E2/490).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Minute of the Foreign Office, 29 March 1943, in the National Archives, FO 371/34691.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Telegram from Halifax to F.O., 17 April 1943, in the National Archives, FO 371/34691.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. "BBC Survey of European Audiences – Portugal", 25 May 1943, in the BBC Written Archives, E2/198.

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Michael Winch, "Report on Conditions in Portugal", January 1943, in the National Archives, FO 371/34691.

<sup>34</sup> Foreign Office internal report, in the National Archives, FO 371/39616.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Letter from A. Pires Guerreiro (Editor of *O Século*) to Diogo da Costa, 7 March 1944, in SNIT Archive, Box 1440.

<sup>36</sup> Letter from Costa to Francisco Lacombe Neves (owner of *Voz de Lisboa*), 17 December 1943, in SNIT Archive, Box 1440.

<sup>37</sup> Letter from Costa to the Director General of Post, Telegraphs and Telephones, 23 November 1943, in SNIT Archive, Box 1440.

<sup>38</sup> Letter from Amaro Vieira (Radio-electricity Office) to Costa, 17 June 1944, in SNIT Archive, Box 1440.

<sup>39</sup> The data presented refers to the year of 1940.