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(ir)Responsible historians facing colonialism during the Portuguese dictatorship (1926-1974)

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The aim of this paper is to examine what it means to be a responsible or irresponsible historian during the Portuguese authoritarian regime, through the issue of colonialism. In order to answer this question, I will begin by highlighting who defines the historian's responsibility or irresponsibility. In a democratic regime, the question of the historian's responsibility is a moral one, and the scientist can freely ask himself whether he should fight against injustice, repair debts or make amends for faults in the name of his own conscience. There is logically very little interference from the government, even if there is always some, including in democracies, as the reports by Antoon de Baets and Ruben Zeeman's Network for Concerned Historians show. In contrast, dictatorial regimes seek to restrict all forms of criticism by controlling or even censoring those who might challenge the established order. As a result of this constraint, dictatorial states will direct discourse, eliminate from the public arena what does not suit them and therefore establish what it is and is not responsible to say. The Portuguese dictatorship, which lasted from 1926 to 1974, was one of a series of states that controlled public discourse and had a very specific idea of what it was responsible to say or not. In this presentation, I will therefore take the point of view of Portuguese authoritarian power when I talk about the responsible or irresponsible historians.

How can we characterise the authoritarian power in place in Portugal in order to understand the ideology that is likely to influence the definition of historians' responsibility? The Portuguese dictatorship was an extreme right-wing nationalist regime based on Catholic values, the defence of traditions, corporatism and the idea that the imperial territories were an integral part of Portuguese territory. Led first by the military and then by civilians, with António de Oliveira Salazar and then Marcelo Caetano in power, the rulers were keen to encourage scientists who wrote a history that fitted into this ideological matrix and to punish those who opposed the government.

Now that we have defined the broad outlines of Portuguese authoritarian ideology, we need to highlight the reaction of the historical community. The challenge is to see whether historians conform to the rhetoric of those in power or not, and how they themselves perceive

their civic and scientific responsibility. Portuguese colonialism will serve as an anchor for the argument. This theme is important because it enables us to understand paradigm shifts: justifying empire would appear today to be scientifically irresponsible, whereas defending colonialism during the dictatorship was perceived by the Portuguese authorities as a responsible attitude. The issue of empire is a crucial one in Portugal's history. The authoritarian Portuguese regime in operation from 1926 to 1974 was characterised by a continuation of the colonial policy initiated by the monarchy in the modern era and not challenged by the Republic (1910-1926). As a result, I intend to show how the historian's responsibility or irresponsibility was reflected in different attitudes to the Portuguese dictatorship.

I) The Empire makes the nation. Responsible historians convinced by dictatorial ideology

To begin this point, I would like to highlight a first group that I will call the convinced historians. These are historians who are convinced that the defence of the Empire is vital to Portugal's existence as a nation and who are proud of its history. Insofar as they support the policies of the Portuguese dictatorship, they are considered by the authorities to be responsible historians who are aware that the weight of history rests on their shoulders. How does their support for government policy manifest itself?

First, these historians responded favourably to the government's call to join the Portuguese Academy of History, which was created in 1936 but really came into being in 1937. Its purpose was clearly defined in the Academy's statutes: its ambition was to defend Portugal's inalienable rights over its colonial territories, as well as to correct historical errors, including those that had been written in the 19th century. Why this century? Because it was the century of liberalism, when historians were able to develop a critical vision of national history. Insofar as the first academicians were appointed directly by the government, and only co-optation took place after 1945, this idea of a responsibility clearly assumed by the historians who were part of the Portuguese Academy of History should be emphasised. Moreover, this Academy was created as part of the double centenary of 1940, celebrating national history and, of course, the Empire. In addition, the Portuguese Academy of History was constantly invited to take part in all commemorations celebrating navigators who had participated in the Portuguese expansion, as was the case in 1960 for the five hundredth anniversary of the death of Henry the Navigator, and also in 1968 for the five hundredth anniversary of the birth of Pedro Álvares Cabral. These

historians could themselves draw attention to certain dates, as was the case with Damião Peres in 1968, who wrote directly to the President of the Council, António de Oliveira Salazar, to point out the importance of this date. As a result, these historians took these commemorations to heart, confirming the agency of historians in the defence of the Empire.

On a more occasional basis, historians could also give lectures in which they took a stand or write works in which they affirmed the need to write a history that took a stand. This was the case with António da Silva Rego's *Documentos para a História das Missões do Padroado Português do Oriente* (1947), in which he directly thanked António de Oliveira Salazar as well as Colonial Minister Marcelo Caetano, who later became President of the Council. Finally, the historian Alexandre Marques Lobato is a good example of this positioning. Born in Mozambique, he studied at the University of Lisbon and, in the 1950s, wrote numerous works defending the Portuguese Empire. He was even part of a commission set up to defend Portugal in its case against the Indian Union in The Hague. As a result, all these historians have assumed their responsibility as scientists to defend government policy.

II) Becoming responsible. Rallied historians to the colonial cause

In this point, I want to highlight the importance of generational breaks within the historical community. As you are no doubt aware, the Portuguese dictatorship was characterised by its longevity and so, over the course of 48 years, many scientists of different ages wrote history. Between the first generations who were active in the 1930s and those who wrote history in the late 1960s and early 1970s, there are clear differences, particularly among those who were critical of the Portuguese dictatorship and therefore belonged to groups in opposition to the dictatorship. I will talk about the younger generations in the third part and will therefore focus on the older ones. Historians who had a formation at the beginning of the twentieth century had grown up in privileged environments where, in schools, the glory of conquests was sung as much during the monarchy as during the Portuguese Republic. Indeed, despite the changes in the political paradigm (monarchy, republic, then dictatorship), very few people criticised the existence of the Empire. There was something of a consensus on this point among historians of both the right and the left. Among the older historians who were active in the early days of the dictatorship, those who criticised the dictatorship were left-wing republicans with socialist leanings. They were not, therefore, communists, an ideology that had very little presence in Portugal in the 1920s and 1930s. Although this underground political party had long

aligned itself with Lenin and his criticism of imperialism, it was almost inaudible until the 1940s. There was a kind of hermeticism to independence thinking and these scientists could not conceive of a Portugal that was not linked to imperial territories.

As a result, historians who might have been considered irresponsible scientists in the eyes of the authorities because they were critical of the dictatorship were able to soften their stance towards the regime, particularly on the issue of colonialism. For example, two historian brothers, Jaime and Armando Cortesão, were among the most militant historians against the dictatorship in the 1930s. Jaime Cortesão led the Ligue de Paris, which organised the Portuguese opposition in France, while Armando Cortesão wrote from the UK. Both historians wrote extensively on the period of the imperial conquest and were generally so fascinated by this period that they wrote in works edited by historians close to the regime. Although Jaime Cortesão died shortly before the outbreak of the colonial war in 1961, Armando Cortesão began to move closer to power when he realised that the Empire was being hotly contested.

This historian, who had distinguished himself by his opposition to the authoritarian regime, rallied to the regime's defence, as it was unthinkable for him to envisage a Portugal without its imperial territory. He distinguished himself, for example, by defending the Portuguese vision against the historian Charles Ralph Boxer during a controversy that stirred up academic circles. Armando Cortesão took up Gilberto Freyre's lusotropical rhetoric, arguing that Portuguese colonialism was no more violent than that of other European powers, whereas Charles R. Boxer maintained that Portugal was no different from other countries. This opposition between the two historians, one Portuguese and the other British, shows how historiographical debates could also have an ideological basis: by adopting this position, Armando Cortesão was arguing in favour of Portuguese colonisation, whereas Charles Ralph Boxer was showing that Portugal was not so different, and therefore, in a way, could not resist to decolonisation.

III) Criticising the Empire. Irresponsible historians and power

I'm now going to focus on historians who were viewed unfavourably by the authoritarian authorities and being judged as scientists who were irresponsible in terms of the nation's interests. When we consider colonialism, it is clear that most of those who criticised this phenomenon were mainly on the left wing. As mentioned in the previous section, there was a generational effect, and only the younger generations who were active during the dictatorship

were highly critical of the Portuguese Empire, particularly those linked to the Portuguese Communist Party, but not exclusively.

If it's possible to pinpoint a period from which opponents began to criticise the Empire, I think the 1940s is a key moment. Young historians born in the 1910s and 1920s began to clearly criticise the position of the Portuguese government. One example is Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, who from the 1940s went on to criticise the responsible historians and in particular the causes they put forward to justify colonisation. Responsible historians emphasised the religious dimension of the conquest, stressing the crusade against the Muslim powers, while irresponsible historians focused above all on the economic and social conditions of Portuguese expansion. Vitorino Magalhães Godinho is one of these scientists, and he has twice lost his university post, not just for his considerations about the Empire but more generally because of his criticisms of the dictatorship.

What was the government's attitude to these irresponsible historians? The administration could dismiss certain people because of a law that allowed it for political reasons and the authorities also actively monitored irresponsible historians. For example, agents of the political police would draw up reports on the communications of certain historians in order to feed the files and to have elements to justify imprisonment, which could take place arbitrarily. Articles and books could then be banned. The best example of this is António Borges Coelho's *Raízes da Expansão Portuguesa*, published in 1965. It was very quickly banned by the Censorship Commission, leading to an interview by the political police, who clearly implied that the positions taken by the author in his book were untenable in the eyes of the authorities, especially in a context of colonial war. As a result, the authoritarian authorities could act vigorously if they felt that scientific activity could encourage independence movements. If the work of this historian was banned, he was also avoid from teaching in higher education.

As a result, it is clear that the historical community reacted in different ways to the ideology of authoritarian power in relation to colonialism. In addition to responsible historians and those who rallied to defend the Empire, there was a group that strongly criticised the authoritarian stance. The course of history proved that the irresponsible historians were right, and when Portugal was democratised after 25 April 1974, they were viewed in a positive light. Thanks to a coup d'état, they became the responsible historians whose analyses during the dictatorship proved to be well-founded.