

DICTATORSHIPS AND DEMOCRACIES IN GREECE, SPAIN AND PORTUGAL

TRANSITIONS AND THEIR
LEGACIES, FIFTY YEARS ON

EDITED BY Manos Avgeridis, Magda Fytili, Kostis Kornetis

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ROSA LUXEMBURG STIFTUNG
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APXEIA
ΣΥΓΧΡΟΝΗ
ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΚΗ
ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑΣ

[TABLE OF CONTENTS]

PREFACE	7
Vangelis Karamanolakis	
INTRODUCTION	11
Southern Europe's Democracies at 50: Anniversaries as Arguments Manos Avgeridis – Magda Fytili – Kostis Kornetis	
CHAPTER 1	25
Echoes of Dissent. Franco's Regime and its Opposition, 1939–1975 Ainhua Campos Posada	
CHAPTER 2	37
Fighting against the Military Dictatorship in Greece: Rethinking the Concept of Resistance Polymeris Voglis	
CHAPTER 3	49
Television: The Limits of Control in Modernising Francoism and the Estado Novo Rita Luís	
CHAPTER 4	67
Cultural Expressions of Historical Transformation in Late Twentieth-Century Portugal Luis Trindade	
CHAPTER 5	79
Transnational and International Dimensions of the Iberian Transitions Antonio Muñoz Sánchez	

CHAPTER 6	99
From Enemies to Anchors: Communist Parties in the Portuguese, Spanish, and Greek Transitions Magda Fytili	
CHAPTER 7	113
The Iberian Left and the Democratisation of the Police. Comparative Insights from Portugal and Spain Diego Palacios Cerezales	
CHAPTER 8	125
“Lost Time Is Never Found Again”: Greek Trade Unions and the Path Taken Katerina Labrinou	
CHAPTER 9	141
Democratisation and the Politics of Memory: National Reconciliation in the Third Hellenic Republic Manos Avgeridis	
CHAPTER 10	155
Ruptures and Continuities: On the 50th Anniversary of the Portuguese Carnation Revolution Miguel Cardina	
TIMELINE OF EVENTS 1973–1978	
Ioanna Vogli	
CONTRIBUTORS	169

[PREFACE]

The publication of this volume comes at the end of a cycle of reflection that began with the fiftieth anniversary of the democratic transitions in Southern Europe and gradually acquired a broader comparative horizon. For Greece, Portugal and Spain, these anniversaries were not simply an opportunity to remember the fall of dictatorial regimes. They also brought back to the foreground a series of questions that remain open: questions about the nature of those regimes, the forms of resistance that confronted them, the paths through which democracy emerged, and the ways in which those processes have been remembered, interpreted, contested, and reworked over the last fifty years.

For the Contemporary Social History Archives (ASKI), this anniversary had a special meaning. ASKI itself belongs to the world that emerged after the end of the dictatorship in Greece. Founded more than three decades ago, it was shaped by the conviction that access to historical sources, the preservation of political and social memory, and the study of the twentieth century are not matters for specialists alone. They concern a wider democratic culture: the right of citizens to know their history, to confront the traces of conflict, and to revisit the past not as something sealed and completed, but as a field still open to interpretation. In this sense, ASKI has sought over the years to function not only as an archive, but also as a place of research, discussion, and public intervention.

It was precisely from this standpoint that the anniversary of 1974 prompted us to think again about the Greek transition. But it also became clear to us that such a discussion could not remain confined within the Greek case. However necessary the national frame may be, it is not sufficient. The histories of Greece, Portugal and Spain invite us to think across borders, to place each dictatorship and each transition within a larger European and international landscape, and to examine more carefully both what brought these experiences together and what kept them apart.

This was one of the reasons why the workshop held in Athens in November 2024 was so important. Organised jointly by ASKI and the Athens Office of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, it brought together scholars and

researchers working on the three countries and opened a comparative discussion that lies at the heart of the present volume. The workshop, on which this book is primarily based, was academically coordinated by Manos Avgeridis, Director of ASKI, with organisational support from Ioanna Vogli, in collaboration with Boris Kanzleiter, Director of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation's Athens Office, and his colleagues Phoebe Daliani and Vangelis Koltsidas. The volume is thus rooted in a particularly fruitful collaboration between the two institutions. The conversation continued the following year in Madrid, in a second international meeting that returned to those questions, extended them, and brought new perspectives into the discussion. The book remains grounded in the intellectual exchange initiated in Athens, even as it also bears the mark of the broader dialogue that followed.

What does it mean, then, to return today to these three dictatorships and to the democracies that followed them?

A first point concerns the regimes themselves. Their differences are obvious and decisive. The dictatorships in Portugal and Spain were long-lasting regimes, born in the wider crisis of the interwar years and deeply marked by colonial questions, civil war, anti-communism, and the successive reconfigurations of twentieth-century Europe. The Greek dictatorship was much shorter, more fragile in its social grounding, and tied to a different historical sequence: the Cold War, the legacy of the Civil War, and the authoritarian structuring of postwar political life. Yet difference should not lead to fragmentation. It is worth asking how these regimes can be thought together without flattening them into a single model. Under what broader historical conditions did they emerge, endure, and eventually collapse? And how might we better understand them if we move beyond narratives contained by national borders?

The same question applies to resistance. Resistance was never singular. It did not speak with one voice, nor did it follow one line. It took different forms, moved through different spaces, involved different generations and political cultures. It was legal and illegal, public and clandestine, organised and improvised. It developed inside each country, but also in exile, in networks of solidarity, in the circulation of texts, people, and practices across Europe and beyond. If we are to understand how the dictatorships came to an end, then we need to think of resistance as a many-layered and shifting field, not simply as a heroic prehistory of democracy, but as a formative arena in which political actors, collective languages, and expectations about the future were forged.

A second point concerns the transitions themselves. For many years, the dominant tendency was to view these processes through reassuring narratives: peaceful passage, successful democratisation, gradual normalisation.

No doubt, each of the three countries did enter a new era, and no serious reflection on the period can ignore the importance of that rupture. But fifty years later, we are in a better position to see that there was nothing simple or linear about these passages. Transition was never just an institutional rearrangement directed from above, even where elite agreements played a major role. Nor was it the unproblematic inauguration of an ever-expanding democratic horizon. It involved tensions, hesitations, exclusions, unfinished reckonings, and difficult negotiations between continuity and change.

This becomes especially clear if one asks not only who governed these transitions, but also who pressed upon them. What was the role of social demands, popular mobilisation, and political conflict? How did issues such as justice, accountability, recognition, or the return of the excluded enter the agenda? To what extent were they contained, deferred, or reshaped? And how did the Left, defeated and persecuted under dictatorship, position itself within these new conditions? These are not marginal questions. They concern the very texture of democratic life in its formative years.

The Left occupies, for that reason, a crucial place in the discussions gathered here. Not because it offers a single interpretive key, but because its trajectory allows us to see several central dilemmas at once: the passage from illegality to legitimacy, the tension between mobilisation and institutional participation, the pressure to appear responsible and governable, the burden of previous defeats, the effort to articulate social demands within new parliamentary settings, and the cost of compromise. To follow the Left across the three countries is also to see how democracy was shaped not only by those who took office, but also by those who carried into the new era the memory of repression, the experience of resistance, and projects of transformation that did not always fit easily within the limits of the emerging order.

A third point has to do with time. More than half a century has passed since the events to which this book returns. In those decades, entire political and social worlds have risen and declined. Generations have changed. Archives have opened. Testimonies have been recorded. Studies, films, public debates, and commemorative practices have accumulated. All this means that we are no longer dealing only with the history of transition, but also with the history of how transition has been remembered. And that history too is far from unified. The meanings attributed to these democratic beginnings have shifted according to later conjunctures: periods of reform and optimism, moments of disillusionment, phases of European integration, times of crisis, and, more recently, the renewed pressure of authoritarian and far-right languages in public life.

This is why the fiftieth anniversary mattered. Not because round numbers possess some intrinsic truth, but because they create a moment in

which societies pause, look backward, and in doing so reveal something about the present. Every return to the past is also a statement about contemporary anxieties, contemporary needs, and contemporary horizons. When, in recent years, public debate in Southern Europe has been increasingly marked by xenophobia, racism, border violence, economic insecurity, and the strengthening of the far-right, it is impossible to revisit the democratic transitions innocently. We do not approach them from a neutral distance. We approach them from within a troubled present.

This does not mean that the transitions should be diminished, dismissed, or reduced to their shortcomings. On the contrary, it means that they should be examined with greater care, with greater historical precision, and with a sharper awareness of what was at stake in them. It means taking seriously the hopes they generated, the openings they created, the conflicts they left unresolved, and the legacies they handed down. It means refusing both complacent celebration and retrospective contempt.

The public discussion that concluded the Athens workshop in November 2024, although not included in the present volume, was dedicated to democracy today. This was not an accidental choice. It expressed a broader conviction running through the entire project: that the histories examined here should not concern only historians or the protagonists of those years. They also concern the societies in which we live today. They concern the ways in which we think about participation, rights, institutions, exclusion, fear, and political possibility. They also concern the language through which democracy is defended, narrowed, or reimagined.

This volume is offered in that spirit. It invites readers to revisit the dictatorships and the transitions in Greece, Spain and Portugal not as closed national stories, and not as completed passages from darkness to light, but as historical processes dense with contradiction, conflict, and possibility. To think comparatively about them is not to erase difference. It is to create a space in which differences and affinities can be seen more clearly. It is also to open a conversation about what democracy meant then, what it came to mean in the decades that followed, and what remains at stake in invoking those histories today. If the pages that follow succeed in encouraging such a conversation, then they will have fulfilled an essential part of their purpose.

Vangelis Karamanolakis

[INTRODUCTION]

Southern Europe's Democracies at 50: anniversaries as arguments

Half a century after the democratic transitions that reshaped Southern Europe, the histories of dictatorship and democratisation in Greece, Spain and Portugal remain actively contested. They are debated not only in academic work, but also in public discourse, cultural institutions, and everyday political language. In this context, anniversaries do more than commemorate. They become moments when societies return to questions of responsibility and justice, reconsider who is included in the democratic story, and renegotiate the boundaries of legitimate dissent. This volume approaches democratisation not as a straightforward journey from authoritarian rule to democratic “normality”, but as a complex process shaped by uneven tempos, social pressures, institutional legacies, and competing memories. Methodologically, this perspective avoids treating outcomes as inevitable. Politically, it highlights democracy as something continuously made and remade, and therefore always vulnerable to reinterpretation, contestation, and reversal.

In 2024, Greece marked fifty years since the fall of the dictatorship and the transition to the Third Hellenic Republic. The anniversary, organised without a single overarching state umbrella, generated a wide range of conferences, exhibitions, documentaries, and public debates. Much of this conversation nevertheless remained largely nationally framed. A broader view suggests why that frame can be restrictive. Greece's transition took place alongside major transformations elsewhere in the European South. Portugal underwent a revolutionary break after April 1974, followed by far-reaching political and social change. Spain moved toward democratisation after November 1975 through a managed and negotiated process that has often been linked to a language of consensus and, more controversially, to practices of forgetting.

Despite the central place of these histories in Europe's political self-understanding, sustained comparative work that brings the three cases into direct conversation remains less common than one might expect. This volume therefore treats comparison not as a way of ranking “successful” and “failed” transitions, but as a tool for understanding how democracies are constructed. It directs attention to how rupture is produced and contained,

how legitimacy is assembled, how institutions are refounded, how rights are expanded or constrained, and how social demands are translated into enduring political arrangements.

THE EVOLVING HISTORIOGRAPHY OF SOUTHERN EUROPEAN TRANSITIONS

Scholarship on the Southern European transitions has developed through several distinct phases. Early comparative analyses –most influentially the collective project led by O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead– conceptualised Portugal, Spain and Greece as foundational cases of late twentieth-century regime change, foregrounding elite bargaining, uncertainty and institutional “crafting” as key explanatory variables.¹ This interpretive framework intersected with broader attempts to situate these transformations within a global sequence of democratisation waves,² while structural approaches such as Nicos Poulantzas's analysis of the authoritarian crises highlighted the socio-economic contradictions underlying the collapse of the Iberian and Greek dictatorships.³

From the mid-1990s onward, the analytical focus expanded from transition to consolidation, with comparative research examining the durability of democratic institutions, party systems, and state structures across the region.⁴ Subsequent work further deepened this agenda by exploring how state capacity, policy legacies and patterns of governance evolved in the post-authoritarian decades, reinforcing the utility of “Southern Europe” as a comparative framework while also highlighting significant national divergences.⁵

Since the 1990s –and with particular intensity over the last two decades– historiography has moved beyond institutional narratives to incorporate social mobilisation, cultural change, gender relations, and everyday practices into the analysis of democratisation. Comparative work on consumption, youth culture and gendered transformations has shown how

1. Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Southern Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

2. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

3. Nicos Poulantzas, *The Crisis of the Dictatorships: Portugal, Greece, Spain* (London: Verso, 1976).

4. Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Richard Gunther, P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, and Hans-Jürgen Puhle, eds., *The Politics of Democratic Consolidation: Southern Europe in Comparative Perspective* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

5. Richard Gunther, P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, and Dimitri A. Sotiropoulos, eds., *Democracy and the State in the New Southern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

societal shifts both preceded and outlasted formal regime change, complicating linear accounts of political transition.⁶ At the same time, a growing body of scholarship has examined memory politics and the management of difficult pasts, underscoring how similar democratic outcomes emerged from markedly different trajectories of rupture, reform, and conflict.⁷

Recent historiographical interventions have therefore called for renewed comparative engagement across the three cases, arguing that while the field is now methodologically richer and thematically broader, it remains too frequently organised within national historiographical silos. Collective volumes and synthetic reflections have sought to re-embed the Iberian and Greek experiences within a shared analytical space, reassessing both the “success story” narrative of Southern European democratisation and the longer-term social and political legacies of the transitions themselves.⁸

COMMEMORATING THE TRANSITIONS: FIFTY YEARS ON

The fiftieth anniversaries of the Southern European transitions have also become significant moments of public reflection on democracy itself. Across Portugal, Greece and Spain, commemorations have extended beyond symbolic ritual to include exhibitions, conferences, educational initiatives, and cultural programming aimed at revisiting the legacies of dictatorship and democratisation. At the same time, the form these commemorations have taken reveals important differences in how each society relates to its recent past and to the meaning of the transition within contemporary political debate.

Portugal presents a somewhat different picture. The fiftieth anniversary of the Carnation Revolution has been commemorated through a multi-year programme extending from 2022 to 2026, coordinated by a national commission and involving hundreds of initiatives across the country.⁹ The memory of the April 1974 revolution continues to enjoy a broad symbolic consensus within Portuguese political culture. The revolution is widely regarded as a foundational moment of democratic legitimacy, and commemorations have

6. Kostis Kornetis, Eirini Kotsovoli, and Nikolaos Papadogiannis, eds., *Consumption and Gender in Southern Europe since the Long 1960s* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

7. António Costa Pinto and Leonardo Morlino, eds., “The Politics of the Past in South European Democracies”, *South European Society and Politics* 15, no. 3 (2010).

8. Maria Elena Cavallaro and Kostis Kornetis, eds., *Rethinking Democratisation in Spain, Greece and Portugal* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); Pamela Radcliff, Kostis Kornetis, and Pedro Aires Oliveira, “The Southern European Transitions to Democracy: A Historiographical Introduction,” *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 53, no. 1 (2023); Kostis Kornetis, *A Collective Biography of Southern European Democratization: The Age of Transitions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2026).

9. See <https://50anos25abril.pt/> (accessed 10 April 2026).

emphasised both its revolutionary rupture with the past and its enduring significance for Portuguese civic identity.

In addition to exhibitions and conferences, the commemorative programme has included large-scale travelling exhibitions, public history projects, documentary productions, and digital archives, making historical material widely accessible beyond academic audiences. Initiatives such as oral history campaigns, school-based pedagogical programmes, and participatory projects involving local communities have further reinforced the social dimension of commemoration. Such initiatives have sought to connect younger generations to the experience of dictatorship and to the values associated with the revolutionary transition.

Museums dedicated to the history of dictatorship and resistance, such as the *Museu do Aljube* in Lisbon and the National Museum of Resistance and Freedom at the former Peniche prison, have played a visible role in the commemorative cycle through exhibitions, archival projects and oral history initiatives. Public rituals also remain central to the anniversary, with marches and concerts on 25 April continuing to recreate the symbolic geography of the revolution itself in Lisbon and other Portuguese cities. These have been complemented by collective performances, public readings, and sound-based commemorations recreating the radio broadcasts and popular mobilisation of April 1974, reinforcing the experiential dimension of historical memory. Cultural institutions across the country have also hosted film cycles, theatre productions, and artistic commissions engaging with themes of dictatorship, resistance, and revolution, linking past struggles to present concerns about democracy and social justice. Yet even in Portugal, the anniversary has unfolded within a changing political landscape marked by the rise of new right-wing actors who question aspects of the post-revolutionary settlement.¹⁰

In Greece, the fiftieth anniversary of the fall of the military dictatorship in 1974 generated a wide range of academic and cultural initiatives but lacked a single overarching state framework comparable to those in Spain or Portugal. Universities, research institutions, archives, museums and cultural organisations organised conferences, exhibitions and publications reflecting on the *Metapolitefsi* and its legacies. Among these initiatives were public discussions and conferences hosted by major media institutions and cultural organisations, including a high-profile conference organised by the newspaper *Kathimerini* that brought together historians, journalists, and elite

10. Within this broader framework, see, also, the initiative “Abril É Agora”, an organisation led by the historian Fernando Rosas, which developed a cultural and political programme to mark the fiftieth anniversary of 25 April 1974: <https://abrilagora.pt/> (accessed 10 April 2026).

political actors to reflect on the legacy of the democratic transition fifty years after the collapse of the junta, forging a narrative of a “success story” of democratisation, focusing on high politics.¹¹

Other significant initiatives were the exhibition “Τομή '74. Από τη Δικτατορία στη Δημοκρατία” (The Break '74: From Dictatorship to Democracy), hosted at the National Library of Greece and organised in collaboration with the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT) and the General State Archives. Drawing on extensive audiovisual and documentary material –including photographs, censored broadcast material and archival recordings– the exhibition traced the political and cultural transformation of Greek society during the transition from dictatorship to democracy.¹² At the same time, artistic institutions addressed the authoritarian past in a broader Southern European perspective. The international exhibition “Democracy”, hosted at the National Gallery in Athens between July 2024 and February 2025, explored the relationship between art and political resistance across Greece, Spain and Portugal during the final decades of authoritarian rule and the early years of democratisation. Bringing together more than 140 artworks by more than fifty artists, the exhibition examined themes such as repression, resistance, uprising and political awakening, highlighting the role of artistic practice in struggles for democratic freedoms in Southern Europe.¹³ While the anniversary prompted renewed public discussion about the restoration of democracy and the achievements of the post-1974 political order, the commemorative landscape remained relatively decentralised. This pattern reflects the particular trajectory of the Greek transition, which combined a rapid institutional restoration of democracy with a comparatively limited development of formalised memory policies in subsequent decades.

Another important contribution to the anniversary programme in Greece was the major historical exhibition “1974 & 1944: Athens Celebrates Its Freedom”, presented at the City of Athens Arts Center in Eleftherias Park as the centrepiece of the Municipality of Athens’ commemorative events. Designed and implemented by Technopolis City of Athens in collaboration with the Contemporary Social History Archives (ASKI), the General State Archives, and the Historical Archive of the Municipality of Athens, the exhibition was historically curated by ASKI, which also developed its overall narrative structure. Bringing into dialogue two landmark moments –the liberation of

11. See the conference programme and video recordings at <https://www.lse.ac.uk/Hellenic-Observatory/Events/Conferences/metapolitefsi> (accessed 10 April 2026).

12. The exhibition is also available in digital form at <https://exhibitions.nlg.gr/exhibition/tomi-74-apo-ti-diktatoria-sti-dimokratia/> (accessed 10 April 2026).

13. See more at <https://www.nationalgallery.gr/en/exhibitions/democracy/> (accessed 10 April 2026).

Athens from Nazi occupation in 1944 and the fall of the military dictatorship in 1974– it foregrounded the city as a space of collective emotion, mass participation, and political expectation. By focusing on the shared experience of freedom regained, while also insisting on the anxieties and unresolved tensions that accompanied both moments, the exhibition linked the anniversary of the *Metapolitefsi* to a longer urban history of liberation, public space, and democratic aspiration in Athens.¹⁴ Lastly, an important contribution to the historical memory of the Cyprus tragedy was made by the exhibition organized at the Old Parliament House, which featured posters, photographs, and propaganda material relating to the 1974 Turkish invasion, the missing persons, refugees, and the broader public discourse surrounding Cyprus in the aftermath of the invasion.¹⁵ A year later, in 2025, the Greek Cinematheque, in collaboration with its Spanish and Portuguese counterparts, extended this commemorative landscape through the film programme *The Fall of the Dictatorships and the Flourishing of New Cinema: Greece–Spain–Portugal*, which reflected on the democratic transitions of Southern Europe through cinema fifty years after the end of authoritarian rule.

In Spain, the fiftieth anniversary of the end of Francoism has been marked by an ambitious state-led initiative under the programme *España en Libertad: 50 años*.¹⁶ Coordinated from the central government and promoted personally by Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, the programme has brought together hundreds of activities across the country, including exhibitions, academic conferences, educational programmes and public debates addressing themes such as exile, repression, economic transformation and everyday life under dictatorship. The initiative reflects a broader effort to frame historical memory as a matter of democratic policy and civic education. In practice, the programme has taken the form of a dense network of commemorative initiatives organised in collaboration with universities, museums, schools, municipalities and cultural organisations across Spain's autonomous communities. The aim has been not simply to celebrate the democratic transition but to open a broader public conversation about the dictatorship, its victims and the unresolved legacies of authoritarianism within Spanish society. At the same time, the programme has also become a site of political contestation, with sectors of conservative opposition criticising the commemorations as an attempt to reopen historical divisions. These tensions illustrate how the legacy of the

14. A virtual tour of the exhibition is available at <https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=5P-wUrtoc7dp> (accessed 10 April 2026).

15. <https://nhmuseum.gr/ektheseis/periodikes/item/17603-kypros-74-den-ksexno> (accessed 10 April 2026).

16. See <https://espanaenlibertad.gob.es/> (accessed 10 April 2026).

Spanish transition –long associated with narratives of consensus and reconciliation– remains politically charged in contemporary debates about memory, accountability, and democratic identity.

Beyond these national frameworks, several initiatives have sought to highlight the shared historical trajectory of Southern European democratisation through collaborative projects linking Spain, Portugal and Greece. Many of these exchanges have emerged through initiatives promoted by the Comisionado "España en Libertad", which has attempted to situate the Spanish anniversary within a broader Southern European and European history of democratic transitions.¹⁷ A particularly significant example was the meeting held in Salamanca between the Spanish commissioner Carmina Gustrán, the Portuguese commissioner for the fiftieth anniversary of the Carnation Revolution Maria Inácia Rezola and the Greek curator and director of the Greek National Gallery Syrago Tsiara. Organised within the framework of the Spanish commemorative programme and hosted at the Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica, the encounter framed the anniversaries of the Iberian and Greek transitions as part of the wider historical moment that Samuel Huntington famously described as the beginning of the "third wave" of democratisation, while also highlighting the importance of memory policies and cultural institutions in defending democratic values in the present.¹⁸

Several exhibitions and cultural projects have further reinforced this transnational dimension. The exhibition "Portugal y España, 50 años de democracia," curated by historian Manuel Loff and presented at the Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica in Salamanca, examined fifty years of democracy in Spain and Portugal through a carefully selected corpus of archival documents highlighting common themes in both democratic trajectories. In Madrid, the exhibition "Inquietud. Libertad y democracia,"¹⁹ organised at *La Casa Encendida* in collaboration with the programme *España en Libertad*, brought together works by more than fifty artists from Spain and Portugal to explore the cultural and political transformations associated with the Iberian transitions. Through painting, photography, audiovisual material and archival documentation, the exhibition traced connections between artistic dissent under dictatorship and contemporary debates about

17. For a full program of its activities see <https://espanaenlibertad.gob.es/> (accessed 10 April 2026).

18. The video recording of the discussion is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2uV-gjZVE6Y>. Also see <https://elpais.com/espana/2025-04-13/una-vacuna-de-recuerdo-para-evitar-la-contrala-antidemocratica-en-grecia-portugal-y-espana.html>. (accessed 10 April 2026).

19. <https://www.lacasaencendida.es/exposiciones/inquietud-libertad-y-democracia> (accessed 10 April 2026).

democratic freedoms. Similarly, the exhibition “Vientos del pueblo. De revoluciones y transiciones ibéricas (1974–1977)”,²⁰ organised by the Spanish Ministry of Culture in collaboration with the Ministry for Territorial Policy and Democratic Memory, examined the role of social movements and visual culture in the final collapse of Iberian authoritarian regimes. Through photography and documentary material, the exhibition highlighted the ways in which the occupation of public space and the mobilisation of civil society contributed to the transformation of political participation during the Portuguese revolution and the Spanish transition.

Taken together, these commemorations highlight both the shared historical moment that links the three Southern European transitions and the different ways in which those histories have been institutionalised, narrated, and mobilised in the present. Anniversaries do not merely commemorate past events; they also shape contemporary debates about democratic legitimacy, historical responsibility, and the political uses of memory. In this sense, the fiftieth anniversaries of the transitions in Greece, Portugal and Spain illustrate how the legacies of democratisation continue to be renegotiated in response to new political challenges, including the resurgence of far-right politics and renewed contestation over the meaning of democracy itself.²¹

The chapters collected in this book stem from the international workshop “Dictatorships/Democracies: Political Transitions and the Left in Southern Europe,” held in Athens on 12–13 November 2024. Conceived as the first step in a broader forum that the initiative sought to sustain beyond Greece, the workshop was co-organised by the Contemporary Social History Archives (ASKI) and the Athens Office of the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung. It brought together scholars, researchers, and political activists from Greece, Spain, and Portugal, alongside participants from other countries connected to these histories and their afterlives.²² The dialogue initiated in Athens continued in Madrid in November 2025 (24–28 November) with the international conference “Atado y Bien Atado. The End of Dictatorships in Southern Europe,” organised by ASKI together with the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation offices in Athens and Madrid, and the interdisciplinary centre MIRCo of the Autonomous University of Madrid (MIRCo-UAM). The event took place within the cultural initiative *¿Atado y Bien Atado?*, developed with partners

20. <https://latermicacultural.es/exposiciones/vientos-pueblo/> (accessed 10 April 2026).

21. Also see <https://europeanmemories.net/magazine/the-restless-anniversary-reflecting-on-dictatorship-transition-and-democracy-without-heroics/> and <https://europeanmemories.net/magazine/1975-2025-fifty-years-on-celebrating-by-thinking-and-thinking-by-celebrating/> (accessed 10 April 2026).

22. See <https://askiweb.eu/conference/dictatorships-democracies-political-transitions-and-the-left-in-southern-europe/> (accessed 10 April 2026).

including Verso Books, Amauta, turba! comunicación, Viento Sur, in collaboration with Teatro del Barrio and Sala Mirador, and supported by the *Comisionado para España en Libertad*.²³

The thematic structure of the Athens meeting also shapes the organisation of this volume. It begins by examining authoritarian rule and the diverse landscapes of resistance that formed in response to it, attending to political actors, social movements, and transnational dimensions. It then turns to the processes of transition and democratisation, first through the short- and mid-term dynamics of political change, and then through the longer transformations that unfolded over subsequent decades in institutions, social relations, and political culture. Finally, it addresses the entanglement of history, politics, and memory, tracing how dictatorships and transitions have been narrated, contested, and reactivated in public life. This architecture reflects a core commitment of the volume. It moves beyond treating transition as a narrowly constitutional moment and approaches democratisation as a longer, uneven trajectory that unfolds across politics, society, culture, and institutions.

THREE TRAJECTORIES AND MULTIPLE TEMPORALITIES

The comparative frame rests on clear historical differences. In Portugal, the overthrow of the dictatorship in April 1974 initiated a far-reaching process of political and social change, closely linked to decolonisation and the making of a new constitutional order. In Greece, the regime's collapse in 1974 marked the beginning of the *Metapolitefsi* and a rapid re-establishment of parliamentary democracy. In Spain, the dictator's death in November 1975 initiated a negotiated transition that was largely directed from above, shaped by elite bargaining and carefully managed institutional reform, and is therefore often described as a top-down process.

At the same time, the comparison is attentive to shared patterns and recurring dilemmas. Looking across the three cases brings into view common questions about rupture and continuity, the management of political conflict, the role of social mobilisation, and the ways legitimacy and democratic "normality" were constructed. Comparison is therefore not intended to turn these trajectories into fixed models. Rather, it helps trace how distinct transition dynamics shaped later institutions and political cultures, while also identifying convergences in the problems democratic regimes inherited and the tensions they carried forward. Many of these tensions surface in

23. The video recordings of the conference in Madrid are available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdxaq-3KLIs> (accessed 10 April 2026).

enduring debates about justice and accountability, political violence, labour relations, education, policing, and the ways protest and opposition are regulated within democratic life.

Across all three cases, the Left occupies a central yet contested place. It was a primary target of repression under dictatorship and a crucial driver of resistance. During and after the transitions, it also became a key participant in shaping democratic institutions and expanding social rights. At the same time, the Left was frequently expected, and at times pressured, to accept constraints in the name of stability, responsibility, or democratic normalisation. This often meant accommodating compromises and postponing unresolved questions of justice and accountability. For that reason, it is essential to treat the Left as a plural field rather than a single actor. The chapters that follow examine parties and parliamentary strategies, but they also focus on movements and the social infrastructures of political change.

A central premise of this volume is that democratisation unfolds across multiple temporalities. It includes the intense and dramatic moment of transition, but it also encompasses longer trajectories shaped by advances, reversals, and impasses. It further extends across the subsequent half-century of democratic life, with all its unevenness and contradictions. For this reason, a fiftieth anniversary cannot remain focused on the founding moment alone. It must also assess what followed, and ask who was incorporated into the democratic settlement, who remained at the margins, and who continues to face barriers to full participation. This temporal lens also reframes the relationship between elite agreements and social pressure. Even where transitions have been described primarily as elite-managed processes, shifts in public debate, recognition, and accountability have often been propelled by sustained mobilisation from below.

DEMOCRACY TODAY: FROM COMMEMORATION TO ACTION?

This book is guided by a clear intention to speak beyond a narrowly academic readership. It contributes to a debate that is at once political and historiographical, while remaining accessible to readers who engage these questions through activism, education, public history, and civic concern. The Athens workshop concluded with a public event on “Democracy Today,” which explicitly connected historical reflection to contemporary democratic challenges across Greece, Spain and Portugal. That orientation informs the volume as a whole.

The point is not that the past simply repeats itself, but that the histories of dictatorship, resistance, and transition continue to shape the terms on which democracy is debated. In the current conjuncture, far-right

politics is increasingly mainstreamed, while exclusionary national narratives gain traction across the political spectrum. At the same time, emergency logics are normalised through the language of security, producing new constraints on rights and participation and expanding the discretionary power of the state. Public controversies over policing, surveillance, borders, and political violence demonstrate that democracy is not only a constitutional arrangement but also a continuing struggle over how conflict is governed and whose voices are treated as legitimate political actors.

This is precisely why careful historical documentation and research matter. Democracies are vulnerable not only to coercion but also to distortion: to selective memory, to convenient mythologies, and to the strategic repurposing of the past for present agendas. Rigorous scholarship can clarify what is being invoked, what is being erased, and what is being simplified when “the transition” is mobilised as a political reference point. It can also illuminate how earlier compromises and institutional inheritances continue to condition present dilemmas, including conflicts over justice and accountability, the meaning of political violence, the boundaries of social rights, and the governance of public space. In this sense, historical inquiry is not a retreat from politics, but a contribution to public argument, and a resource for democratic self-understanding.

The broader premise of the volume is that comparison can itself be a democratic practice. It helps distinguish shared patterns from context-specific dilemmas, and it enables transnational exchange about strategies, compromises, and forms of mobilisation that have expanded participation, as well as those that have restricted it. Revisiting Southern Europe’s transitions, then, is a way to think more concretely about what democracy protects, what it excludes, and what forms of political action and public debate keep it responsive and accountable today.

STRUCTURE OF THE VOLUME

The volume is structured as a sequence of interconnected conversations that move from the operation of authoritarian rule and the evolution of opposition, to the political and institutional dilemmas of transition, and finally to the longer afterlives of democratisation in social relations and public debate. Across these contributions, transition is treated not as a self-contained “moment” in the mid-1970s, but as a process whose effects unfolded unevenly across institutions, political cultures, and collective self-understandings, and whose unresolved questions continue to return in the present.

The opening chapters complicate both “dictatorship” and “resistance” by foregrounding change over time, interaction, and cross-border circulation.

Ainhoa Campos Posada reconstructs the evolving relationship between repression and opposition under Francoism, tracing four phases from foundational post-Civil War terror to selective repression, the emergence of labour and student mobilisation, and the convergence of opposition forces in the final years of the regime. Polymeris Voglis revisits the concept of resistance to the Greek military dictatorship by emphasising the transnational networks, material and symbolic circulations, and multi-sited practices through which opposition was organised and sustained, challenging narrower understandings of what “resistance” meant and where it happened. Rita Luís examines television under Francoism and the *Estado Novo* as a medium that simultaneously enabled transnational integration and projects of modernisation while also prompting attempts at protectionist control, showing how entertainment, imported formats, and the management of audiences opened ambiguous spaces that cannot be reduced to simple narratives of “depoliticisation”. Luís Trindade extends the focus on culture by offering a synthetic account of late twentieth-century Portuguese transformation through popular cultural objects, treating films, songs, and advertising not as mere reflections but as expressive sites where migration, urbanisation, democratisation, European integration, and the recurring return of rural and imperial imaginaries became legible as tensions within everyday life.

A second set of chapters addresses the transition years more directly by focusing on political strategy, institutional refounding, and the international field within which democratisation was pursued. Antonio Muñoz Sánchez challenges domestically sealed narratives of Iberian transition by foregrounding the geopolitical and European contexts that sustained dictatorship, shaped the possibilities of political change, and framed accession to the EEC as both horizon and constraint, insisting that “Europeanisation” cannot be narrated as a purely internal epic. Magda Fytili compares communist parties in Portugal, Spain and Greece, showing how divergent legacies (including the imprint of civil wars and the contrast between revolutionary participation and struggles for legalisation) nonetheless produced striking parallels in practice, as parties converged on a “strategy of responsibility” that channelled bottom-up mobilisation into negotiable and defensible frameworks while simultaneously shaping and containing the democratic opening. Diego Palacios Cereales uses police reform to illuminate a core dilemma of democratic state-building: what to do with coercive institutions inherited from authoritarianism, and what role the Left played in redefining them. By contrasting Portugal’s revolutionary rupture and Spain’s negotiated trajectory, he shows how different political contexts generated different reform logics, and why the tension between transformative ideals and governability became especially visible in the field of policing.

The final chapters shift the lens toward longer trajectories and contested legacies, showing how democratisation both expanded and bounded citizenship, rights, and public recognition over decades. Katerina Labrinou examines the limited democratisation of Greek trade unions after 1974, arguing that structural features such as dependence on the state, limited autonomy, and the primacy of party politics persisted across the transition, making labour a revealing site for thinking about continuity, the quality of post-authoritarian democracy, and the top-down character of institutional change. Manos Avgeridis approaches “national reconciliation” in the Third Hellenic Republic as a long and uneven democratising process, tracing how legalisation, repatriation, recognition, and the reworking of official memory expanded inclusion while also producing new exclusions and new silences, and thereby drawing attention to the political choices embedded in remembrance and forgetting. Miguel Cardina, writing in the context of the fiftieth anniversary of the Carnation Revolution, examines how dictatorship’s end and decolonisation were historically intertwined yet often remembered through separate mnemonic registers; through debates, surveys, and public monuments, he shows how the legacies of colonial war, colonialism, and racism remain a crucial terrain on which rupture and continuity are negotiated, especially amid contemporary rightward shifts and the rise of far-right politics.

Taken together, these chapters use comparison to hold difference and commonality in the same frame: distinct transition dynamics and institutional paths are analysed alongside shared dilemmas about reform, legitimacy, mobilisation, and the long afterlives of authoritarianism in democratic life.

Manos Avgeridis

Magda Fytli

Kostis Kornetis

[CHAPTER 1]

Echoes of Dissent

Franco's Regime and its Opposition, 1939–1975



An analysis of the evolution of opposition to Francoism and the repressive adaptation of the regime between 1939 and 1977 reveals a complex dynamic marked by constant interaction between resistance and authoritarian control. From the foundational violence that cemented the dictatorship after the Civil War to selective repression and developmentalist propaganda, Francoism modulated its strategies according to internal pressure and the international context. At the same time, the opposition moved from armed struggle and exile to forms of social, labour, and university protests, finally articulating a political convergence that proved decisive for the transition to democracy. Both phenomena, opposition and repression, are fundamental to understanding the history of Spain during the Franco regime, and their study constitutes one of the most dynamic and fruitful areas of Spanish historiography in recent decades.

In this chapter, we will review the most important characteristics of both phenomena through four distinct chronological stages in the dictatorship's management of violence and repression and in the evolution of the opposition movements against it. The first stage covers the period from the end of the Spanish Civil War to the end of the Second World War (1939–1945), during which the regime's use of mass violence and institutionalised terror marked the period and suffocated and fragmented the opposition. The second, between 1946 and 1955, was marked by international isolation, which forced the dictatorship to modulate its violence while the opposition abandoned the armed struggle and began to focus on worker mobilisation and entryism. Between 1956 and 1968, we can distinguish a third stage, in which the regime combined selective repression with pro-opening propaganda, while the student movement and ecclesiastical dissent joined the workers' movement as opposition actors. The final stage, between 1969 and 1975, was characterised by repressive radicalisation and a loss of internal cohesion in the face of a mature opposition that converged on unified platforms and mobilisations that would accelerate the collapse of the regime after Franco's death.

REPRESSION AS THE BASIS OF THE REGIME: THE CONFIGURATION OF FRANCOISM (1939-1945)

The Franco regime was established on the foundations of violence and exclusion, deployed during the early stages of the conflict in accordance with the spirit dictated by General Mola before the conflict broke out, which stated that the action of the rebels should be “extremely violent” to ensure victory.¹ Thus, Franco’s violence in the post-war period was also characterised by its widespread and massive nature. Its aim was not only punishment, but the complete transformation of Spanish society.²

The regime built a solid legal framework to carry out this punishment and the resulting transformation. This legislation, some of which was enacted during the conflict, demonstrated Franco’s determination to build a “peace” imposed exclusively by the victors. One of the fundamental pieces was the Law of Political Responsibilities of February 1939, which defined the social model and future project of the dictatorship. In addition to punishing actions, it blamed those who did nothing to help the Nationals and, at the same time, opened the door to arbitrary and extrajudicial persecution that often led to looting and pillaging. Together with the Law on the Repression of Freemasonry and Communism of March 1940, it formed the framework by which this repression, administered by the military jurisdiction, imposed penalties ranging from confiscation and the purging of civil servants to forced labour (redemption through work) and the death penalty for hundreds of thousands of Spaniards.³

This institutionalised terror reached unprecedented proportions. The Spanish prison system collapsed: from a previous capacity of 20,000 inmates, it held at least 270,000 people in 1940. It is estimated that approximately 50,000 people were executed by this repressive system between 1939 and 1948. This massive violence was also intended to serve as an example, seeking to terrorise anyone who might consider going underground.⁴

Furthermore, this system was established with the social complicity of part of the population. The dictatorship promoted denunciation, making it a cornerstone of the repressive system, and managed to link the fate of its social support to the survival of the regime through the transfer of property (seizures) and the reservation of public posts, as well as the creation of a

1. Santiago Vega Sombría, *La política del miedo: El papel de la represión en el franquismo* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2012).

2. Gutmaro Gómez Bravo and Jorge Marco Carretero, *La obra del miedo: Violencia y sociedad en la España franquista (1939-1950)* (Madrid: Península, 2011).

3. Nicolás Sesma, *Ni una, ni grande, ni libre: La dictadura franquista* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2024).

4. Antonio Míguez Macho, *La genealogía genocida del franquismo: Violencia, memoria e impunidad* (Madrid: Abada Editores, 2014).

community united in the memory of its own victims and in the complicity in the punishment of the enemy.⁵

After the defeat, and in the face of this massive and institutionalised violence, the opposition was characterised by confusion, lack of unity, and mass exile: it is estimated that at least 300,000 people were forced into exile. Abroad, Republican leaders attempted to take advantage of the situation during the Second World War to seek Allied intervention. However, the Spanish Liberation Junta, formed by them in 1943, was divided, and the geopolitical interests of the Allies did not coincide with those of the opposition to Francoism in exile.⁶

Meanwhile, inland, the main manifestation of resistance was the *Maquis* (a guerrilla movement), made up of former Republican combatants who took refuge in rural and mountainous areas of the country, which constituted the continuation and reproduction of the Civil War. The most organised guerrilla structures were led by the Communist Party (PCE).⁷

The dictatorship, therefore, used an initial wave of mass violence and a constituent legal framework to cement its power, while the opposition was reduced to a divided exile and a decimated but persistent armed resistance within the country.

ISOLATION AND THE QUEST FOR SURVIVAL (1946–1955)

After the defeat of the Axis powers in 1945, the regime faced a period that posed a real threat to its survival. International isolation was made official with the UN's condemnation in 1946, which prohibited Spain from joining the organisation's agencies. Franco's repressive strategy focused on ensuring internal stability and using anti-communism to win the sympathy of the West in the geopolitical scheme of the Cold War.⁸

Faced with the persistence of the *Maquis*, which remained a constant source of destabilisation, the regime resorted to extreme violence based on the Decree-Law of 13 April 1947 on the repression of banditry and terrorism, which

5. Julián Casanova, Francisco Espinosa, Conxita Mir and Francisco Moreno, *Morir, matar, sobrevivir: La violencia en la dictadura de Franco* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2002), 29.

6. Ramón Orza Linares, "¿Un intento de regreso a la II República? El consejo técnico de la Junta Española de liberación en México, 1943–1945," in José Antonio Pérez Juan and Sara Moreno Tejada, eds., *Justicia y represión en los estados totalitarios: España, Alemania e Italia (1931–1945)* (Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch, 2021), 99–174.

7. Mercedes Yusta Rodríguez, "Maquis: la resistencia armada al régimen de Franco," *Revista de Andorra*, no. 3 (2003): 20–29.

8. Juan José Morales Ruiz, "El contubernio: Franco y las Naciones Unidas," *Anuario UNED Calatayud*, no. 25 (2019): 47–80.

stipulated measures of unprecedented harshness, including the death penalty on a virtually discretionary basis. The legislation sought the active collaboration of the conservative rural population, encouraging them to report not only the direct perpetrators of sabotage, but also accomplices and accessories.⁹

The period between 1947 and 1949 is known as the “three years of terror”. This brutal campaign of persecution against the guerrillas decimated the guerrilla groups in Aragon, Levante, León and Asturias. The repression, led by the Civil Guard, was so brutal that the PCE finally decreed a change of strategy in the early 1950s. The persistence of the guerrillas ceased to be a threat to the regime after 1952: some historians have seen this confrontation as a prolongation of the logic of the Civil War.¹⁰

Diplomatic and economic isolation began to break down with the consolidation of the Cold War around the same time. Bilateral agreements with the United States and the Concordat with the Vatican, both signed in 1953, marked the definitive consecration of Franco’s Spain.¹¹ Meanwhile, the Republican government in exile strove to show strength before the UN. However, a lack of unity and limited influence led to the removal of the “Spanish question” from the UN’s list of pending issues in 1946.¹²

The harsh living conditions resulting from autarky and shortages created long-standing social unrest, which became a new source of protest. This unrest was expressed in peaceful and spontaneous protests, such as the boycott of Barcelona’s trams in 1951. The success of these protests, which forced the cancellation of price increases, showed the opposition that demands regarding the cost of living were more appealing to the population than the old slogans of war.¹³ The Communist Party (PCE), understanding this new dynamic, adopted the strategy of “entrism” (from 1951 onwards). This new strategy consisted of infiltrating the organs of the system, especially the Spanish Trade Union Organisation and other institutions, in order to undermine it from within, seeking medium- and long-term results.¹⁴

9. Jorge Marco, “Rethinking the Postwar Period in Spain: Violence and Irregular Civil War, 1939–52,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 55 (2020): 492–513.

10. Arnau Fernández Pasalodos, *Hasta su total exterminio: La guerra antipartisana en España (1936–1952)* (Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2024).

11. M^a del Rocío Piñeiro Álvarez, “Los convenios hispano-norteamericanos de 1953,” *Historia Actual Online (HAOL)*, no. 11 (Autumn 2006): 175–181.

12. Emilio Grandío Seoane, “De la República a Europa: la búsqueda de la democracia en los ‘años de plomo’ de la oposición exterior al franquismo (1946–1957),” *Alcores: revista de historia contemporánea*, no. 15 (2013): 183–203.

13. Gregorio Santiago Díaz, “Vivimos sobre un volcán: ¿Pudo derrocar el hambre a Franco? (1948–1951),” *Historia Actual Online* 63, no. 1 (2024): 55–70.

14. Francisco Gago Vaquero, “Las Comisiones Obreras durante el franquismo,” *Tiempo y Sociedad* 24 (2016): 57–86.

In short, the period 1946–1955 was a time of forced transition. The regime managed to overcome its isolation thanks to the Cold War and strategic pacts, ensuring its permanence through selective repression that decimated the guerrilla movement. At the same time, the opposition, realising the futility of armed struggle, sowed the seeds of social and institutional dissent, paving the way for the large-scale worker and student mobilisations of the following decade.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND NEW ACTORS (1956–1968)

The period that began in the 1950s, known as the second Francoism or the era of developmentalism, was a time of profound social and economic transformation in Spain, which, paradoxically, generated new legitimacy for the dictatorship while giving rise to the actors who would eventually defeat it. Repression became more selective and institutionalised, adapting to the international parameters imposed by the end of isolation (following Spain's entry into the UN in 1955). The regime combined its traditional "legitimacy of origin" (victory in 1939) with a new "legitimacy of exercise" based on economic growth and improved living standards.¹⁵

To deal with growing dissent, the regime opted to create special jurisdictions, seeking to empty the opposition's most reasonable demands of content. The Public Order Court, created in 1963, was a special jurisdiction established for non-military political crimes. This was presented as an attempt to adapt to international standards, although in reality it reiterated the repressive nature of previous regulations.¹⁶

Meanwhile, repression during this stage remained selective and relied on acts of preventive violence to reaffirm the immutable nature of the dictatorship, as in the case of the execution of Julián Grimau in 1963. Grimau, a member of the Central Committee of the PCE, was captured in 1962. Although he was accused of alleged crimes committed twenty-five years earlier, his execution served to demonstrate the immutable nature of the dictatorship. Franco forced an individual and binding vote in the Council of Ministers to ratify the death penalty, renewing the "blood pact" between his collaborators. Meanwhile, the strikers were subjected to summary trials and exile, and the irregular violence of groups such as

15. Paloma Aguilar Fernández, *Memoria y olvido de la guerra civil española* (Madrid: Alianza, 1996), 165–172.

16. Juan José del Águila Torres, *El TOP: La represión de la libertad (1963–1977)* (Madrid: Fundación Abogados de Atocha; Ministerio de la Presidencia, Relaciones con las Cortes y Memoria Democrática, 2020).

Franco's Guard and the Guerrilleros de Cristo Rey intensified to intimidate students and workers.¹⁷

At the same time, the regime attempted to channel social change along its narrow paths. The key figure was the Minister of Information and Tourism, Manuel Fraga Iribarne, who promoted the Press Law of 1966, eliminating the regime's mandatory censorship. His goal was to strip the opposition's most reasonable demands, such as freedom of information, of their substance.¹⁸

In step with these changes, the opposition transformed itself, abandoning the slogans of the Civil War and adopting a social and generational character that was articulated from within. The implementation of the Stabilisation Plan (1959) and economic development exacerbated inflation and created the conditions for a new wave of strikes and protests. The "entrism" strategy initiated by the PCE in the early 1950s matured, leading to the consolidation of the *Comisiones Obreras* (CC. OO.), a socio-political movement that promoted labour demands (such as fair overtime pay) but also political demands (freedom of association and the right to strike). However, its triumph was resounding in the large industrial centres. In 1967, the Supreme Court ratified the illegal nature of the CC. OO., considering it a "subsidiary of the Communist Party of Spain".¹⁹ Despite the repression, worker mobilisation became the main source of destabilisation for the regime. This was accompanied by mobilisations in sectors that had not previously been involved in opposition to the regime.

The university, stripped of its previous educational system and with purged professors, became a symbol of opposition to the regime. University protests were constant, with milestones in 1956 and 1968, despite the repression exercised by the dictatorship. Massified and marked by precarious conditions, the university environment encouraged student militancy.²⁰

Even institutions that had been pillars of Francoism began to distance themselves. The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) led to a renewal in the Spanish Church. Critical distancing began in the mid-1950s at the grassroots level (laypeople and clergy) and reached its peak with the crisis of Catholic Action in 1966. Basque priests protested against the lack of

17. Sesma, *Ni una, ni grande, ni libre*.

18. Carmen Menchero de los Ríos, "La modernización de la censura: La ley de 1966 y su aplicación," in Jesús A. Martínez, ed., *Historia de la edición en España (1939–1975)* (Madrid: Marcial Pons Historia, 2015), 68–96.

19. Gago Vaquero, "Las Comisiones Obreras durante el franquismo."

20. Sergio Calvo Romero, "El movimiento estudiantil antifranquista. Un terreno fértil: El proceso de construcción de un ámbito historiográfico," *CIAN: Revista de historia de las universidades* 27, no. 2 (2024): 193–209.

freedoms (1960), and religious figures demonstrated against torture in Barcelona (1966).²¹

In line with this, the PCE formally adopted a policy of “national reconciliation” in 1956, seeking to attract considerable forces that disagreed with Francoism, including monarchists, Christian Democrats, and dissident Falangists. Although seen as opportunistic, it was key to forging a viable alternative.²²

LATE FRANCOISM, THE AGONY OF THE REGIME AND POPULAR MOBILISATIONS (1969–1975)

This period constituted the final phase of the dictatorship, characterised by the radicalisation of the immovable core within the regime –known as the “bunker”– and a simultaneous loss of repressive effectiveness on the part of the dictatorship, while the opposition evolved towards political convergence and mass social mobilisation from within. This period spanned from the government restructuring of 1969 to Franco’s death in 1975, marking the definitive decline of the regime.

Faced with growing internal conflict and the rise of terrorism, the dictatorship resorted to more extreme violence and military justice, but unlike in previous periods, its ability to impose its will absolutely was diminished. Faced with the rise of terrorism by groups such as ETA and FRAP, the regime resorted to military jurisdiction. The Burgos Trial (1970) was intended to be an act of preventive violence and self-assertion. Nine death sentences were imposed, using military jurisdiction.²³

Despite the harshness of the sentences, internal pressure and international outcry forced Franco to commute the death sentences. This commutation showed that the repressive will of the dictatorship had been broken by protest and mobilisation.

However, Franco’s final days were marked by a phase of radicalisation of the dictatorship. In 1975, the Council of Ministers approved a decree-law “on the prevention of terrorism” (26 August). This legal framework was used for the last executions (September 1975) of FRAP and ETA militants. These executions, considered an act of self-assertion by the regime, led to the withdrawal of seventeen ambassadors. On 1 October 1975, in response to international

21. Feliciano Montero García, “La Iglesia en el tardofranquismo o el ‘despegue’ de la Iglesia,” *Historia del presente*, no. 10 (2007): 3–6.

22. Carme Molinero, “La política de reconciliación nacional: Su contenido durante el franquismo, su lectura en la Transición,” *Ayer* 66, no. 2 (2007): 201–225.

23. Gaizka Fernández Soldevilla and José Francisco Briones Aparicio, “El franquismo ante el proceso de Burgos,” *Araucaria. Revista Iberoamericana de Filosofía, Política, Humanidades y Relaciones Internacionales* 44 (2020): 27–51.

outcry, a large demonstration was organised in the Plaza de Oriente to reaffirm popular support for Franco. Franco justified his repression as a response to a “leftist Masonic conspiracy” in collusion with “communist-terrorist subversion”. This was one of Franco’s last public appearances.²⁴

The dictatorship was severely weakened by the succession crisis and the division of its elites. The assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco by ETA was a severe blow, unleashing confusion and weakening decision-making. The departure from the government of reformists such as Pío Cabanillas (Minister of Information) and Francisco Fernández Ordóñez, forced by the “bunker” (Girón de Velasco, Utrera Molina), reflected that the Francoist elites were divided between those who wanted to block any change and those who sought an agreed break or controlled evolution.²⁵

The late Franco era was the moment of maximum maturity for the internal opposition, which managed to articulate social, political, and territorial forces that made continuity unsustainable.

Social unrest became the most powerful and effective force against the regime. Labour unrest reached historic levels, with almost 20 million hours of work lost in 1974 alone. This increase in unrest, especially since 1970, was fuelled by the workers’ desire to achieve improvements in working conditions and the awareness that it was the most effective instrument of political struggle.²⁶

The success of “entrism” was consolidated with the victory of the united and democratic candidates (organised by CC. OO.) in the 1975 trade union elections, achieving clear success in large companies and industrial centres. Meanwhile, university protests multiplied. The student movement, which included young people from victorious families, continued to challenge the regime, despite physical, legal, and academic repression. The closure of the University of Valladolid in 1975 in response to student protests, together with the death of Enrique Ruano in 1969, exemplifies the harsh repression directed against youth dissent.²⁷

The process of distancing and opposition by the Catholic Church intensified significantly in the late Franco era. Critical distancing was consolidated among the Catholic “rank and file” and among the secular and parish clergy. In the 1970s, this militancy became part of the vanguard of the most

24. Pau Casanellas, *Morir matando: El franquismo ante la práctica armada, 1968-1977* (Madrid: Catarata, 2014).

25. Sesma, *Ni una, ni grande, ni libre*.

26. Pere Ysàs, “La imposible ‘paz social’: El movimiento obrero y la dictadura,” *Historia del Presente*, no. 9 (2007): 7–26; Sesma, *Ni una, ni grande, ni libre*.

27. Gago Vaquero, “Las Comisiones Obreras en el franquismo”; Calvo Romero, “El movimiento estudiantil antifranquista.”

radical labour and political struggle. The distancing from the institutional Church, coinciding with the leadership of Tarancón, culminated in the Joint Assembly (1971) and the episcopal document “Church and Political Community” (1973).²⁸

Meanwhile, the opposition sought unity of action and, in some sectors, the violent route. The Burgos Trial catalysed an unprecedented mobilisation, leading to the formation of united platforms such as the Democratic Board of Spain and the Council of Political Forces of Catalonia. Meanwhile, groups such as ETA, FRAP and GRAPO intensified the armed struggle, advocating revolutionary violence.²⁹

Events in neighbouring countries highlighted the inevitability of change. The triumph of the Carnation Revolution in Portugal (April 1974) and the fall of the Military Junta in Greece (July 1974) eliminated the regime’s last allies in southern Europe, confirming the failure of authoritarian evolution.³⁰

In short, the late Franco era was a period of extreme contradictions: the regime attempted to ensure its permanence through repressive radicalisation and ideological reaffirmation (such as the executions of 1975), but this violence was increasingly ineffective and costly at the international level. The opposition, for its part, managed to converge on unified platforms and used worker and student mobilisation as a more powerful instrument of struggle than the post-war guerrilla movement, ensuring that Franco’s demise would lead to democratic restoration.

CONCLUSIONS

The longevity of the Franco regime can be explained by its ability to adapt its repression and build successive legitimacies, first through massive violence and later through economic growth and institutional control. However, this strategy failed to neutralise the social transformations that had been eroding its foundations since the 1950s. The abandonment of armed struggle, the rise of the labour movement, university dissent and cracks in traditional pillars such as the Church created a scenario of growing dissent. Added to this were external factors such as the Cold War and the collapse of

28. Montero García, “La Iglesia en el tardofranquismo o el ‘despegue’ de la Iglesia.”

29. Raúl Morodo Leoncio, “Memorias de la Transición: la Junta Democrática de España (1974–1976),” in Esther González Hernández and Rafael Rubio Núñez, eds., *España constitucional (1978–2018): trayectorias y perspectivas* (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2018), 177–192.

30. Ana Belén Gómez Fernández, “La llegada de la democracia al Mediterráneo: Las transiciones de Portugal, Grecia y España,” *Historia Actual Online*, no. 25 (Spring 2011): 7–18.

other European dictatorships, which precipitated the regime's isolation in its final phase. Ultimately, the combination of social mobilisation, political convergence, and the loss of internal cohesion made the collapse of Francoism inevitable after Franco's death, paving the way for democracy.

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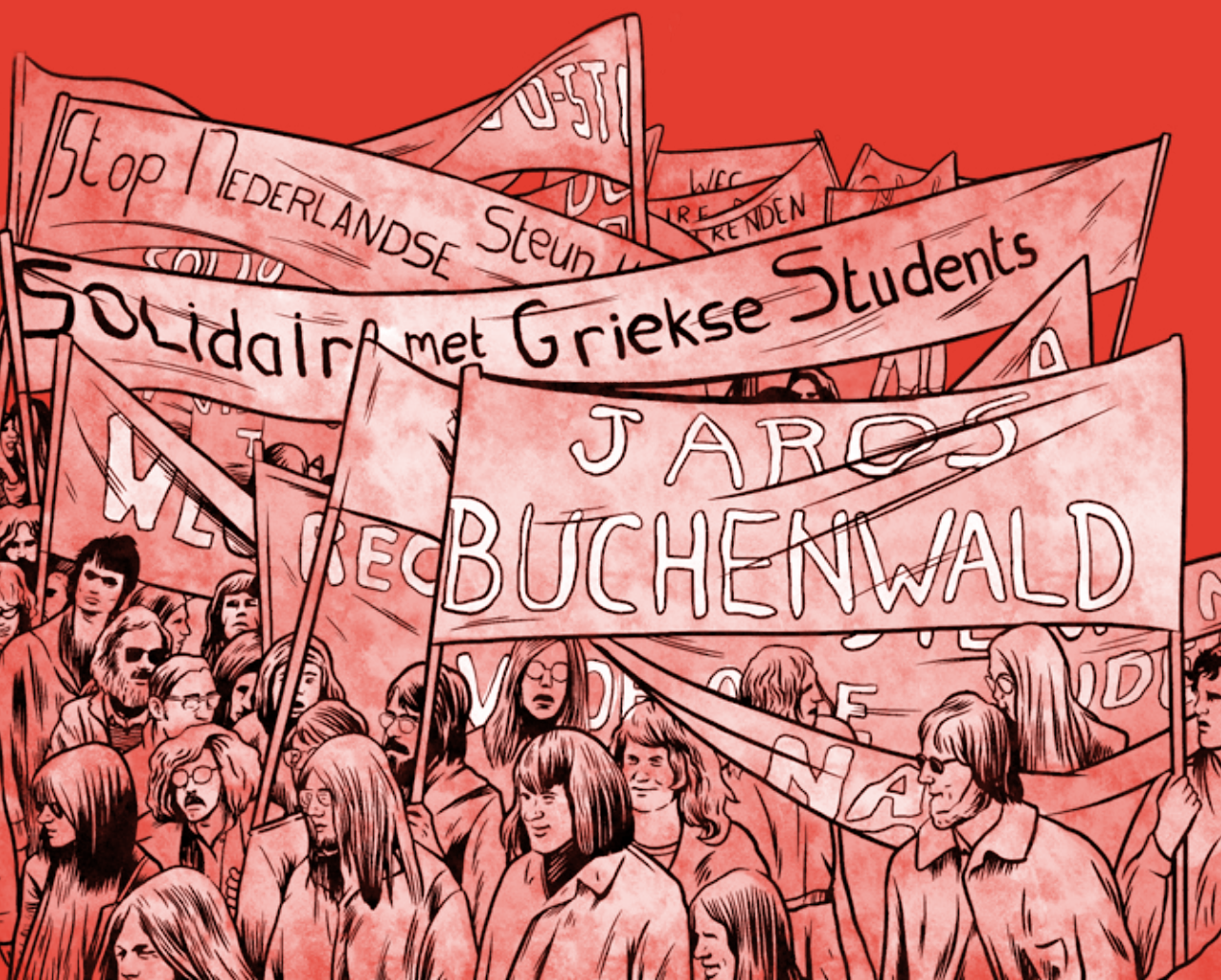
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[CHAPTER 2]

Fighting against the Military Dictatorship in Greece

Rethinking the Concept of
Resistance



In the spring of 1970, the major anti-dictatorial organisation PAM (*Patriotiko Antidiktatoriko Metopo*, Patriotic Anti-dictatorial Front) decided to set up a special unit for violent action against the military dictatorship. In the summer of that year, three young PAM members living in Italy met in Milan to discuss how to proceed. One of them (Giorgos Tsikouris) was Cypriot. With the help of the PCI (*Partito Comunista Italiano*, Italian Communist Party), they obtained a fake passport for Tsikouris to travel to Greece. The other person who volunteered to take part in the action was an Italian, Elena Angeloni, a member of the PCI. Together with G. Tsikouris and E. Angeloni, another Italian, a specialist in explosives, travelled from Italy to Greece. The explosives came from Germany. A Greek student in Paris travelled to Heidelberg to pick up another Greek comrade there and then went to Munich to pick up the explosives. They then went by car to Frankfurt and handed them over to a French woman, a member of the *Parti Communiste Français* (French Communist Party), who flew from Frankfurt to Athens with the explosives in her luggage. In Athens, with the help of Greek comrades (one of whom was a student in Italy), they decided that the target would be the US embassy in Athens, because of the support of the military regime by the American government. The end of the endeavour was tragic: G. Tsikouris and E. Angeloni were killed on 2 September 1970 when the bomb exploded while they were in the car in the parking lot of the US embassy in Athens.¹

The story of G. Tsikouris and E. Angeloni illustrates the point I will make in this article. I will discuss the concept of resistance against the military dictatorship in order to argue that resistance is about the circulation of people and materials, about networks and contacts. Resistance crosses national borders, and it is not located in one place but rather emerges in multiple sites and takes different forms.

1. Argyris Panagopoulos, "Οι ξεχασμένοι ήρωες. Έλενα Αντζελόνι, Γιώργος Τσικουρής," *I Avgi*, April 2022.

THE CONCEPT OF RESISTANCE

In Greece, the anti-dictatorial struggle was then (and still is today) called “resistance”. Several anti-dictatorship organisations in those years used the term resistance in their name, for example the “Democratic Committees of Resistance”, the “Popular Revolutionary Resistance”, the “National Movement of Democratic Resistance”, and “Greek Resistance”. Those who participated in the struggle against the regime were accordingly called “resistance fighters”, while their association is also called “Association of Imprisoned and Exiled Resistance Fighters, 1967-1974”. In general, the term resistance is widely used today on different occasions and by different actors. Despite its wide use, the meaning of the term resistance is rarely explained. Let us not take its meaning for granted and ask ourselves: what does resistance mean?

In the literature, the concept of resistance has been used by scholars to describe a very wide range of practices (from sabotage and rebellion to publishing poems and illegally listening to radio stations), different levels of action (individual, collective, local, national), and different modes of organisation (from very well-organised actions to spontaneous reactions). Resistance can be directed against different targets (from individuals to state institutions) or have different aims (it can seek change or, on the contrary, prevent change).² Furthermore, it is not always the subject who seeks to have their actions recognised as resistance; rather, it is the scholar who labels these actions as such. James C. Scott’s seminal work on the everyday resistance of peasants in Malaysia demonstrated that there exist alternative forms of resistance that can be widespread but not necessarily discernible to the authorities. For Scott, the slow pace of work, flight, pretence, petty theft, alleged ignorance, rumour-mongering, were acts of daily and continuous disobedience and non-compliance; it was a resistance that was not visible as such and was not manifested publicly to the authorities out of fear but was manifested “behind the scenes”, among the subjects.³ In authoritarian regimes, public, collective resistance is difficult and rare because the stakes are high and the repression is relentless. Often opposition is expressed in an indirect way and is not easily recognisable as resistance, for example, youth dissatisfaction with communist regimes in Eastern European countries was expressed through the adoption of Western cultural norms of appearance and entertainment.⁴ In other cases, however, opposition to an authoritarian

2. Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L. Einwohner, “Conceptualizing Resistance,” *Sociological Forum* 19, no. 4 (2004): 533–554.

3. James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 278–303.

4. Timothy Brown, “‘1968’ East and West: Divided Germany as a Case Study in

regime may also be expressed in a direct way, like demonstrations and uprisings, like the Polytechnic School uprising in Greece in November 1973.

Despite the diverse conceptualisations of resistance, there is agreement among scholars that resistance refers to some form of action and that resistance expresses a relationship of opposition. More to the point, I will argue that resistance is intrinsic to power relations, and that we must rethink resistance as a field shaped by the multitude of points of resistance. I will start by briefly discussing the history of the concept of resistance before the 1960s, and then I will examine some key features of the struggle against the colonels' dictatorship in Greece. In the last section of the article, I will return to the theoretical discussion to consider how the study of the anti-dictatorial struggle can enrich the way we understand the concept of resistance.

In the twentieth century, the term "resistance" gained widespread currency during the Second World War, first in France. The term resistance expressed active opposition to the brutal regime of occupation imposed by force by the Axis powers. From the beginning, it had positive connotations. Resistance was a term that included the people as the subject of action; the fight against the occupation and for the liberation of the country was not only a matter for the Allied troops but also for the citizens themselves. Moreover, the concept of resistance, at that historical juncture, was intertwined with the national ideology; resistance against the Nazis was a national issue and was an outgrowth of patriotic ideology. In Greece, the term resistance was not used in the years of the Occupation by the national liberation organisations, but it was adopted immediately after the Liberation in 1944. From the very beginning, it was identified with the defence of the nation and the recovery of national independence, which is why it was called National Resistance. The National Resistance was invoked by the EAM (*Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo*, National Liberation Front) and the KKE (*Kommounistiko Komma Elladas*, Greek Communist Party), which played a leading role in the national liberation movement.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, those who had been involved with the EAM organisations called themselves "fighters of the National Resistance". They sought to establish a series of clubs and associations under this designation, and to publish leaflets and books on the National Resistance. But only for a short while. Due to the outbreak of the civil war

Transnational History," *American Historical Review* 114, no. 1 (2009): 69–96; Sándor Horváth, "Patchwork Identities and Folk Devils: Youth Subcultures and Gangs in Socialist Hungary," *Social History* 34, no. 2 (2009): 163–183; Filip Pospíšil, "Youth Cultures and the Disciplining of Czechoslovak Youth in the 1960s," *Social History* 37, no. 4 (2012): 477–500; *East Central Europe* 38, nos. 2–3 (2011).

(1946–1949), the EAM and other left-wing resistance organisations were ruthlessly persecuted for years to come. The concept of resistance, however, continued to have positive connotations for Greek society. As a result, the term resistance later began to be used more widely. It came to denote opposition to authoritarianism, oppression, and violations of legality by the sovereign power. This is the case, for instance, with the DAS 114 organisation (*Dimokratiki Antistasi Spoudaston 114*, Democratic Student Resistance 114)⁵ which was established in the early 1960s and played a leading role in student protests for the democratisation of political life. During the years of the dictatorship, the use of the term resistance was generalised to describe the diverse expressions and types of opposition to the military regime.

THE RESISTANCE AGAINST THE COLONELS' DICTATORSHIP

The anti-dictatorship struggle in Greece can be divided into three periods. The first period covers the years 1967–1971, and is characterised by the activity of illegal anti-dictatorship organisations. The second period covers the years 1972–1973 and concerns the emergence of a mass anti-dictatorship movement, mainly but not only among students. The third period concerns the period from the bloody repression of the Polytechnic School uprising in November 1973 until the fall of the junta in July 1974, when the anti-dictatorship movement was crushed by the authoritarian policies of the regime. Now, I would like to discuss the characteristics of each period in more detail.

The years 1967–1971. Immediately after the coup, the first anti-dictatorship organisations began to form, created by people who had been active until then or who had been affiliated with parties of the Centre and the Left. The largest organisation, by far, was the PAM, which was created by members of the Left and the Greek Communist Party, while another important organisation was the DA (*Dimokratiki Amyna*, Democratic Defence), created by people who were members of the Centre Union. Later on, in February 1968, the PAK (*Panellinio Apeleftherotiko Kinima*, Panhellenic Liberation Movement) was established by Andreas Papandreou in Stockholm. Alongside these, a great number of small anti-dictatorship groups were formed in the early years of the dictatorship. A salient characteristic of these groups was that they were constituted “from below”. That is to say, they were not the outcome of the initiative of political parties (which were outlawed) or prominent politicians, but rather of individuals who sought to overthrow the regime and

5. The number 114 referred to the last article of the Constitution, according to which “the compliance with the constitution is dedicated to the patriotism of the Greek people”, and became a very popular political slogan in the early 1960s.

were based on personal networks among friends, relatives, fellow students, and acquaintances from the years before the coup. Such organisations included the *Elliniko Dimokratiko Kinima* (Hellenic Democratic Movement), the *Dimokratikes Epitropes Antistaseos* (Democratic Committees of Resistance), *Ethniko Kinima Dimokratikis Antistaseos* (National Movement of Democratic Resistance), the *Spoudastiki Pali* (Student Struggle), and many others.

At the same time, Greeks (mainly students) were active in Western Europe. The number of Greek students in Italy, West Germany, France, Great Britain and other countries increased dramatically during the years of the dictatorship as many young people preferred to study abroad to avoid the stifling climate imposed by the military regime in Greece. Anti-dictatorship committees were formed in almost every Western European city that had a university and Greek students. For instance, in West Germany, there were anti-dictatorial committees in West Berlin, Nuremberg, Hannover, Bremen, Bochum, Frankfurt, Munich, Bonn, Karlsruhe, Hamburg, to name just a few cities. To a large extent, the anti-dictatorial struggle was inextricably related to connections and circulation between activists and groups in Greece and Western Europe. People and materials (like brochures, books, explosives, but also songs, news, and theories) travelled back and forth between Greece and Western Europe, as well as within Western European countries, often with the help of Italian, German, or French activists.⁶

The anti-dictatorship organisations in Greece and abroad developed a multifaceted activity, depending of course, on the prevailing conditions. In Western Europe, parliamentary democracy allowed activists to organise protests, concerts and debates, to publish leaflets and newspapers, and to pressure political parties and trade unions in the host countries to react to the oppression and violation of human rights in Greece. Inside Greece, however, conditions were very difficult and the main underground activity was the recruitment of new members and propaganda against the regime. Yet some organisations went further and decided to act by planting low-power explosive devices in places, buildings, and offices related to the military regime and the US government. The so-called “dynamic resistance” was more akin to “armed propaganda” than “armed struggle”, but at the time raised the issue of the use of violence against the regime. Several anti-dictatorship organisations took a negative stance towards the

6. A vast collection of archival and printed material concerning the networks and the solidarity movement in Western Europe is available in the digital repository of the project “Democracy and Freedom: Digital Museum of European Solidarity in Greece (1967–1974)” of ASKI (Contemporary Social History Archives). <https://solidaritymuseum.askiweb.eu/en/> (accessed 14 February 2026).

“dynamic resistance” but most of them were ambivalent about political violence. For example, the PAM was initially opposed to the use of explosive devices, but later changed its stance and in April 1970 created a special unit for violent actions against the regime. After the tragic outcome of the aforementioned attempt in September 1970, however, they abandoned the idea of dynamic resistance.⁷

The years 1972–1973. The efforts of the clandestine groups to incite a mass anti-dictatorship movement ultimately proved unsuccessful, remaining a minority undertaking. The majority of these organisations were short-lived, being dissolved by the regime. Their members were subjected to torture and imprisonment for lengthy periods. Interestingly enough, at the time when the anti-dictatorship organisations in Greece were in crisis, and the anti-dictatorship movement abroad was showing signs of fatigue, the student movement emerged. From 1972, a younger generation of students who had neither political experience from the years prior to the dictatorship nor long involvement in clandestine groups, took advantage of the “liberalisation” of the military regime to express their opposition. The regime felt entrenched and, under pressure from protests abroad, relaxed its repressive and censorship measures.

The students took advantage of the political opportunity that arose and pushed for free elections to be held in the student unions. A landmark event was the two-day occupation of the Athens Law School in February 1973, which was the first public, mass student protest against the junta and ended peacefully. It was the starting point for a series of public protests, which were violently suppressed by the police. Despite the repression, opposition did not subside, and in the autumn of 1973, there was a new cycle of protest, which culminated in the Polytechnic School uprising in Athens. The Polytechnic uprising began as an occupation of the university building by a few hundred students on 14 November 1973, but gained an impressive momentum as it attracted not only students but also tens of thousands of people, mostly young, who wanted to demonstrate their opposition to the military regime and their solidarity with the students. The students’ Occupation Coordination Committee, in which the leftist anti-dictatorship organisations played a significant role, was in charge, but the situation got out of hand as thousands of people gathered inside and outside the Polytechnic School and clashed with the police. Within three days, the peaceful occupation developed into a violent, mass uprising in the capital that shook the regime. The dictator Georgios Papadopoulos and his puppet government, headed by

7. For the question of dynamic resistance see Polymeris Voglis, *Δυναμική Αντίσταση: Υποκειμενικότητα, πολιτική βία και αντιδικτατορικός αγώνας 1967–1974* (Athens: Alexandria, 2022).

Spyridon Markezinis, opted for a bloody suppression by the army on 17 November 1973. There were 24 civilians dead, hundreds were arrested, and dozens of demonstrators were injured by bullets and beatings in the deadliest crackdown in post-war Greece. Most of the victims were not students, indicating that it was more a youth uprising than a student uprising against the dictatorship.⁸

From November 1973 to July 1974. In the aftermath of the Polytechnic School uprising, Papadopoulos was overthrown by the hard-liner Dimitrios Ioannidis. His short-lived rule was characterised by brutal repression of any opposition. After the shock of the suppression of the uprising, the anti-dictatorship movement in Greece fell apart, and activists went underground to escape the crackdown. During the eight months of the Ioannidis' regime there were no public protests, while hundreds of members of the anti-dictatorship organisations were arrested and brutally tortured. The dictatorship finally collapsed with impressive speed in July 1974 after the coup against Makarios in Cyprus and the Turkish invasion.

A NEW APPROACH TO RESISTANCE

This brief examination of the anti-dictatorship struggle in Greece demonstrates the complexity of resistance. The struggle against the dictatorship was fought in Greece and abroad; it was both violent and non-violent; it was both clandestine and public; it was both a cause of determined activists and a mass movement. In other words, resistance is not a single phenomenon, and, for this reason, it should be examined in its multiplicity.

To understand the multiplicity of resistance, Michel Foucault's approach is useful. Power relations are not unidimensional, and the matrix of relations indicates that there is a multiplicity of points at which power is exercised and at which resistance is projected. As Michel Foucault has written, power relations depend "on a multiplicity of points of resistance: these play the role of adversary, target, support, or handle in power relations. These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network".⁹ Resistance, then, can be understood as a multiplicity of points in the power relations that create a field through relations, connections, and circulations between multiple actors. Or, to put it differently, the concept of resistance

8. For a detailed account of the Polytechnic School uprising see Kostis Kornetis, *Children of the Dictatorship: Student Resistance, Cultural Politics and the "Long 1960s" in Greece* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013); Leonidas Kallivretakis, *Το Πολυτεχνείο έξω από το Πολυτεχνείο. Οι αφανείς πρωταγωνιστές της εξέγερσης του 1973* (Athens: Themelio, 2023).

9. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 95.

can be understood as a field constituted by a multitude of points of contention with regard to the exercise of power.

Let me try to historicise what Foucault suggests. It would be difficult to argue that there is a linear development, that is, that there is a gradual, evolutionary process in the anti-dictatorial struggle. There was no movement that began after the coup and culminated in the Polytechnic School uprising six and a half years later. For several years, active resistance against the regime was a matter of a few organisations and a few hundred people in Greece, and it would be an exaggeration to speak of an anti-dictatorial movement. The anti-dictatorship movement emerged later, in 1972, but there is no simple cause-and-effect relationship between the earlier clandestine organisations and the movement. The clandestine groups certainly helped to cultivate a spirit of opposition to the dictatorship, but the radicalisation of students was a more complex process that went beyond the anti-dictatorship organisations. Additionally, the concept of time is not fixed when examining social and political movements. These movements create events with the intention of accelerating developments and giving momentum to processes, which can be described as a “thickening” of time. This implies that they seek to deny a “natural” maturation of conditions and accelerate developments.

Having said this, multiplicity refers to different forms of action (violent or peaceful, legal or illegal, public or underground, etc.), which are different “points of resistance”. In this sense, activism may turn anything into a site of contention. A street may become a site of demonstration, a wall may become a site for political graffiti, an apartment may become a hideout, university buildings can be transformed from places of education into centres of political protest, and so on. Resistance, thus, is created through the multiplication of the points and subjects involved; let us think of resistance as a field created by the subject’s action. What are the characteristics of this field that resistance creates?

First of all, the multiplicity of resistance is related to dispersion, networking, and interaction. There is not one site of resistance but many, including different kinds of sites (real and imagined), which are connected to each other, networked through the movement of people and the circulation of ideas. The anti-dictatorial struggle does not have a centre. The anti-dictatorship struggle was carried out in Greece, but also in Italy, France, West Germany, Great Britain, Sweden, and elsewhere; it was carried out by people crossing borders and carrying ideas and materials. It involved individuals, anti-dictatorship organisations and committees that cooperated with each other, each maintaining its independence. The network of the different groups and individuals in Greece and abroad between 1967 and 1974 created a common political space unified by their opposition to the military regime.

Resistance against the dictatorship goes beyond Greek borders and, at the same time, is influenced by the political radicalism that is internationally in bloom in the “long sixties”. The anti-colonial struggles, the revolution in Cuba, the global movement of 1968, and the spread of revolutionary ideas and theories shaped the way Greeks within the country and abroad perceived resistance against the military regime. From this perspective, the anti-dictatorial struggle is an interesting case study through the prism of transnational history, which, according to Pierre-Yves Saunier, focuses on the study of relations, circulations, contacts, and the new entities they create.¹⁰

The multiplicity of points of resistance means that there is not a singular subject. Unlike what happened in Greece during the Occupation, when the EAM (and the KKE) played a dominant role in the Resistance movement, during the dictatorship there were many organisations in Greece and abroad, but none was dominant. In addition, if there is one quality that can be said to be prevalent among these groups, it is not their rigid structure but, on the contrary, their fluidity. Many anti-dictatorship organisations were short-lived, new forms of collective organisation emerged, new forms of action were adopted (such as “dynamic resistance”), activism over party politics was prioritised, and the commitment of individuals to organisations was not stable. From a historical point of view, the difference between the resistance in the years of the dictatorship and the model of organisation and action of the resistance in the 1940s is enormous.

In conclusion, I suggest that resistance should not be viewed as a singular entity that develops over time in an evolutionary manner and exhibits a distinct mode of organisation and action. Rather, resistance can be understood as constituted by the various points of contention with the dictatorship. Similarly, a multitude of collective and individual actors coalesce to create a political space that is not centralised, but rather dispersed. Resistance, too, is not a singular phenomenon, but rather a multitude of expressions. It is individual and collective, takes diverse forms and has several sites, it is constant and intermittent, partial and often ineffective, with periods of peak and decline. The multiplicity of resistance gives rise to a correspondingly multifaceted subject of resistance, a subjectivity that is similarly complex.

10. Pierre-Yves Saunier, *Transnational History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

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[CHAPTER 3]

Television: The Limits of Control in Modernising Francoism and the Estado Novo



During the democratic transition, Spanish television was considered an instrument of depoliticisation,² despite the importance of some of its programming in the political debate. In contrast, in Revolutionary Portugal, television was put “at the service of the people” after undergoing a process of ‘political cleansing’ following the events of 25 April 1974, and it was ultimately nationalised by the end of 1975. Yet Portuguese audiences clearly favoured entertainment formats that distanced themselves from the notion of television as an educational tool, a role it had also been assigned during the Estado Novo.³ In both countries, this preference for entertainment formats is often seen as a form of depoliticisation.

This chapter argues that during Francoism and Estado Novo, television played a dual role: it simultaneously facilitated both regimes’ transnational integration and even modernisation, while also promoting various protectionist measures of questionable effectiveness. Although television exposed Iberian audiences to the imagery and ideals of consumer society –echoing the Americanisation process in full force throughout the 1950s–1970s–⁴ this process unfolded unevenly in Portugal and Spain. By analysing the presence of transnational flows and integration in the implementation and development of television in both countries, we ask: to what extent did censorship and other control techniques attempt to limit the influence of these transnational flows, including United States soft power? What role did these dynamics play in either destabilising these regimes or, conversely, in transforming television not only into an instrument of modernisation but also into a medium of depoliticisation?

1. This research was funded by the FCT through projects UIDB/04209/2020, UIDP/04209/2020, and LA/P/0132/2020.

2. José Muñoz-Soro, “The Media in the Spanish Transition to Democracy (1975–82),” *International Journal of Iberian Studies* 33, nos. 2–3 (2020): 131–133.

3. João Carvalheiro, “Elementos sobre a ideia de audiência nos inícios da TV portuguesa,” *OBS** 12, no. 1 (2018): 34–35.

4. Richard F. Kuisel, “The End of Americanization? Or Reinventing a Research Field for Historians of Europe,” *Journal of Modern History* 92, no. 3 (2020): 630.

INTRODUCING TELEVISION IN PORTUGAL AND SPAIN

The push for international integration of the Estado Novo and Francoist regimes in a democratising Europe was closely aligned with the development of television in post-war Europe. The Second World War was pivotal for television's technological advancement, as components such as airplane cockpit screens were repurposed for TV sets. Although early television trials began before the war in Germany, France, Italy, and the UK, television emerged as a cultural symbol of the post-war period. The BBC began regular broadcasts in 1946, followed by RTF in 1949, RAI in 1954, TVE in 1956, and RTP in 1957. Greek television provides an interesting comparison, having emerged slightly later, in 1959–1960, initially outside state control but supported by US aid; it became a state monopoly only in the late 1960s.

The development of television not only mirrored but also actively contributed to the international integration of the Iberian regimes, as its implementation relied heavily on international networks. This dynamic was especially evident in Spain, though it also applied to Portugal. Despite the fluctuations in post-war diplomatic relations, the commercial and institutional dimensions of mass media development were deeply influenced by geopolitical factors, making media a key instrument of international engagement for both regimes. A notable example is CBS's proposal in August 1950 to establish a Spanish-based radio station broadcasting Spanish news to the United States – mirroring similar initiatives for Italian and French content.⁵ This occurred even before the United Nations' General Assembly Resolution 386, which eased Spain's diplomatic isolation in November of that year. The Francoist regime responded favourably to CBS's plans; indeed, CBS would later become one of the first providers of news content for TVE in 1957. This early collaboration around media exchange anticipated the formal diplomatic rapprochement marked by the 1953 Madrid Pacts, which granted the US access to four military bases in Spain – paralleling Portugal's earlier 1951 agreement allowing US use of the Lajes base. The 1950s thus marked a turning point for the Iberian dictatorships, as they moved from post-war isolation – signalled by their exclusion from the UN in 1946 – to recognition as strategic “anti-communist allies” by the end of the decade, a status symbolised by President Eisenhower's 1959 visit to Madrid.

Francoism and Estado Novo had two models for implementing television at their disposal: the public service model, exemplified by the BBC, and the commercial model represented by US television. However, Iberian

5. “Project by the Columbia Broadcasting System for the Establishment of a Radio News Service for the United States of America from Spain,” folder, box 35670, fonds Directorate-General for Broadcasting and Television, General Archives of the Administration (AGA), Alcalá de Henares.

television provides a strong case study of how these models are not as opposed as they might appear. Both dictatorships adapted the “public service model” in ways that reflected each regime’s unique power dynamics and the influence of economic elites over the state.

Like most European broadcasters, both TVE in Spain and RTP in Portugal were established as monopolies. In Portugal, however, the television concession was not granted to the state radio operator, *Emissora Nacional*, due to limited resources and pressure from the major private radio station, *Rádio Clube Português*, which had previously sought the rights to the television licence.⁶ Instead, RTP was established as a limited liability company whose shareholders included the state, nine radio operators (including *Rádio Clube Português*, which held the largest private share), eleven banks, and one individual, Armando Stichini Vilela, one of the seven members of the 1955 Television Commission, representing public subscription. Although the majority of RTP’s capital was private, the state provided crucial financial support by means of multiple increases in the company’s share capital over the years, compensating for shortfalls in revenue from licence fees and advertising. As a result, the regime maintained strong influence over RTP, setting regulations for its structure and operations and retaining powers of appointment, supervision, and direction, including appointing a government delegate to RTP’s board.

In contrast, TVE was created as a fully state-owned channel, following the model of other European countries where the television concession was granted to the state radio operator, in this case, RNE. Both TVE and RNE fell under the jurisdiction of the *Dirección General de Radiodifusión* (Directorate-General for Broadcasting), under the Ministry of Information and Tourism, created in 1951. Initial state investment in television was minimal and was compensated by advertising from the outset. Advertising included sponsorship and legal ownership of some programmes by sponsors, making it the only European television system with this type of funding. This funding model also facilitated the broadcast of US series, which were designed with commercial breaks in mind.⁷ Consequently, despite its official status as a public service broadcaster, TVE developed into a hybrid model more akin to the US commercial model than RTP, though both relied heavily on US programming.⁸

6. Alberto Arons de Carvalho, *A RTP e o serviço público de Televisão* (Coimbra: Almedina, 2009), 403–404.

7. Jesús Montero and Teresa Ojer, “Los programas de ficción de producción extranjera durante la dictadura,” in Jesús Montero, ed., *Una televisión con dos cadenas: La programación en España (1956–1990)* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2018), 102.

8. In 1958, TVE began to receive films from the USA as well as participating in the ex-

TELEVISION: A TRANSNATIONAL ENDEAVOUR

Iberian television networks, like most European ones, were highly reliant on Western connections – namely infrastructure, technical knowledge, and content. Thus, even in protectionist dictatorial regimes such as Estado Novo and Francoism, television remained a product shaped by transnational flows, as its mode of production was grounded in ongoing transnational and intermedial interactions.

At the infrastructural level, Western European television networks depended on their membership in international organisations such as the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) – both of which Spain and Portugal joined early. TVE became a member of the EBU in October 1955, followed by RTP in 1956, although RTP only became an active participant in 1959.⁹ TVE's connection to the Eurovision network in 1960 enabled RTP to receive programming via Spain until 31 January 1966, when Portugal's own transmission infrastructure was completed. From that point onward, RTP could not only receive but also contribute content to Eurovision without Spanish mediation. Yet the first Eurovision retransmission via the Spanish link occurred on 8 May 1963, when a football match between Benfica and Feyenoord was broadcast from Lisbon.¹⁰

In its formative years, RTP maintained close ties with Western European broadcasters, particularly in countries where public service television was dominant, such as West Germany, France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Italy, and Monaco (home to Europe's oldest private television station, founded in 1954). Technical expertise and, to some extent, programming were transferred through the circulation of personnel. Before regular broadcasts began in March 1957, RTP's future directors undertook internships at foreign stations: Orlando Vitorino trained in France, Germany, and the Netherlands; Álvaro Benamor and Rui Ferrão interned at Italy's RAI; and Nuno Fradique Veiga Santos and Herlander Peyroteo trained at the BBC.

Managers and technicians also participated in international conferences, trade fairs, and media festivals – some of which brought together both Eastern and Western broadcasters, such as the pop music festival in Split,

change of Kinescope programmes with Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Peru, etc. See "Outbound Books lv. 1957–1960 (correspondence)," box 35739, fonds Directorate-General for Broadcasting and Television, Ministry of Information and Tourism, IDD (03) 049.008, General Archives of the Administration (AGA), Alcalá de Henares.

9. RTP, *Yearbook 1964* (Lisbon: RTP, 1964), 144.

10. M. Roldán Villén, "TVE hace posible el primer contacto de la TV portuguesa con Eurovisión," *Tele-Radio*, 27 May 1963, 10–11.

Yugoslavia,¹¹ and the Golden Prague International Television Festival.¹² In addition to exchanging ideas, they acquired and tested new equipment abroad. RTP engineers regularly purchased radio beams in France, transmitter components in Germany, and studio and field equipment in both Germany and the Netherlands. For example, Marcello Morais, who would later lead RTP's operational services, visited France's RTF in early 1957 during a NATO-sponsored trip to Paris.

The launch of Spanish Television was far more improvisational. When regular broadcasts began, only two TVE employees had visited other television stations, and none had received specialised training; most applied what they had learned from radio, theatre, and film.¹³ In the early 1960s, however, TVE staff and managers were also sent abroad for training, including to the BBC. Upon their return, this group developed the Nestlé-sponsored programme *Esta es su vida* in Miramar Studios in Barcelona.¹⁴ Others were sent to the United States, where ten staff members completed a six-week course at the Studio School of RCA Institutes.¹⁵ By the end of the decade, in 1969, TVE had established contacts with 92 television stations around the world and maintained particularly close relationships with Hispanic American broadcasters. Its productions reached four continents,¹⁶ reflecting the more expansionist and commercially oriented nature of the Spanish model.

Programming, however, is the most visible aspect of the entangled nature of Iberian television's development. This entanglement is evident across distinct segments, as both stations relied on foreign suppliers from the outset. That was particularly true in the case of news: in 1957, TVE contracted the services of CBS and United Press (UP), which sent daily newsreels by plane.¹⁷ RTP, on the other hand, signed an agreement with UP –prior to the start of regular broadcasts–, via the Portuguese National Agency (ANI), under which the US agency committed to supplying ten news items per day for the first two and a half years of the contract, with a minimum of eighty news items per

11. Visa request by Humberto Mello Pereira for travel to Yugoslavia, 24 June 1971, folder SR 3342/71, NT 3922, File Services, SC, PIDE Collection, National Archive of Torre do Tombo, Lisbon.

12. "Praga: Festival internacional de Televisión," *Tele-Radio*, 3 July 1967, 28.

13. N. Carreras Larrio, "Estructura y análisis de la programación de TVE (1958–1962): Los años pioneros," PhD diss., Universidad de Sevilla, 2008, 570.

14. According to Lorenzo Díaz, Jordi Garriga, head of advertising, sent Federico Gallo (presenter), Eugenio Pena (director) and Vilá San Juan (coordinator) to the BBC to learn. See Lorenzo Díaz, *La televisión en España, 1949–1995* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1994), 292.

15. "Profesionales de TVE en Nueva York," *Tele-Radio*, 24 August 1964, 9–11.

16. Matías Escribano, "TVE en el Mundo," *Tele-Radio*, 14 April 1969, 13–15.

17. Díaz, *La televisión en España, 1949–1995*, 690.

week thereafter.¹⁸ Despite these foreign suppliers introducing Portugal and Spain into the dominant news flow, information remained tightly controlled.

Entertainment, however, provides an especially revealing case study in the reception of the transnational content. In 1964, TVE signed a contract with Paramount for the acquisition of feature films.¹⁹ RTP, as early as 1959, introduced films specifically produced for television, with the goal of fulfilling three objectives: satisfying audience demand, freeing up studio space, and lowering production costs, since importing these films was cheaper than producing live television.²⁰ From 1960 onwards, such programmes –sometimes including series that were already successful in foreign markets and featured characters familiar to Portuguese audiences through other formats, such as cinema– began to appear more frequently in RTP’s programming grid. While censorship could ban certain titles, cut scenes, or manipulate translations, it could not erase the cultural impact of this foreign content. Shows like *Perry Mason*, *Bewitched*, *The Flintstones*, *I Love Lucy*, *Bonanza*, and *Dr. Kildare* became extremely popular in both countries, helping to forge shared cultural references and a common audiovisual language – one increasingly shared between Portugal and Spain.

By the mid 1960s in Spain, despite efforts to limit the impact of foreign programmes –such as adapting formats or establishing agreements with other southern European broadcasters, like RAI in 1963²¹ and RTP in 1964–²² “cinematic” programmes, as they were designated, accounted for the largest share of TVE’s programming (23.8%). The majority of these were foreign series like *The Saint*, *Mr. Novak*, *Bewitched*, *Bonanza*, etc., followed by news programmes (19.2%), as shown in Table 1.²³ In Portugal, RTP’s programming grid was distributed differently, making direct comparison difficult. However, if “news” include “current affairs”, the share amounts to a similar proportion (17.98%), whereas films accounted for approximately 11.48% in 1965.²⁴ This highlights the distinction between the two stations, with RTP being more inclined to emphasise its educational and informative missions.

18. Government Commissioner Quarterly Report, Oct.–Nov. 1956, 25–26, box 679, António Oliveira Salazar Collection, National Archive of Torre do Tombo, Lisbon.

19. Díaz, *La televisión en España, 1949–1995*, 697.

20. RTP, *Board of Directors’ Financial Report and Audit Committee Opinion*, 1959 (Lisbon: RTP, 1959), 7.

21. “Colaboración Hispano-Italiana: En Roma se ha firmado un acuerdo entre la RAI-TV y RTVE,” *Tele-Radio*, 21 January 1963, 10–11.

22. Minutes of the agreement meeting, 1964, folder “Foreign Relations RTP/TVE Meeting 1964,” box 50, RTP Collection, RTP: Museum Centre, Lisbon.

23. *RNE/TVE Programación 1965–1966* (Madrid: Ministerio de Información y Turismo, n.d.), 11–12.

24. RTP, *Yearbook 1965* (Lisbon: RTP, 1965), 11ff.

PROGRAMME TYPE	TVE	PROGRAMME TYPE	RTP
Cinematic	23.8%	News	13.83%
News	19.2%	Subsidiary production	13.62%
Religious	18.2%	Drama	Theatre 2.98%
			Movies 11.48%
Light entertainment	16.2%	Cultural	9.40%
Cultural	14.8%	Educational	9.30%
Drama (not just theatre, but also Spanish production)	10.4%	Various	7.18%
Children's	7.1%	Dissemination programmes (documentaries, etc.)	6.75%
Musical	3.9%	Advertising	5.86%
Sports	3.3%	Sports	5.03%
		Current Affairs	4.15%
		Classical Music	2.98%
		Tele-school	2.76%

Table 1: 1965 TVE and RTP's Grid comparison (Sources: MIT and RTP, *RNE/TVE Programación 1965-1966* and 1965's *RTP Yearbook*)

In both countries, efforts were made to encourage domestic production. In Portugal, although results were limited, RTP promoted the creation of original Portuguese television content, starting with an annual competition that became permanent in 1961.²⁵ In Spain, despite its heavy reliance on US imports, TVE began producing original content early on

25. RTP, *Board of Directors' Financial Report and Audit Committee Opinion*, 1961 (Lisbon: RTP, 1962), 7.

and with more success than its Iberian counterpart. For instance, in 1958, TVE produced *Tele Rodríguez*, its first original series, depicting the life of a family that owned a television set.²⁶ From 1959 onwards, short-format series by Jaime de Armiñán were produced, focusing on the middle class –especially women– depicting aspirations for a different way of life.²⁷ These series can be seen as an example of TV “creolisation”²⁸ or “selective appropriation”.²⁹ Some of these series, like *Galeria de Maridos*, were also broadcast by RTP in 1960.³⁰

When comparing the titles preferred by their audiences,³¹ we find that both countries predominantly favoured US and British productions (CBS, ABC, NBC, and BBC), including ITV programmes financed by US production firms, like Saffire Films, led by Hannah Weinstein. For example, *The Adventures of Robin Hood* and *Four Just Men*, written by Hollywood outcasts during McCarthyism, were intended for distribution in the United States – illustrating the entangled broadcasting relationship between the UK and the US³² and complicating the notion of what Americanisation means for the UK, even though the latter provided entry for most of the US television flow.³³ In sum, Iberian audiences enjoyed similar types of content and were offered virtually identical programming options, though in varying proportions. Heavily influenced by US culture, this content –ranging from Hollywood cinema, television series and formats (i.e. talk shows) and advertising– contributed to the development of consumer societies in both Portugal and Spain, shaping consumption habits and sociability norms. By the late 1950s, broadcasting magazines such as *Tele-Radio* and *Radio & Televisão* were already advertising household goods, such as domestic appliances and comfort items, emulating the homes depicted on television and in their pages.

26. Carreras Larrío, “Estructura y análisis de la programación de TVE,” 207.

27. N. Carreras Lario, “Tradición e innovación en la comunicación social: la experiencia inicial de Televisión Española,” *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico* 19 (2013): 675.

28. Volker R. Berghahn, “The Debate on ‘Americanization’ among Economic and Cultural Historians,” *Cold War History* 10, no. 1 (2010): 114.

29. David Ellwood et al., “Questions of Cultural Exchange: The NIAS Statement on the European Reception of American Mass Culture,” *American Studies International* 32, no. 2 (1994): 42.

30. Programme log, book 1960, RTP Collection, RTP: Museum Centre, Lisbon.

31. *El público opina sobre televisión: Dos encuestas para TVE* (Madrid: Instituto de la Opinión Pública and Televisión Española, 1965), 19; RTP, *Yearbook 1971* (Lisbon: RTP, 1971), 316–319.

32. Michele Hilmes, *Network Nations: A Transnational History of British and American Broadcasting* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 298–299.

33. Kaarle Nordenstreng and Tapio Varis, *Television Traffic—A One-Way Street: A Survey and Analysis of the International Flow of Television Programme Material*, Reports and Papers on Mass Communication 70 (Paris: UNESCO, 1974), 23.

A PARALLEL PRODUCTION PATH, DIVERGENT CONTROL STRATEGIES

Even though both regimes relied on foreign formats and imports, they also implemented protectionist measures that went beyond merely stimulating domestic production, as previously mentioned. These measures were primarily based on three control strategies: local adaptation, censorship, and controlling reception. In this regard, the strategies in both countries diverged more than they converged. Both countries focused on controlling content through censorship and various forms of local adaptation –dubbing in Spain and subtitling in Portugal– which ultimately influenced how these products were consumed. However, only the Francoist regime sought to actively control the reception of these products.

In Portugal, dubbing of foreign content was banned by a legislative package aimed explicitly at promoting national production (Law No. 2027 of 18 February 1948), which also established a National Cinema Fund. Television followed the same rule, allowing dubbing only in exceptional cases, such as for cultural programmes or cartoons. Dubbing films was permitted only for co-productions.³⁴

In contrast, in Spain, dubbing was mandated by an order from the Minister of Industry and Commerce on 23 April 1941, which prohibited the projection of films in any language other than Spanish, except those authorized by the *Sindicato Nacional del Espectáculo*. The order also stipulated that dubbing had to be carried out in Spanish studios, on national territory and by Spanish nationals.³⁵ However, this requirement was lifted by order of the national Ministry of Education in 1947. Nevertheless, dubbing remained widespread, largely due to its historical roots predating Francoism.

Dubbing in Spain developed on a scale that the Portuguese market never permitted, as the process –requiring studios, actors, and recordings– was significantly more expensive. In Portugal, only one film was ever dubbed before the prohibition: the 1936 French film *Son excellence Antonin (O Grande Nicolau*, in Portugal), directed by Charles-Félix Tavano. By contrast, the first film dubbed into Spanish was produced in 1929, before the proclamation of the Second Republic, though it was done in Paris, and not all the actors were Spanish.

During the Second Republic, dubbing studios were established in

34. Section “Program Group Meeting. Administrative and Legal 23-X-64,” 10, minutes of the agreement meeting, 1964, folder “Foreign Relations RTP/TVE Meeting 1964,” box 50, RTP Collection, RTP: Museum Centre, Lisbon.

35. Carmen Gutiérrez-Lanza, “Proteccionismo y censura durante la etapa franquista: cine nacional, cine traducido y control estatal,” in Rosa Rabadán, ed., *Traducción y censura Inglés-Español 1939–1985: Estudio preliminar* (León: Universidad de León, 2000), 25.

Barcelona (*Trilla-la Riva* in 1933, *Acustic S.A.* and *Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer*, which dubbed *Gone with the Wind* in 1947, setting the standard for dubbing in Spain) and in Madrid (*Voz de España*, *Fono España S.A.*, and *Cinearte-Iber-son*). In other words, a dubbing industry and established spectator habits were already in place under the Second Republic, and the legislative change of 1947 did not disrupt these practices.³⁶

Later, however, TVE mixed versions dubbed in Spain with those from Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Miami (e.g., *Bewitched* or *The Dick Van Dyke Show*), sparking public debates³⁷ and pressure from Spanish studios.³⁸ The primary argument against foreign dubbing was often the quality of the Spanish language. Conversely, in Portugal, a culture of rejection of dubbing was evident, as reflected in a 1969 observation on the subject: “(...) it would be ridiculous for a Paul Newman or an Anthony Perkins to be identified by the same Portuguese voice, not to mention the case of singers who would be ‘betrayed’ in the versions of their songs”.³⁹

Censorship also played a significant role in content regulation. In TVE, two main models of censorship can be observed. Initially, under the leadership of Minister Rafael Arias Salgado, a fundamentalist Catholic and staunch Falangist, and José M^a Revuelta y Prieto, as Director General of Radio and Television Broadcasting, television followed the operational model already established by RNE. Since many TVE employees came from RNE, they had already internalised these censorship procedures, resulting in stricter control over the medium by the regime.

In addition to consignments, a mechanism included in the 1938 Press and Printing Law that required media outlets to include specific information (e.g., “Activate propaganda in favour of the victims in Chile; contact the office set up at the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica, run by Blas Piñar and Alfonso Zunzunegui, who will provide the necessary documentation”⁴⁰ or “Prepare a

36. Gutiérrez-Lanza, “Proteccionismo y censura,” 25.

37. Carmen Rodríguez de Sepúlveda, “Gerardo Diego y un tema importante: El lenguaje, en TVE,” *Tele-Radio*, 11 November 1967, 12–17; Salvador Pérez Valiente, “TV española y de las Españas,” *Tele-Radio*, 12 February 1968, 11; Braulio Díaz Sal, “Lengua española y de las Españas,” *Tele-Radio*, 8 April 1968, 15. In 1969, there was even a column in *Tele-Radio* “El espectador y el Lenguaje” – and a TVE program, headed by Professor Manuel Criado de Val. See Manuel Criado de Val, “Opinión: La correcta utilización del lenguaje,” *Tele-Radio*, 1 September 1969, 9; Manuel Criado de Val, “En busca de la unificación al castellano: Los doblajes. Sería necesario un servicio de unificación lingüística del doblaje,” *Tele-Radio*, 19 January 1970, 19.

38. C. R. S., “Las series nocturnas dobladas en España,” *Tele-Radio*, 12 October 1970, 36–37.

39. Orlando Dias Agudo, “As legendas do cinema: Como se fazem?,” *Nova Antena*, 14 February 1969, 28.

40. “In Support of the Victims of Chile,” note from the Director General of Broadcasting to the Director of TVE Programmes, ref. 492, 24 November 1961, box 35654, fonds Directorate-

report for today, featuring aerial photographs of Madrid that appeared in yesterday's edition of *Arriba*, also mentioning the splendid new neighbourhoods, etc."⁴¹), there were also suggestions (e.g., "Attention should be paid to women's attire; as a general rule, they should not wear evening gowns"⁴²). Additionally, there were direct orders for censorship in its restrictive sense, involving cuts, eliminations, or prohibitions (e.g., "In yesterday's broadcast of Gran Parada, the final act featured an orchestra dedicated exclusively to [underlined in the original] jazz music. I remind you that such performances are prohibited."⁴³). There were also reprimands regarding technical, aesthetic, moral, or political issues (e.g., "Yesterday's feature film was too old. It should be tested beforehand to avoid interruptions"⁴⁴ or "Josephine Baker's performance was completely vulgar"⁴⁵ or even "The excessive praise given to the BBC on TVE for its XXV anniversary seems inappropriate"⁴⁶). On the other hand, praise for content and aesthetic aspects was also possible (e.g., "Little John's performance on Gran Parada was extraordinary"⁴⁷).

General for Broadcasting and Television, Ministry of Information and Tourism, IDD (03) 049.008, General Archives of the Administration (AGA), Alcalá de Henares.

41. "Report: Aerial Photographs of Madrid," memo from the Director General of Broadcasting to the Director of TVE Programming, ref. 223, 13 January 1961, box 35654, fonds Directorate-General for Broadcasting and Television, Ministry of Information and Tourism, IDD (03) 049.008, General Archives of the Administration (AGA), Alcalá de Henares.

42. "Regarding Ladies' Wardrobe," memo from the Director General of Broadcasting to the Director of TVE Programming, ref. 219, 2 February 1960, box 35654, fonds Directorate-General for Broadcasting and Television, Ministry of Information and Tourism, IDD (03) 049.008, General Archives of the Administration (AGA), Alcalá de Henares.

43. "'Jazz' Music in *Gran Parada*," memo from the Director General of Broadcasting to the Director of TVE Programming, 30 May 1960, box 35654, fonds Directorate-General for Broadcasting and Television, Ministry of Information and Tourism, IDD (03) 049.008, General Archives of the Administration (AGA), Alcalá de Henares.

44. "Feature-Length Films," memo from the Director General of Broadcasting to the Director of TVE Programming, ref. 276, 31 October 1960, box 35654, fonds Directorate-General for Broadcasting and Television, Ministry of Information and Tourism, IDD (03) 049.008, General Archives of the Administration (AGA), Alcalá de Henares.

45. "Performance by Josephine Baker," memo from the Director General of Broadcasting to the Director of TVE Programming, 7 November 1960, box 35654, fonds Directorate-General for Broadcasting and Television, Ministry of Information and Tourism, IDD (03) 049.008, General Archives of the Administration (AGA), Alcalá de Henares.

46. "25th Anniversary of the BBC," memo from the Director General of Broadcasting to the Director of TVE Programming, ref. 1068, 6 November 1961, box 35654, fonds Directorate-General for Broadcasting and Television, Ministry of Information and Tourism, IDD (03) 049.008, General Archives of the Administration (AGA), Alcalá de Henares.

47. "Performance by Little John," memo from the Director General of Broadcasting to the Director of TVE Programming, 7 November 1960, box 35654, fonds Directorate-General for Broadcasting and Television, Ministry of Information and Tourism, IDD (03) 049.008, General Archives of the Administration (AGA), Alcalá de Henares.

The second phase coincided with the appointment of Manuel Fraga as Minister of Information and Tourism (1962–1969), a period considered crucial for both the consolidation of the regime and the restructuring of TVE.⁴⁸ While censorship had taken a different name in 1960,⁴⁹ it remained active within TVE through “advisory commissions”,⁵⁰ whose broadcasting secretaries, according to Montero Díaz et al.,⁵¹ were responsible for reviewing broadcasts, checking programmes, and listening to recordings – ensuring not so much quality improvement as strict adherence to production guidelines and the airing of only approved content.

Similarly, RTP’s censorship system only became fully defined after 1962, when the Cabinet for the Examination and Classification of Programmes (CECP) assumed its final structure. The onset of colonial wars in Angola (1961), Guinea-Bissau (1963) and Mozambique (1964) had a profound effect on RTP – not only in terms of censorship, but also in programming strategy, as television played a prominent role in the war effort. Prior experience with film censorship, which relied on cuts and age classifications, and radio censorship, particularly its internal mechanisms, were crucial in shaping television censorship in Portugal. However, television censorship was not uniform; different types of content required different methodologies. Some cases resembled film censorship, in which CECP played a central role, while others required a more decentralised approach, depending on the division heads,⁵² for example. In sum, over time, both TVE and RTP adopted a more decentralised censorship model, adapting their oversight depending on the format. Television, by its nature, required a more flexible approach to censorship. This shift can be observed in both broadcasters, as they sought to balance censorship with increasing complexity in television production. New agents –such as producers⁵³ and division heads,

48. Enrique Bustamante, *Historia de la Radio y la Televisión en España: Una asignatura pendiente de la democracia* (Madrid: Gedisa, 2013).

49. *Boletín Oficial del Estado* (BOE), no. 44 (20 February 1960): 2078.

50. “There are ten advisory commissions at TVE to assess the various programme genres, made up of prominent bodies who, after TVE has drawn up the general programme outline, make their assessments. (...) A permanent committee presents the various programmes to the committees for their appraisal.” in section “Program Group Meeting. Administrative and Legal 23-X-64,” 16–17, minutes of the agreement meeting, 1964, folder “Foreign Relations RTP/TVE Meeting 1964,” box 50, RTP Collection, RTP: Museum Centre, Lisbon.

51. Jesús Montero et al., “Los telediarios franquistas: Una investigación sobre las fuentes,” *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social* 69 (2014): 170.

52. Rita Luís, “Entre o mercado global de informação e o primado da nação: a censura na televisão do Estado Novo, 1957–1974,” *Ler História* 81 (2022): 226–227.

53. Rita Luís and João Carvalheiro, “When the Censor Is Not the Censor: Variety Shows’ Censorship on Portuguese Television during Salazar’s Dictatorship (1957–1968),” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 45, no. 1 (2024): 120.

at RTP, and broadcasting secretaries at TVE– gained prominence in managing censorship, which became embedded in labour relations rather than being limited to formal regulatory oversight.

On another note, Francoism focused much more than Estado Novo on controlling television reception. Teleclubs began to appear more or less spontaneously in both countries, where early television consumption was commonly collective, as TV sets were expensive, and were often promoted by parishes or priests.

In Portugal, it wasn't until the early 1970s that TV ownership became more socially diversified.⁵⁴ While TV clubs existed from early on –the first recorded instance dates back to 1957, in a Lisbon parish, initiated by a priest and dedicated to members of a Catholic congregation–⁵⁵ and initially followed the same attendance rules as cinema theatres,⁵⁶ they lacked the state intervention that Teleclubs received in Spain. Instead, unregulated cafés remained important viewing spaces until the 1970s, especially in rural areas.⁵⁷

In contrast, Spain saw a more deliberate effort by the regime to control the phenomenon. After an initial unstructured phase, the Ministry of Information and Tourism actively expanded Teleclubs –especially in rural areas– through the creation of a national Teleclubs network in late 1964, replicating the control model previously used with Cineclubs.⁵⁸

The spontaneous nature of early Teleclubs was initially celebrated in TVE's magazine *Tele-Radio*, with examples such as the miners of Teruel or the students of the Antonio Nebrija College in Madrid's University City, who established their own Teleclubs.⁵⁹ TVE even launched a donation programme, beginning with a request from a priest in the parish of Serradas de la Fuente (Madrid province).⁶⁰ From 1962 onward, according to Martín,⁶¹ individual purchase of television sets was encouraged to discourage public gatherings. Television sets were no longer considered luxury items; taxes were reduced, and instalment-based purchasing was introduced, making national production a more attractive endeavour, which eventually drove prices down.

54. RTP, *Yearbook 1970* (Lisbon: RTP, 1970), 308.

55. "Surgiu o primeiro TELECLUBE português!," *Rádio e Televisão*, 22 November 1957, 2.

56. Decreto-Lei (DL) 42.660 (20 November 1959), *Diário do Governo*, Série I: 1740–1741.

57. RTP, *Yearbook 1970*, 316.

58. Javier Martín Antón, "Los teleclubs: Una revisión acerca de las salas de televisión en España y su incidencia en Asturias," *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma* 29 (2017): 360.

59. Jesús Vasallo, "Teleclub y convivencia," *Tele-Radio*, 4 May 1964, 10.

60. "En cada pueblo, un televisor," *Tele-Radio*, 23 November 1964, 40–41.

61. Martín Antón, "Los teleclubs," 356.

Although grassroots organisation was initially praised,⁶² this soon conflicted with the more centralised vision promoted by Minister Manuel Fraga. His project officially began on 25 November 1964, with the inauguration of the first Teleclub in the network in Mantilla la Seca (Zamora), followed by the construction of the first purpose-built “pilot” Teleclub⁶³ on 7 May 1967, in Ojos Negros (Teruel).⁶⁴ The initiative was conceived as a means of extending the economic and social development experienced by the country into rural areas, with the explicit goal of raising the cultural level of the population. Its significance was underscored by the inclusion of the Teleclubs networks in the Second Development Plan, in 1967⁶⁵ – an importance that television implementation had not previously received. By that time, there were over 2,300 Teleclubs throughout Spain,⁶⁶ each equipped with at least a library and supervised by a monitor trained in special courses⁶⁷ sponsored by the Ministry and overseen by the Central Board of Information, Tourism, and Popular Education. Activities –including “Talks and lectures”, “Theatrical performances”, “Debates and round tables”, “film forums”, “musical soirées”, “folkloric performances”, or “field trips”– were closely monitored.⁶⁸ Authorities emphasised that Teleclub programming should include “lectures and conferences led by influential figures” and that local “Ateneos” should provide intellectual guidance for Teleclubs activities.⁶⁹ By 1972, the number of Teleclubs had nearly doubled, with more than 4,600 active across Spain, according to Martín.⁷⁰ However, by 1975, it is estimated that around

62. Jesús Vasallo, “Elevación cultural por los teleclubs,” *Tele-Radio*, 1 June 1964, 21.

63. Javier Martín divides teleclubs into three typologies: locals –the majority, usually in rural areas–; district level and pilot ones, located in new buildings. See Martín Antón, “Los teleclubs,” 362–363.

64. L.-T. M., “Tele-clubs,” *Tele-Radio*, 22 May 1967, 16–19.

65. José Carlos Rueda Laffond, “La televisión, símbolo del desarrollismo franquista: algunas claves de interpretación,” *Cercles: Revista d’Història Cultural* 21 (2018): 121.

66. “National Network of Teleclubs, Central Board of Information, Tourism, and Popular Education,” Ministerio de Información y Turismo (MIT), 93, box 54067, fonds Ministry of Information and Tourism, General Directorate of Popular Culture and Spectacles, IDD (03) 049.021, General Archives of the Administration (AGA), Alcalá de Henares.

67. Jesús Caveró, “Teleclubs,” *Tele-Radio*, 21 October 1968, 10–12.

68. “Questionnaire A,” from Evaristo Martín Freire, Central Board of Information, Tourism, and Popular Education, to provincial delegates, January 1968, box 54067, fonds Ministry of Information and Tourism, General Directorate of Popular Culture and Spectacles, IDD (03) 049.021, General Archives of the Administration (AGA), Alcalá de Henares.

69. Circular 3/67, 3 May 1967, from the Sub-director General of the Central Board of Information, Tourism, and Popular Education, to provincial delegates, box 54067, fonds Ministry of Information and Tourism, General Directorate of Popular Culture and Spectacles, IDD (03) 049.021, General Archives of the Administration (AGA), Alcalá de Henares.

70. Martín Antón, “Los teleclubs,” 362.

80% of households already owned a television set,⁷¹ leading to the decline –though not complete disappearance–⁷² of the Teleclub model of reception.

CONCLUSION

The consumer society, shaped by mass culture –particularly of US origin– found in television a key agent of influence in the Iberian Peninsula. Examining the introduction and development of television in Portugal and Spain compels us to reconsider the Estado Novo and Francoism as protectionist regimes. Both adopted strategies, albeit different ones, to shield themselves from transnational flows and certain aspects of modernisation, bearing in mind the disruptive potential of television across various dimensions, from its content to the gatherings of viewers it encouraged.

However, due to the inherently transnational nature of television production, the medium ultimately forced both regimes to open up, particularly as factions within the regimes advocating modernisation found their interests aligned with such openness. In Spain, this process occurred through the appropriation of strategies –particularly the commercial nature of the US television model– and an attempt to domesticate transnational content through the creolisation of foreign productions. This approach enabled TVE, within just a decade, to evolve from merely adapting content for Spanish audiences to exporting its own content – primarily to the Latin American market. A strong influence of market-oriented imperatives on television production became evident. From the mid-1960s onward, the Francoist regime increasingly viewed television as a tool of modernisation –*desarrollismo* in its native form– aimed at disseminating the achievements of the “economic miracle”, driven by technocratic governance, across the entire country. In this sense, the Americanisation of TVE was more profound than that of RTP, extending beyond content to encompass production practices and models.

In Portugal, RTP lacked the resources to develop domestic productions capable of competing with the more popular imports, largely US imports, with only a few exceptions in non-fiction formats. Furthermore, it never fully embraced the entertainment-driven, audience-oriented mission typical of commercial television. Although it began to acknowledge the importance of appealing to viewers during the 1960s, RTP maintained a strong commitment to its “informative” and educational functions – roles that were significantly shaped by the colonial wars that began in 1961.

71. Rueda Laffond, “La televisión, símbolo del desarrollismo franquista,” 120.

72. TVE, “¿Qué fue del teleclub?,” *TVE Informativos*, 8 July 2012, 3:06, <https://www.rtve.es/play/videos/te-acuerdas/acuerdas-fue-del-teleclub/1458105/> (accessed 30 April 2026).

Among all media, television was regarded as the most tightly controlled by both regimes, and indeed it was, especially in terms of its informative content. However, the space dedicated to entertainment opened up possibilities for viewers, whose effects likely varied according to social groups and the temporal contexts of reception. For instance, between the 1950s and 1970s, the role of television, among other media, in the emergence of new subjectivities, in the transformation of gender roles, dress codes, and norms of sociability between the sexes, must be considered when discussing the modernisation and liberalisation of the regimes. The effect that would later come to be understood as depoliticisation can, however, be interpreted as ambiguous during these periods, especially in dimensions where “the personal is political”, as it allowed for horizons of possibility different from those promoted by the regimes. Still, the question remains: to what extent were these changes controllable? What impact did they, in fact, have on censorship rules? And how significant were they considered by the regimes themselves: were they seen as a manageable evolution, or did they genuinely escape their repressive control?

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[CHAPTER 4]

Cultural Expressions of Historical Transformation in Late Twentieth- Century Portugal



INTRODUCTION

This chapter proposes a synthesis of social and political transformation in late twentieth-century Portugal through the analysis of some objects of Portuguese popular culture. The idea is not to use these cultural objects (films, songs, TV ads) as symptoms of social change, but rather as expressions of tensions triggered by some of the most dramatic transformations experienced by Portuguese society from the 1960s to the 1990s, a period marked by mass migration, urbanisation, industrialisation, and democratisation in the aftermath of the 1974–75 revolutionary process.

Combined, these transformations light each other up. Political events, from the revolution to European integration, gained momentum in the context of strong migratory movements, both to Northern Europe and to the largest cities (especially Lisbon and Porto), an exodus from the countryside that meant also the end of rural Portugal in a society increasingly dedicated to the secondary and tertiary sectors. Conversely, these new social circumstances developed through a generalised easing of authoritarianism, noticeable, for example, in the opening of the country to the outside world, including population mobility, but also its exposure to different ideas, expectations, and opportunities.

Cultural objects offer particularly expressive entry points to these phenomena. This can be seen at two levels. On the one hand, popular culture presents a palpable utopian drive even under authoritarianism. Songs, films, and news in circulation exposed audiences to trivial aspects (and thus not explicitly subversive) of their aesthetics that opened expectations, sometimes unconsciously: the happy ending in Hollywood films seemed to suggest that happiness was a legitimate right in affluent societies; the vibrant rhythm of rock music energised the aspirations of Portuguese youth from the 1960s onwards; the photos of the international jet set in magazines familiarised readers with the everyday life of people who looked, simultaneously, freer and, here too, happier (normally by following more liberal morals).

On the other hand, cultural circulations and the expectations triggered by their contents played a decisive role in the deterioration of the ideological edifice that sustained the authoritarian regime. A good example of this can be

found in the insistent use of the word democracy in 1950s and 1960s magazines, to show how Western societies were becoming more egalitarian (when a North American politician was shown riding a bus, or a British prince studying in a public school). Democracy, in these circumstances, was not exactly a political regime (which would have been unacceptable to censorship), nor even a political value, but a natural consequence of modernisation.¹

When the everyday life of modern societies was shown as a space of horizontal relations and broader expectations, the aspiration to freedom and equality went beyond the programme of anti-fascist opposition. At this level, modernisation emerged as a shared project, encapsulating disparate dimensions such as consumerism, comfort, liberal mores, and social mobility. One thing seemed irretrievably lost in the process: the image of Portugal as a traditional society, and the Portuguese as a people of conformist peasants. And yet, the latter did not disappear without a bang. As our cultural objects will show, the ideological foundations of Portuguese nationalism –the deeply ingrained narratives of rurality and Empire– would regularly reappear in late twentieth-century Portugal, as a return of the repressed in the nation's political unconscious.

MIGRATION, URBANISATION, AND THE END OF THE ESTADO NOVO

An emblematic sequence in *Verdes Anos* (a founding film in the Portuguese new cinema of the 1960s) dramatically represents the challenges posed by the city to newcomers –a housemaid in a middle-class household (her) and an apprentice shoemaker (him)– who try to retrieve a blouse she dropped in a large puddle at a construction site after a fight. With their knees in the mud, they lean on each other, trying to reach the blouse, in a silent reconciliation, while the melancholic guitar of Carlos Paredes (the familiar instrument of *fado*, Lisbon's traditional music) offers a sonic contrast to the background of tall buildings in modern Lisbon.² The couple's chaste tenderness and the melancholic chords barely compensate for the inhospitable elements of the scene: the muddy puddle, the modern buildings, and the sorrow left by the fight, in which their expectations about life in Lisbon clashed. They are, socially and geographically, at the city limits, but that is precisely what puts them at the centre of the historical process.

The sequence is very close to the atmospheres of urbanisation in other contemporary films, especially in Italian cinema –Pasolini's *Accatone* or Visconti's *Rocco and His Brothers* easily come to mind– where the struggle of characters to fit into society is similarly shown through the adversities

1. Luís Trindade, *Silêncio Aflito* (Lisbon: Tinta-da-China, 2022), 360.

2. *Verdes Anos*, dir. Paulo Rocha (Lisbon: Vitória Filme, 1963).

experienced by those who migrated to the city. But the migratory processes involved in Portuguese modernisation were not circumscribed to those who abandoned rural Portugal, heading to Lisbon, Porto, and their outskirts (which grew exponentially from the 1960s onwards, sometimes in the form of large shanty towns). Many Portuguese, in the last decades of the Estado Novo, also fled poverty and authoritarianism towards Northern Europe and Angola and Mozambique, then colonies in the Portuguese empire.³ Some numbers will help to understand the immense social impact of the phenomenon.

The most significant migratory movement was by far the one that led 1.5 million Portuguese (over 15% of the country's population) to France and other northern European countries between the 1950s and the 1980s, a true exodus that drained the countryside, especially in the central and northern regions, of its youth. To these, we should also add the thousands of families who moved to Angola and Mozambique as settlers, encouraged by a particularly insensitive colonial policy incentivising land occupation in Africa in a period of generalised decolonisation in European empires, even after the start of the liberation wars (in 1961, in Angola, and in 1964, in Mozambique). Most of these settlers, over 500,000 people, would suddenly return to Europe in 1975, when both colonies became independent countries.⁴

The emigration to northern Europe and the end of Empire became uncomfortable presences in Portuguese society, often ignored or dismissed by intellectual discourse (in the negative representations of the “bad taste” of emigrants and the imperial nostalgia of the *retornados*). But none of these phenomena had the same territorial impact as the internal migration to Lisbon and Porto, whose population represented increasingly high percentages of the total population (whereas 15% of the Portuguese lived in the Lisbon area in 1950, the percentage rose to 25% in 1990; the numbers for the greater Porto are, respectively, 8% to 12%).⁵ Both urban areas were deeply transformed, with the development of overpopulated suburbs, many built with clandestine construction, of just miserable shacks.

Shanty towns around Lisbon, or the “dormitory towns” burgeoning beyond its limits, were thus at the centre of the structural transformations

3. On Portuguese emigration to France, see Victor Pereira, *A Ditadura de Salazar e a Emigração* (Lisbon: Temas e Debates, 2014); on Portuguese settlers in the African colonies, see Cláudia Castelo, *Passagem para África* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2007).

4. On the return of settlers, see Christoph Kalter, *Portugal e os Retornados* (Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2025).

5. The most relevant statistical information on social change in late twentieth-century Portugal can be found in António Barreto, *A Situação Social em Portugal (1960–1995)* (Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 1996).

experienced by Portuguese society. Again, a few figures help us understand the depth of change. The process of urbanisation and the end of rural Portugal (a country socially, economically, and culturally based on agriculture), are clearly visible in the shifts that took place in the 1950s, when, for the first time, the percentage of urban population surpassed that of rural areas, in parallel with the decrease of the contribution of agriculture to under 50% of the GDP – numbers that gain a symbolic dimension when one realises that this was also the moment when illiteracy dropped to under 50%, in a seemingly direct relation between living environments, economic sectors (agriculture and countryside versus industry, services, and cities) and education with its symbolic capital.

What expression did these phenomena find in cultural objects? Interestingly, this was also the moment when a decisive structural transformation occurred in the cultural field, when, with radio and television, cultural reception overcame the divide between country and city. In a few decades, both urban and rural populations could watch the same films, listen to the same songs, and form their opinions from the same news. Ironically (and this irony contains the key to the cultural tensions analysed in the next section), the impact of transmissions in the countryside affected far fewer viewers than would have been the case a few decades earlier. In fact, more than the penetration of urban culture in rural Portugal, the main consequence of this homogenisation of cultural imaginaries through massified cultural forms may have been the crystallisation of rural Portugal as an authentic national identity among urban audiences.

REVOLUTION, IDENTITY, AND THE END OF RURAL PORTUGAL

In 1971, just a few years before the end of the Estado Novo, a series of three records would produce what was immediately seen as a break in Portuguese popular music. Contrary to what one would expect –even if the more sophisticated technologies in music production (all three works were recorded in Paris) played a key role in this development– the albums did not follow the aesthetics of rock and pop that had changed the musical landscape in the previous decade. On the contrary, their authors tried to root this renewal in national traditions, searching for folkloric themes, adapting lyrics from classic Portuguese poetry, and trying to build “sound stagings” –*encenações sonoras*, in the words of José Mário Branco, who produced all the records and authored one of them– to reconstruct a sense of cultural authenticity.⁶

6. Ricardo Andrade and Hugo Castro, “José Mário Branco et l’utilisation de la ‘musique traditionnelle’,” *Exils et migrations ibériques aux XXe et XXIe siècles* (forthcoming).

This was especially the case with *Cantigas de Maio*, by José Afonso, already a central name in the music scene, who would become an emblematic figure in the canon of Portuguese culture after the revolution (among other reasons, because “Grândola, vila morena”, included in the album, was chosen as the radio signal used to launch the coup of 25 April 1974). *Cantigas de Maio* combines adaptations from several regions’ folklore with themes with strongly utopian lyrics – “Rise, O Summer Sun / we are your singers”⁷ and carefully built soundscapes where the critic Jorge Cordeiro identified something “viscerally Portuguese”:

“Cantigas do Maio” is the noblest and most representative form of Portuguese song. [...] the profound knowledge of Portuguese musical expression is evident from the first to the last composition. More than a search, it’s an absolute and remarkable demonstration. There are no external influences (geographical or human) or ‘collages’ of styles that are foreign to us. There are no tricks. It’s viscerally Portuguese in the diversity of the compositions presented.⁸

In fact, there was nothing but external influences in *Cantigas de Maio* (in instruments and technologies), and if we understand the effects produced in the studio as “tricks”, without Cordeiro’s derogatory tone, it is clear that the whole album completely depends on these “artificial” interventions in the making of a sound where the critic recognises, on the contrary, an ultimate example of national authenticity.

The critical response triggered by *Cantigas de Maio* and the place it occupied in the musical canon present several ideas that are important to our argument. To start with, what seems more authentic, was often invented in the context of modern phenomena such as nationalist propaganda and cultural industrialisation. Secondly, the relation between cultural expressions and their contexts of production rarely functions as a simple reflection, developing instead complex negotiations with historical events. Thirdly, in the context of Portugal’s democratic transition –which was also a moment marked by the end of rural life and increasing social urbanisation– several influential cultural productions tried to accommodate the impact of change through the persistence of an imaginary close to that same world that was about to disappear, either through the representation of urban malaise (as we saw in *Verdes Anos*), or the retrieval of its landscapes and values (as in *Cantigas do Maio*).

Already during the revolutionary period, filmmakers António Reis and

7. José Afonso, *Cantigas do Maio* (Lisbon: Orpheu, 1971), vinyl record.

8. Jorge Cordeiro, “José Afonso: *cantigas do maio*,” *Mundo da Canção*, December 1971, 1.

Margarida Cordeiro made a film that retrospectively became a founding moment (like *Verdes Anos*'s status within Cinema Novo) of a film aesthetic based on long sequences, contemplative atmospheres, and an overall refusal of realism, that would constitute a distinctive mark of Portuguese cinema internationally. The film, *Trás-os-Montes*, is a docufiction staged in the region referred to in the title –which could be translated as “beyond the mountains” in northeast Portugal– showing images of the rural landscape and its ways of life unaffected by modernity, mixed with fable and history.⁹ *Trás-os-Montes*, the region, is shown as a dreamlike place, outside history, as if the film tried to capture a vanishing world under the impact of the modernising processes announced by the revolution.

Reis and Cordeiro were not alone in this interest in what were seen as the country's most “backward” regions. The “campaigns of cultural dynamisation” mobilised by the Armed Forces Movement, in order to bring infrastructural support and ideological guidance to the people, focused almost exclusively on the most remote areas (in relation to Lisbon) of rural Portugal.¹⁰ It was as if the deeply ingrained image of Portugal as a country of peasants –built throughout decades of fascist propaganda– resisted even the transformative drive of the revolution.

And yet, several sequences of another emblematic film of the period, *The Arms and the People* –a collective documentary on the political and military events and popular mobilisation in the first week after 25 April 1974– showed a completely different picture.¹¹ One of the filmmakers, Brazilian director Glauber Rocha (at that moment in exile in Europe), conducts several interviews with people from a shanty town in Lisbon, in one of the film's most dramatic moments. There is, of course, nothing *dreamlike* in the filmic representation of urban poverty. When asked about their expectations of the revolutionary coup, none of the slum dwellers spoke about freedom or democracy; a few mentioned the end of the colonial wars, but housing seems to have been the main concern on everyone's mind: all that these people – mostly women– wanted was to move from the shack to a better neighbourhood. The revolution, here, touched the core of the period's social change, as we saw in the previous section.

9. *Trás-os-Montes*, dir. António Reis and Margarida Cordeiro (Lisbon: V.O. Filmes, 1976).

10. On the campaigns of cultural dynamisation, see Sónia Vespeira de Almeida, *Camponeses, Cultura e Revolução* (Lisbon: Colibri, 2009).

11. *As Armas e o Povo*, dir. Colectivo de Trabalhadores da Actividade Cinematográfica (Lisbon: Instituto Português de Cinema, 1977).

DEMOCRACY AND THE PERSISTENCE OF PORTUGAL'S RURAL AND IMPERIAL IMAGINARIES

So far, this chapter has tried to establish a relation between social transformation (especially urbanisation) and cultural objects that, often by contrast –in the nostalgia triggered by the end of rural life, the flip side of urbanisation– illuminate its impact on the country's imaginary. Along with the dominant image of Portugal as a rural country, however, Portuguese society also had to deal –as we briefly saw– with another historical dimension: empire and colonialism, in a moment marked by events such as the colonial wars, decolonisation, the return of settlers, and yet another migratory movement, this time in the opposite direction, that brought immigrants from the former colonies (especially Angola and Cabo Verde) to Portugal. Most of these would populate the growing outskirts of Lisbon and its shanty towns.

Portuguese culture faced the end of Empire with unease. The dictatorship, in the 1960s, tried to promote cultural celebrities from the colonies (football players like Eusébio; or Eduardo Nascimento, Portugal's representative in the 1967 Eurovision song contest), in order to present itself as a multiracial country in the context of the colonial wars.¹² Some of the first expressions of Portuguese rock music from the late 1960s responded with historical allegory, denouncing the regime's imperial fantasies, accused of driving a whole generation to war. After the revolution, the topics of decolonisation, the *retornados*, and the living conditions of immigrants became true taboos in both the cultural field and political debate, only slowly emerging from invisibility through novels and films that treated them as trauma, already in the 1980s.

In these circumstances, the reemergence of an aesthetic of Empire, in the most unlikely of places, seems all the more significant: a trend of nationalist pop music stood out within the boom of Portuguese rock in the early 1980s, one of the most relevant phenomena in the period's popular culture. In a cultural context marked by a growing circulation of international rhythms and by the exuberance of its audiovisual culture (at a moment when television was already widespread), dance floors in Portugal celebrated the imaginary of medieval "reconquest" and fifteenth-century "discoveries". Bands like *Heróis do Mar* (*Heroes of the Sea*, the first line of the national anthem) or *Sétima Legião*, revisited the aesthetics and imaginary of 1930s fascist propaganda in the festive atmosphere of 1980s youth culture, a completely different historical context marked by the new aspirations to consumerism brought by European integration.

12. Marcos Cardão, *Fado Tropical* (Lisbon: Edições Unipop, 2014).

Nationalism now seemed cool, but it would be a mistake to interpret its aesthetics as apolitical. To dance at the sound of martial celebrations of the past – “History forgets the weak / Let’s sing our victory loud and clear”¹³ is a good example of *banal nationalism*, through which political ideas insinuate themselves into everyday life and its political unconscious.¹⁴ The process would reach further developments when members of *Heróis do Mar* and *Sétima Legião* formed *Madredeus*, a bold mix of the choreography of *fado* and chamber music with lyrics that synthesised recognisable tropes of national culture, including *saudosismo*, a nostalgia for the past with a strong tradition in Portuguese literature. The immense success achieved by *Madredeus* internationally (where the band sold several million records) suggests that the sounds of eternal Portugal had an appeal in the global markets of world music.

Of course, the celebration of the past, the renewed cult of nationalism, must be understood –as we did with *Cantigas do Maio* and *Trás-os-Montes*– against a background of social transformation, where the majority lived in cities and their suburbs, professionally and culturally distant from the rural lives of their grandparents. Rather than the pop rhythms of *Heróis do Mar* or the melancholic melodies of *Madredeus*, the soundtrack of Portuguese society in the 1980s and 1990s was filled with the electric guitars and rebellion of punk rock (with which post-Salazarist and post-revolutionary youth cultures negotiated the impact of neoliberalism) and the dance and subversive lyrics of hip hop (with which young Portuguese of African origin reacted to society’s structural racism towards its postcolonial subjects).

However, the idea in this article was not to illustrate the changes in late-twentieth-century Portugal with contemporary cultural objects. The examples chosen to build our argument rather served to identify less immediate relations with the historical process and to retrieve subtle aspirations and anxieties triggered by social change. Rural Portugal, in particular, proved a particularly insistent return of the repressed in the country’s political unconscious. This was not a mere atavism, but a negotiation with the speed of transformation. At this level, the imaginary of rurality kept reappearing towards the end of the century and beyond. A final example, to conclude, will help us see this more clearly.

13. Heróis do Mar, *Heróis do Mar* (Lisbon: Polygram, 1981), vinyl record.

14. Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995).

CONCLUSION

A 1995 ad for the olive oil brand *Gallo* would become one of the most successful commercials on Portuguese television. The ad depicts a traditional Christmas Eve in a typical town in Alentejo, a region in southern Portugal. We can see the illuminated town and hear the church bell, before a traveling shot that transports us inside the cosy households where women set the table. A caption meanwhile tells us, from the outset, “That is this spirit”, an atmosphere reinforced by what comes next: the townspeople walk the old streets to church, where a series of religious images follow; female hands touching holy water, making the sign of the cross, or holding the beads of the rosary.

The sound, now, is filled with the soft voices of a children’s choir singing traditional songs about olive branches and trees, themes that link the scene’s religiosity and the brand of olive oil. The situation is solemn, and this sense of gravity is reinforced by the slow motion and sepia tone through which the ad imbues bodies and places with a feeling of timelessness. As another caption insists, this is the temporality of tradition. Towards the end of the commercial, we can still see a large family at the initial dinner table, a tray with codfish laid down by a woman, while a man sits at the head of the table. In a more relaxed atmosphere, everyone drinks and talks while dipping bread into the olive oil that covers the fish.

The brand’s website explains that the film was designed to “honour and reinforce Portugueseness” (*Portugalidade*), a series of rural tropes easily recognisable by Portuguese audiences in 1995: the landscape of the Alentejo region and its people, faith and church, codfish and olive oil.¹⁵ However, the contradiction between the pastoral scene and urban television audiences is difficult to overlook. The commercial promoted *Azeite Gallo* to urban consumers by showing an environment that was already very distant from their everyday life (including gender roles and the status of religion). As we saw throughout this chapter, this contradiction constituted one of the most powerful representations of late twentieth-century Portuguese culture, when pictures and sounds of rural Portugal survived –and were at times even reinforced– despite society’s urbanisation and industrialisation. Not only were these representations produced through modern media –cinema, popular music, television– but they also spread through globally circulating forms of information and culture.

Rather than a contradiction, the distance between that Christmas Eve in

15. Gallo, “A Nossa História,” <https://www.galloportugal.com/a-nossa-historia/#history-row>. The film, along with other *Azeite Gallo* commercials, is available on the company’s website. (accessed 21 September 2024).

the Alentejo and the households of urban consumers of *Azeite Gallo*, can be seen as a negotiation, a constitutive dimension of modernisation, through which a sense of belonging could be preserved in an increasingly globalised world. As it happens, the strength of this imaginary has a strong, although often invisible, political impact: its ability to cross the ideological divide (many on the cultural left still fall for the spell of this lost people and its toils) represents a late victory of Salazarism, the long authoritarian period that was also a conservative cultural project –of a rural country of peasants– constructed by the most sophisticated media and cultural industries in the twentieth century.

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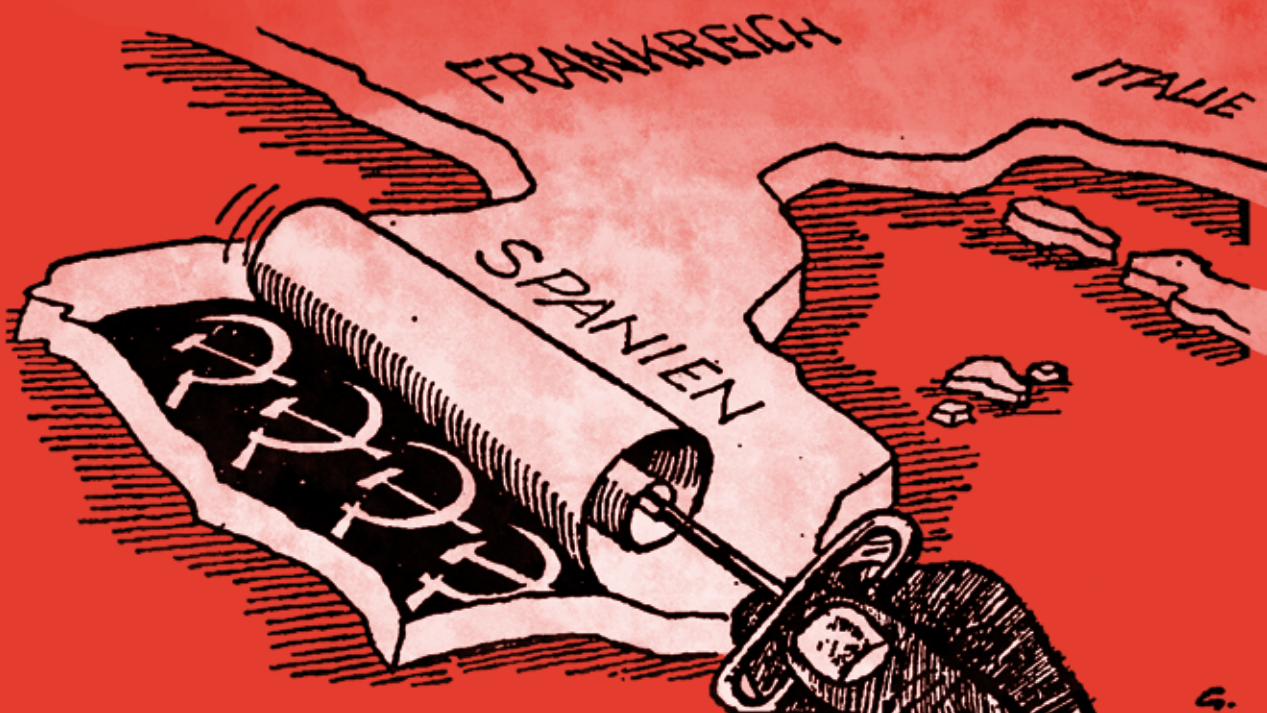
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[CHAPTER 5]

Transnational and International Dimensions of the Iberian Transitions



The vision of Europe's post-1945 history as an almost teleological process of modernisation, democratisation, and convergence dominates the collective imagination. In recent years, the economic crisis, the rise of the extreme-right, Brexit, and the war in Ukraine have damaged this perception, but have not swept away this optimistic account, in which the EEC/EU appears as a powerful engine driving the peoples of the continent towards a horizon of well-being, freedom, and fraternity. The "myth of Europe" retains particular freshness in Portugal and Spain, where it is embedded in their own national myths. The idea of a *Sonderweg* happily closed with the integration into the EEC is commonplace also in the academy, which tends to interpret the recent history of both countries as a virtuous process of "Europeanisation", through which atavistic backwardness was overcome. In this "fairy tale", the 1970s transitions represent the great watershed between an unhappy past and a blissful present as members of the European family.¹

Despite the central role of European "manifest destiny" in the idealised interpretation of the recent history of Portugal and Spain, their official narratives of the democratic transitions were constructed solely with domestic materials, as a sort of national epic, free by definition from foreign "interferences". In the 1980s, political science further strengthened this view with a very influential thesis on democratic transitions, the thrust of which was that "domestic factors play a predominant role".² Shortly later, however, the democratisation wave in Eastern Europe, driven by an external factor (the crisis of the USSR), revealed how misleading this thesis was and forced to a reconsideration of the influence of the international context on transitions, including in Southern Europe. This revision was advanced by historians, especially after 2000, when primary sources began to be accessible. We now know that the construction of democratic regimes in the three countries was a process deeply embedded in the European geopolitical reality of the time,

1. María Elena Cavallaro and Kostis Kornetis, eds., *Rethinking Democratisation in Spain, Greece and Portugal* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

2. Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Lawrence Whitehead, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, vol. 4: *Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

and that its understanding is therefore limited without considering the incentives, constraints, and influences from beyond national borders.

This article presents, in a necessarily synthetic form, some of the key achievements of the historiography on the international context of the democratisation in Portugal and Spain. The first part provides an overview of the place of the Iberian dictatorships in the world. The second part analyses separately the impact of the international context on the processes of political change, starting with the outbreak of the revolution in Portugal in April 1974. The third part shows how the three new democracies managed the common goal of joining the EEC.

"EUROPEANISATION" UNDER AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES

"Change through rapprochement": a pragmatic Western strategy towards Iberia

The bipolar world that took shape after 1945 proved the lifeline for the Iberian dictatorships. The high strategic value of both countries was the key to the rapid creation of alliances with the new American empire, thus ensuring their insertion into the Western bloc. The brotherhood in arms with the Western powers not only ensured the survival of the regimes but also served to launch military enterprises such as the Portuguese colonial war, which would have been impossible without the military aid provided by other NATO countries.³

The cooperation projects promoted to foster development and social cohesion in Europe also offered enormous possibilities for the consolidation of the Iberian dictatorships and their further international normalisation. From the mid-1950s onwards, Portugal and Spain dismantled their autarkic system and opened their markets to join the European economic miracle convoy with strong support from the USA, the World Bank, and the IMF. Foreign investment, emigration, and tourism were, for both countries, the driving forces of an extraordinary economic boom that would bring about tectonic social changes. The crystallisation of the EEC as the main project for economic cooperation in Europe would make it essential for Spain and Portugal to reach a stable relationship with it.

The relationship of Francoism and the Estado Novo with the EEC has been traditionally narrated as a story of failure. Given the democratic essence of the European project, the Iberian regimes would have been marginalised and had to settle for agreements of an exclusive economic nature only

3. Antonio José Telo, *Portugal e a NATO: O reencontro da tradição atlântica* (Lisboa: Edições Cosmos, 1996).

concluded in the first 1970s. We now know that this is a simplistic approach that obscures the complexity of the European-Iberian relations, in which lie some of the keys to the future transitions. The EEC did not close the door but left it half open to Spain and Portugal. The reason was as “economic” as “political”. It responded to a strategy aimed at fostering democratisation through economic cooperation. Following the American-coined “theory of modernisation”, the Six came to understand that closer ties with the Iberian Peninsula did not strengthen the regimes but, on the contrary, would accelerate the pace of the profound structural changes taking place there, which would inevitably lead to the obsolescence of the dictatorships and pave the way for democracy. The relaxation of repression and the liberalisation projects tried out, especially by Franco’s regime from the early 1960s onwards, reinforced this belief.⁴

However, the optimism about the inexorable advance of democracy in the “free world” rapidly waned in Africa, Latin America, and Europe itself, where the military coup in Greece in 1967 was even supported by Washington. Europe no longer followed the US in its benevolent stance towards the colonels’ dictatorship, just as it did not accompany it in the Vietnam War. As a reaction to the situation in Greece, for the first time, the EEC explicitly defined itself as a democratic project in which there was no room for dictatorships. The actual effect of this change on the Six’s policy towards dictatorships was, however, slight. Although the violence in Greece did not cease, and although the 1968 revolution had turned the zeitgeist definitively against the dictatorships in Southern Europe, the main EEC countries slowly loosened the pressure on Greece and returned to the strategy of “change through rapprochement” that they had been developing towards Portugal and Spain.⁵

Hopes of democratisation without democratic promotion

In the early 1970s, German *Ostpolitik* gave a strong impetus to détente between the blocs. Southern European regimes also benefited from the spirit of cooperation that spread across the continent. Leading European governments sought to maintain good relations with the regimes and publicly welcomed political reform projects aimed at moving closer to the EEC. Economic interests also fuelled tolerance and goodwill towards the regimes, a card that the latter learned to play masterfully. To build a gigantic dam in Mo-

4. Nicolau Andresen Leitão, *Estado Novo, democracia e Europa, 1947–1986* (Lisboa: ICS, 2007); Fernando Guirao, *The European Rescue of the Franco Regime, 1950–1975* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

5. Víctor Fernández Soriano, “¿Asociación y democracia? Las dictaduras meridionales en el proceso de integración europea en los años sesenta,” *Ayer* 117 (2020): 47–73.

zambique, Lisbon set up an international consortium of companies backed by the respective governments, and Madrid delayed for years the choice of the (German) PAL or (French) SECAM color television system so that Bonn and Paris would compete in friendly gestures towards Spain, for instance by supporting Spain's rapprochement with the EEC.⁶

The European socialist parties in power participated without enthusiasm in this pragmatic approach and were harshly criticised by the noisy alternative left and their own left-wing. Contacts with the modest Iberian socialist movement sought more to appease these critical voices than to provide real support. At a meeting of the Socialist International in 1972, the Portuguese socialist leader Mário Soares urged his comrades to "decide whether they want to provide effective and practical help (...) or whether they simply propose to continue to make declarations".⁷

As a whole, the huge gap between European rhetoric and realpolitik was devastating for democrats of Spain and Portugal. Instead of undertaking effective measures to put the regimes under pressure, Paris, Bonn, and London were more interested in highlighting any positive change in the regimes that would justify further concessions on their path to the EEC. The Spanish author José Luis López Aranguren wrote resignedly in 1973: "Is it worth running the risk of democratic concessions if, in any case, sooner or later, the world will end up proving us right, as it has so often done, and the European Community admitting us into its midst?".⁸

Despite the assassination, in December 1973, of the Spanish Prime Minister Carrero Blanco, and despite the voices of high officials in Portugal who considered the war lost and publicly called for a political solution, nothing in European capitals suggested that essential changes were approaching in Spain and Portugal. The solidity of the regimes seemed absolute and was "confirmed" by political scientists, whereas the reforms, with their ups and downs, continued, especially in Spain. Confident in the virtues of détente, aware that the democrats in those countries were much weaker than the communists and lacking any plan B to the voluntary evolution of dictatorships, the West could not even imagine the near end of those dictatorships. When,

6. Rui Lopes, *West Germany and the Portuguese Dictatorship, 1968–1974: Between Cold War and Colonialism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 108–114; Antonio Muñoz Sánchez, "A European Answer to the Spanish Question: The SPD and the End of the Franco Dictatorship," *Journal of European Integration History* 15, no. 1 (2009): 77–94.

7. "Memorandum of the First Meeting of the Portugal Committee in the Socialist International," 3 March 1972, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, Socialist International, file 779.

8. Quoted in Santiago Míguez González, *La preparación de la transición a la democracia en España* (Zaragoza: Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza, 1990), 116.

on 24 April 1974, Mário Soares spoke in Bonn about an imminent military coup, SPD comrades listened to him with sympathy. It was not the first time Soares had predicted the Estado Novo was going to fall the next day.⁹

THE PORTUGUESE REVOLUTION AND THE EUROPEAN "PEACEFUL INTERVENTION"

If the collapse of the Southern dictatorships was not even seen as a remote possibility, the outbreak of a revolution belonged more to a political science-fiction scenario. By breaking all the rules of the Cold War, rekindling in the old continent the embers of the almost forgotten socialist ideals and representing a real danger to the geopolitical equilibrium, the Portuguese Revolution had a huge international impact and moved many actors on both sides of the Iron Curtain to try to exercise their influence. Conversely, key political actors in Portugal searched for external support to promote their own agenda. The "welcome foreign interference" had a direct impact on the ultimate failure of the Revolution and the implementation of a European-style democracy. The political earthquake in Portugal was also going to have a global impact on Western policy towards Southern Europe, which would influence the transition in Spain very directly.

American vs European response to the Revolution

The bloodless implosion of the Estado Novo, led by the *Movimento das Forças Armadas* (MFA) and intended to bring both freedom to Portugal and an end to the colonial war in Africa, generated great relief among NATO allies and a groundswell of sympathy for the new authorities in Lisbon. Even Washington did not share the scaremongering of the new President-General António Spínola, who, in his desperate bid to save the Empire, painted to Nixon an almost apocalyptic scenario if the MFA and the strong *Partido Comunista Português* (PCP) of Álvaro Cunhal were not stopped. The appointment of a provisional government led by a leftist officer and communist sympathiser, Vasco Gonçalves, in the same July days as the fall of the regime in Greece was the beginning of the end of American optimism towards the Revolution, which was practically buried with the resignation of Spínola shortly later.¹⁰

The political paralysis in Washington in the wake of the Watergate scandal, coupled with the growing anti-Americanism in the old continent

9. Antonio Muñoz Sánchez, "La socialdemocracia alemana y el Estado Novo (1961–1974)," *Portuguese Studies Review* 13, nos. 1–2 (2005): 477–504.

10. Bernardino Gomes and Tiago Moreira de Sá, *Carlucci vs Kissinger: Os EUA e a Revolução Portuguesa* (Alfragide: Dom Quixote, 2008).

and the lack of a tradition of democracy promotion without the use of heavy weapons, made a constructive US strategy towards the instability that spread across southern Europe impossible. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger opted then for a policy of damage containment, in which revolutionary Portugal would play a key role. Instead of trying to prevent a communist takeover, Western governments should accelerate it by denying financial support to Lisbon and expelling it from NATO. Turned into a new Cuba, Portugal would function as a frightening warning to other southern European societies. In addition to vaccinating the Mediterranean, and especially Italy, against leftist radicalism, the US hoped that a Soviet-controlled Portugal would arouse anti-Soviet fears in NATO countries, severely damaging German *Ostpolitik* and curbing Europe's aspiration for autonomy from Washington.

However, Kissinger's "vaccine theory" found no echo in Europe, where a policy of aid and cooperation with Portugal was advocated as a means of weakening the radicals and strengthening the moderates. The forging of this "European response" to the Revolution was, however, quite complex. The oil crisis fed political instability and national introversion in Western Europe, and the EEC entered a period of "Eurosclerosis". During 1974, no initiative was undertaken in Brussels to support Portugal's weak economy, nor were any efforts made to promote an attractive image of the EEC in a country where Europeanism was weak, and the now dominant leftist discourse denounced the "Europe of monopolies" while idealising Third World socialism as a model for Portugal. The only European country that had not been durably affected by the Oil Crisis, possessed the necessary resources to influence Portugal and, additionally, had strong reasons for the revolution to fail, was West Germany. Bonn was thus to become the driving force of the "European answer" to the Portuguese Revolution. The pillars of this policy were financial assistance, direct pressure on the Lisbon authorities, and support for the non-communist parties.¹¹

Promoting "democratic" parties

On 25 April 1974, the *Partido Socialista* (PS) was a tiny group of professors and lawyers whose fundamental political capital was its enthusiastic leader and the links he had forged in exile with the main political family in Europe. As the new foreign minister, Mário Soares led, in the following year, the process of decolonisation and undertook an intensive promotion of the new

11. Mario del Pero, "A European Solution for a European Crisis: The International Implications of Portugal's Revolution," *Journal of European Integration History* 15, no. 1 (2009): 15–34.

Portugal abroad that was, at the same time, a successful campaign of self-promotion at home. Although the PS publicly defended a left alliance *à la française*, from the very beginning, Soares depicted the PCP to his European colleagues as a threat to democracy and asked for massive support for the very same social democracy that he blamed in revolutionary Portugal for being too moderate.¹²

The Germans and the Swedes, above all, paid for the whole infrastructure, covered the salaries of hundreds of functionaries, supported the modernisation of the socialist newspaper *República*, and also sent experts to Portugal to help the PS with organisational matters, propaganda, and electoral tactics. But the main support to the PS was political: meeting very often with Olof Palme, Willy Brandt, or François Mitterrand, Mário Soares shaped the image of the representative, in Portugal, of the most attractive and powerful political family in Europe. With a personalised campaign on the extremely popular Soares, the PS got an impressive victory in the April 1975 Constituent Assembly election with almost 38%. The PCP, which had almost monopolised opposition to the regime and was, with the support of the MFA, leading the construction of a “socialist democracy” in Portugal, did not secure even a third of that share.¹³

The virulent confrontation between PS and PCP after the elections put a stop to hopes for a left unity and opened up new possibilities for northern European social democracy to influence the Revolution by strongly backing its comrades in Lisbon. In the summer of 1975, the Committee for Friendship and Solidarity with Democracy and Socialism in Portugal was established. Its *modus operandi* consisted in organising high-profile meetings between leading figures of European socialism and Soares, at which measures were discussed to support those opposed to the revolutionary process led by Prime Minister Vasco Gonçalves. The Committee even discussed the possibility of a military intervention in Portugal in the case of a definitive communist takeover.

The European conservatives, very weakened in that *social democratic decade*, tried to reassert themselves in Portugal, where they saw great possibilities for a Christian Democratic party, as in Italy after 1945. Lacking any contacts in Lisbon, they had to spend the first critical months of the Revolution searching for a partner, while looking with envy at the way the socialists were already developing “what might well be the most massive party-to-party aid programme ever seen in the democratic world”. The approach

12. David Castaño, *Mário Soares e a Revolução* (Alfragide: Dom Quixote, 2013).

13. Juliet Antunes Sablosky, *O PS e a transição para a democracia* (Lisboa: Editorial Notícias, 2000).

to the PPD of Francisco Sá Carneiro did not bear fruit, as the party took a turn to the left and unsuccessfully sought the support of the Socialist International. Finally, Freitas de Amaral's CDS was invited to cooperate. The political backing of the European conservatives turned crucial for a small party constantly under the threat of being outlawed for its "anti-revolutionary" stance. To distance itself from the dictatorial past, the CDS sought full assimilation into the European conservative family, and its program became a mere copy-and-paste of those adopted by those parties. The strong Europeanism of Portugal's main conservative party would contribute to a decades-long marginalisation of the extreme nationalist right.¹⁴

Conditioned financial aid and political pressure

Party cooperation and other instruments of "parallel democracy" played an important, but not central role in the successful European efforts to address the Portuguese Revolution. Much more effective was the "stick-and-carrot" policy towards the government of Vasco Gonçalves during the "hot summer" of 1975, which was encouraged by the PS and other political forces and, in a much more discreet way, by the moderate sectors of the MFA under the leadership of Ernesto Melo Antunes, foreign minister in that period.

After the failed conservative putsch of 11 March 1975, some European governments, and especially the West German government, saw the situation as evidence that the communists were about to take power in Portugal and launched an offensive to influence the revolution actively. The critical situation of the Portuguese economy after one year of massively increased wages and inflation, the halt of external investment, and capital flight opened a unique opportunity for effective foreign intervention. During the electoral campaign, Bonn announced a plan to provide Portugal with 70 million DM in financial assistance. While public opinion was meant to perceive this as a disinterested gesture of European solidarity, the Lisbon government was informed that the money would not be used to finance the construction of socialism, that is, the large number of recently nationalised companies. In the next weeks, the EEC also approved a special fund for Portugal, with respect for "democratic standards" as a requirement for its implementation. This form of conditional aid, unknown under the dictatorship, was perceived by the Portuguese prime minister as an intolerable interference in internal affairs. Speaking to a delegation from the European

14. Matthias Stenger, *Transnationale Parteienzusammenarbeit: Die Beziehungen der deutschen und portugiesischen Christlichen Demokraten von der Nelkenrevolution bis zum Vertrag von Maastricht (1974–1992)* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2011).

Parliament, Vasco Gonçalves accused Western Europe of acting as though the Portuguese authorities were expected to behave like “good kids”.¹⁵

In order to strengthen the effectiveness of the European strategy aimed at “embracing Portugal” and preventing its fall into communist Hades, the Nine sought to neutralise both Washington and Moscow in the Portuguese crisis. Especially disturbing was Kissinger’s insistence on his “vaccine theory”. For the Secretary of State, the elections of April had been a mere “popularity contest” without any consequence on the revolutionary process, no matter what the “ridiculous Europeans” believed. Thus, the moment had come to expel Portugal from NATO and let the country fall into the arms of the USSR. To compensate for it, Franco’s Spain would then join the Alliance. The Europeans now spoke plainly: if the US insisted on its Machiavellian strategy, the transatlantic relations would suffer. Even the new US Ambassador to Lisbon, whose initial mission had been to prepare Portugal’s disconnection from the West, now recommended following the European allies. Despite his conviction that there was no hope for democracy in Portugal, Kissinger eventually gave up.

Although the USSR’s policy towards the Carnation Revolution has not yet been investigated in depth, it is widely accepted that Moscow sympathised with the idea of a leftist democracy in Portugal but was not willing to support the establishment of a socialist regime in a NATO country, as this would have dynamited European détente. Following the Western warning in the spring of 1975 that the Helsinki Summit might be called into question by the situation in Portugal, Moscow appears to have stopped aiding the PCP altogether and to have focused instead on supporting the communists in the newly independent countries of Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau.

The Helsinki Summit in July 1975 provided an opportunity for intense Western pressure on the Portuguese leaders. A socialist Portugal would risk international isolation, President Francisco Costa Gomes heard from Schmidt, Ford, and others. Aware of the gravity of the situation, Costa Gomes, on his return to Lisbon, proceeded with the controlled dismantling of the Gonçalves government and paved the way for the moderate sectors of the MFA, which eventually brought the Revolution to an end in November. The path towards the construction of a Western-style democracy was thus opened.

15. Antonio Muñoz Sánchez, “Diktatur, Revolution und Konsolidierung der Demokratie: Die Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung und Portugal,” in Peter Birle and Antonio Muñoz Sánchez, eds., *Partnerschaft für die Demokratie: Die Arbeit der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Brasilien und Portugal* (Bonn: Dietz, 2020), 241.

THE SPANISH TRANSITION AND THE SMOOTH EUROPEAN INFLUENCE

Before 25 April 1974, Francoism appeared to be the most open of the southern European regimes, and the project of a “Spanish-style democracy” was viewed with sympathy in the West. When Juan Carlos succeeded Franco a year and a half later, however, the Spanish regime was, in the eyes of the world, the last redoubt of 1930s fascism: a bizarre dictatorship, unacceptable in Europe and doomed to a rapid demise. Being the latecomer to democracy was no mere anecdote for Spain. The transitions in Portugal and Greece produced a kind of historical acceleration in Western Europe as a whole, one that would affect the process of democracy-building in Spain in many different ways.

The multiple waves of the Portuguese tsunami

The joyful Lisbon spring of 1974 had a huge impact on Spain. The wind of freedom blowing from Portugal revitalised anti-Francoism, and a Democratic Junta, hegemonised by Santiago Carrillo’s Communist Party (PCE), was founded. Conversely, the ultras saw the collapse of the *Estado Novo* as a dangerous warning and pressured Prime Minister Carlos Arias Navarro to stop reforms. The collapse of the Greek regime further increased the hopes of the democrats and the uncertainties of the Francoists. While Portugal and Greece were enjoying their regained freedom, in Spain the reformist impulse was fading and the opposition seemed to be gaining the initiative. A “democratic rupture” was no longer a utopian scenario.¹⁶

The Portuguese Revolution also had a deep impact on the international context in which the coming post-Franco era would unfold. The “wait-and-see” stance towards the Spanish dictatorship was now overcome, and European governments began to search for measures to prevent a chaotic scenario. This became especially urgent after March 1975, when Lisbon seemed to be heading towards a communist dictatorship and the only US proposal for resolving the Iberian imbroglio was to let Portugal turn into a satellite of the USSR and invite Franco’s Spain to join NATO. As in Portugal, European socialists concluded that a key factor for a peaceful transition in Spain would be the rise of a strong socialist party. Among different candidates, the historic *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE) seemed to have the biggest potential. Its new leader, Felipe González, presented himself to the European comrades as strongly pragmatic and anti-communist. The “democratic rupture” defended by the *Junta Democrática* was, in his eyes, suicidal, for it would lead to a Chilean scenario. González trusted Juan Carlos to dismantle the regime and

16. Josep Sánchez Cervelló, *La revolución portuguesa y su influencia en la transición española (1961–1976)* (San Sebastián: Nerea, 1995).

call for free elections, where the PSOE would try to repeat the success of the PS in Portugal and reduce the PCE to a marginal role. With the support of the Socialist International, the PSOE launched a Democratic Platform, formally in friendly relations but actually in open competition with the Democratic Junta. European socialists also promoted the international profile of González and thus boosted the popularity of a politician hitherto unknown in Spain.¹⁷

In the Summer of 1975, Arias Navarro launched an offensive against democrats and “terrorists”. Fully confident that the “silent majority” supported the regime, and willing to show the West that Spain would not renounce its own model of democracy, the government intended to eradicate the alternative represented by the opposition. The Revolution in Portugal, where the spring of freedom had given way to stark political confrontation, now served the Spanish government as a means of showing, mainly on television, the risks of political radicalism. To demonstrate strength and determination, frighten the opposition, and make clear to the world that it would not tolerate any interference, the regime brought alleged terrorists before a military court, and five were sentenced to death.

The executions at the end of September sparked a huge international protest that surprised the regime. In Lisbon, the Spanish embassy was vandalised, and furniture and pieces of art were set on fire. The European countries (except Ireland) withdrew their ambassadors, and the EEC suspended relations with Spain. The wave of protests, in turn, provoked a virulent patriotic reaction in Spain, stirred up by the regime, which thus felt reinforced. The consequences of this crisis for the regime’s external relations were, however, disastrous. Decades of efforts to gain respectability were thrown overboard at the key moment when the life of its founder was running out and the delicate period of succession was to begin. The executions also exacerbated abroad the old cliché of Spain as a violent nation historically unable to live at peace with itself. The impression that, after Franco, the country could descend into chaos was now widespread.¹⁸

Europe and the failure of the democracy “a la española”

Franco’s successor was aware that his survival as king depended on bringing democracy to Spain in the short term and opening the door to the EEC. The decision to renew Arias as prime minister, however, showed Juan Carlos’ weak position vis-à-vis the conservatives and his lack of a proper strategy.

17. Antonio Muñoz Sánchez, *El amigo alemán: El SPD y el PSOE de la dictadura a la democracia* (Madrid: Villa de Indianos, 2025).

18. Antonio Moreno Juste, “The EEC and the End of the Franco Regime: The September 1975 Crisis,” *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 90 (2015): 25–46.

The West took a mixed view of this tepid start to the transition. While visiting Madrid to sign the friendship treaty replacing the old military agreement of 1953, Kissinger recommended that Arias move slowly towards democracy and keep the PCE illegal. Europe's position was quite different. On the one hand, goodwill was shown with the return of the ambassadors to Madrid, the presence of the French and German presidents at the coronation of Juan Carlos, and the resumption of relations with the EEC. At the same time, however, coldness towards Madrid on the part of the Socialists who governed in six of the nine EEC countries was maintained as a subtle form of pressure. If the Spanish government really wanted to normalise relations with Europe, it was up to it to move unequivocally towards democracy.

The slow pace of reform and the extreme violence of the police towards the growing labour protests, with five workers murdered in Vitoria (the Basque Country) in March 1976, definitively buried European socialism's tolerance of the Arias Navarro government. Leaders such as Willy Brandt and Olof Palme now publicly criticised the situation in Spain. In May, Maurice Faupé, who was responsible for reporting to the European Parliament on Spain, presented a report that highlighted the lack of progress in democratisation and pointed to the legalisation of the Communists as a *sine qua non* for Spain's entry into the EEC. As the main Spanish interlocutor for most EEC governments, Felipe González began to appear very frequently in the Spanish press, which presented him as a politician whose views were respected by those who would decide on the country's bid to enter the EEC. The illegal PSOE, one newspaper wrote, had become for Spain the "customs officer of Europe".¹⁹

Meanwhile, neither the EEC heads of state nor the heads of government visited Madrid, nor did they invite the prime minister or the king. For a monarch in desperate need of international recognition, the vacuum to which Europe subjected him was unbearable in the long run. Seeking a way out of this situation, he persuaded Washington to arrange an official visit to the US in June 1976. In his speech on Capitol Hill, Juan Carlos announced publicly for the first time his determination to establish democracy in Spain. The visit was a major public relations success, and the king returned to Madrid politically strengthened and ready to oust a prime minister whose commitment to the project of a "Spanish-style" democracy was putting the monarchy at risk.²⁰

19. Charles Powell, "International Aspects of Democratization: The Case of Spain," in Laurence Whitehead, ed., *The International Dimensions of Democratization: Europe and the Americas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

20. Charles Powell, *El amigo americano: España y Estados Unidos, de la dictadura a la democracia* (Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2011).

The dismantling of the regime and the elections of June 1977

The new Prime Minister, Adolfo Suárez, received instructions from the king to dismantle the regime, legalise all political parties, and hold free elections within a year. The aim now was to establish a Western democracy that would eventually provide the monarchy with international recognition and enable Spain to enter the EEC. To gain the sympathy of the powerful European socialism, Suárez was also instructed to promote the PSOE as a moderate alternative to the PCE. One key element was to boost the popularity of Felipe González by showing him on TV. Moreover, the government authorised the celebration of the party's congress in Madrid. The attendance of leading figures from the Socialist International turned the congress into a historic event and gave a massive boost to the popularity of the PSOE in a country fascinated by European modernity and the welfare state. Meanwhile, Santiago Carrillo was still living clandestinely in Madrid after returning from exile.²¹

In contrast to the socialists, the European Christian Democrats did not manage to exercise any influence over the formation of the Spanish party system after Franco. Their partner in Spain brought together very heterogeneous personalities and groups of opponents of Francoism who only coincided in their refusal to collaborate with the reformists who ended up taking the reins of the Transition. In 1977, the European conservatives therefore decided to cooperate with the newly formed UCD, an unlikely combination of liberals, Christian democrats, social democrats, and plain grey Francoist bureaucrats, built up using state technical and economic resources and intended to provide Adolfo Suárez with a platform from which to secure a large majority in the first democratic elections and maintain absolute control over the transition process.²²

This projection would ultimately not be confirmed, largely because of the PSOE's unexpected electoral performance. With the massive financial and logistical support from the European and mainly German socialists, the PSOE organised "the most modern and European-like campaign"²³ centred around the popular *Felipe*, and aimed at reaching an electorate that, as González told his European comrades, was much more conservative than that of their countries. Exceeding the most optimistic forecasts, in the elections of 15 June 1977, the PSOE reached almost thirty per cent of the votes, only five points behind the UCD. The objective of becoming the dominant party on the left was more than fulfilled. In addition, thanks to its strong

21. Antonio Muñoz Sánchez, *El amigo alemán*, 395–398.

22. Natalia Urigüen López de Sandalino, *A imagen y semejanza: La democracia cristiana alemana y su aportación a la transición española* (Madrid: CSIC, 2018).

23. "Spanien vor der Wahl," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 11 June 1977.

position in Parliament, the PSOE was able to force the opening of a constituent process, something that had not been part of the Suárez government's plans. Thus, the PSOE's electoral results gave a critical boost to democratisation in Spain.

EUROPE, THE COMMON GOAL OF THE IBERIAN DEMOCRACIES

Very different in origin and development, the transitions in Portugal and Spain reached the same destination: a parliamentary system animated by a strong desire to align with the European model of advanced social democracy through EEC membership. The deep Europeanism that inspired the new democracies was partly rooted in history, but above all it was contemporary factors that made EEC membership a touchstone of both countries' external action. The aim was to consolidate democracy and, at the same time, to crown with glory the governments that would lead their countries towards what they themselves presented as a new "manifest destiny" for the nation. The urgency of reaching a "Europe" unprepared to receive them, however, led Portugal and Spain to compete with each other.

Europeanism by tradition or by electroshock: ways to participate in the EEC race

The decision of Portugal and Spain in 1977 to apply for EEC membership was hardly motivated by a considered long-term strategy aimed at establishing democracy, promoting economic development, building the welfare state, and anchoring both countries in a new international alliance. Behind the request also lay a short-term political calculation on the part of the ruling party to consolidate its power within the still unstable political system that had emerged from the transition to democracy. The prospect of a quick accession was crucial for Soares and Suárez as it was for Prime Minister Karamanlis in Greece. The three hoped that the negotiations would take no more than four years, so that at the next elections they could reap the rewards of the success of joining the continent's exclusive club of prosperous nations.²⁴

Greece, Portugal and Spain therefore saw themselves not as fellow travelers to the EEC but as competitors in a race in which no one wanted to be left behind. After Athens submitted its application in June 1975, the first constitutional government in Lisbon felt the urgency to do so as soon as possible in order to get ahead of Madrid, whose application was delayed by the complexity of dismantling the regime. Circumstances were pushing

24. Francisco Niny de Castro, *O Pedido de Adesão de Portugal às Comunidades Europeias: Aspectos Político-Diplomáticos* (Cascais: Princípia, 2010).

Portugal urgently to adopt the newly launched “European option”: “[Without] Greece defining itself in favor of accession, and the political acceleration in Spain pushing [in the same direction], we would certainly have thought differently about the possible accession. But outside [the EEC]. What is there?”²⁵ Lisbon submitted its application in March 1977, four months before Madrid, which did so as soon as the first elected government had been formed.

Once Madrid and Lisbon had submitted their applications for EEC membership, Athens feared that Brussels might be tempted to link the three applications, and Greece therefore tried –and succeeded– to move ahead independently in the negotiations. Portugal, in turn, tried to dissociate itself from Spain, whose negotiation process was expected to take a long time due to the weight of its economy and the reluctance of countries such as France. For its part, Spain still hoped that the EEC would apply a “vue d’ensemble”, i.e. a global negotiation with the three candidate countries, which would not only speed up Spain’s entry into the Community but would also benefit it in the negotiations, since “any demanding concession they ask of us, they will have to ask of the other two countries”.²⁶

Dealing with a Community in “Eurosclerosis”

The velvet-gloved battle between Greece, Portugal and Spain to win a place under the sun in Europe was a marked feature of Mediterranean enlargement, unlike the first enlargement involving the UK, Ireland, and Denmark in 1973. The reason was the lack of clear rules and the disorientation of the club that was to receive them. After the collapse of the dictatorships in Greece and Portugal in 1974, it was only a matter of time before the two countries –and later Spain– applied for EEC membership. However, by the time Madrid applied in July 1977, Brussels had no strategy for dealing with the new enlargement, and a debate had not even been launched. The enormous impact of the 1973 oil crisis on the process of European construction was the underlying reason. The abrupt end of the golden cycle of post-war capitalism triggered fears of a new Great Depression. The Nine then resorted to protectionist measures to safeguard their economies, disengaging from European cooperation and leaving the EEC in paralysis.²⁷

25. “Report of the Portuguese Mission to the European Communities,” 1 February 1977, Ernâni Lopes Collection, file I, European Documentation Centre, Universidade Católica de Lisboa.

26. “Report of the Spanish Mission to the European Communities,” 3 February 1977, Archivo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Madrid, R-12.557.

27. N. Piers Ludlow, *Roy Jenkins and the European Commission Presidency, 1976–1980: At the Heart of Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

In view of the Eurosclerosis and skepticism towards enlargement, Athens, Lisbon, and Madrid realised that only the political will of the major European countries could break the impasse and open the doors of the EEC to them in a short period of time. Greece was the first to understand this and to act accordingly. Karamanlis ignored the Brussels institutions and sought the public backing of Schmidt, Giscard d'Estaing, Callaghan, and other heads of government for Greece's entry into the EEC. The Greek prime minister demanded that Brussels treat Athens differently from Lisbon and Madrid because Greece had already had an association treaty since 1961, insisted that his country was not an economic problem for the Nine, and presented rapid entry into Europe as the only way to stabilise the country and prevent the rise of a socialist opposition hostile to NATO and the EEC. Karamanlis succeeded. He got the option of pre-accession status removed, prevented the linking of Southern enlargement, and imposed fast-track negotiations. In May 1979, when Portugal and Spain were just starting their negotiations, Greece signed the accession treaty that would make it the tenth member of the EEC on 1 January 1981.²⁸

Portugal tried then to repeat Greece's success, that is, to dissociate itself from the Spanish candidacy and negotiate a quick entry into the EEC. Like Greece, Portugal was a small country and easily assimilated into the European economy. On the other hand, political instability after the Revolution was very high and, as in Greece, rapid accession to the EEC would serve to weaken radical forces. Unlike in Spain, there was no pro-European consensus in Portugal, and to disappoint the hopes that the moderate political class had raised among the population through the pro-European option would be grist to the communists' mill. But Lisbon's desire to move towards the EEC free of Spain's unwanted company was not to be realised. For the Nine, the Iberian candidacies were interconnected, and the negotiations had to proceed in parallel.

The "Spain problem" was Portugal's main stumbling block on its path towards the EEC. On the one hand, Lisbon saw Spain as unnecessarily delaying its accession, although, in reality, Portugal's negotiations with Brussels were themselves quite complex, especially given the country's extreme underdevelopment and its oversized nationalised sector. On the other hand, Portugal perceived Spain as an enormous danger to its economy when the borders between them as members of the EEC disappeared, given the power of the Spanish economy and its capacity to penetrate Portugal. These considerations, which mixed real fears with nationalist prejudices, led successive

28. Eirini Karamouzi, *Greece, the EEC and the Cold War, 1974–1979: The Second Enlargement* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

governments in Lisbon to try to isolate their negotiations with Brussels completely from those with Spain, to insist repeatedly on the need for a separate accession of the two countries into the EEC, and to defend with extraordinary zeal what they believed to be the best way to protect the weak Portuguese economy from the supposed threats of the imminent Iberian market.²⁹

The common goal of joining the EEC not only failed to bring the new Iberian democracies closer together, but was in fact the main reason why Spain and Portugal maintained, until 1986, a bizarre disconnection between two neighbouring countries whose relations had been painstakingly woven over centuries.

29. Antonio Muñoz Sánchez, “Las negociaciones intra-ibéricas de Portugal y España,” in *Memorias de Europa: La adhesión de España en la Comunidad Europea*, coordinated by Antonio Moreno Juste, Carlos Sanz Díaz, and Ricardo Martín de la Guardia (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2023).

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[CHAPTER 6]

From Enemies to Anchors

Communist Parties in the Portuguese, Spanish, and Greek Transitions



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INTRODUCTION: COMMON CHALLENGES, DIVERGENT PATHS

The collapse of authoritarian regimes in Portugal, Greece and Spain during the 1970s created a rare historical convergence in Southern Europe: three states undergoing political transformation within a few years of one another, all with communist parties that had been central to the opposition under dictatorship. Yet while their political trajectories intersected, the strategies of these parties were shaped by markedly different historical legacies and transitional contexts. Two differences stand out. First, the civil wars in Spain (1936–39) and Greece (1946–49) left enduring organisational and cultural marks on their communist parties. Years of repression and political exclusion, compounded by the traumas of those conflicts, tended to encourage moderation within the communist left during the democratic transitions. In Portugal, by contrast, the Communist Party (PCP)’s formative experience was one of clandestine survival under a long-standing authoritarian regime, enabling it to enter a revolutionary process as a legal and influential force from the outset. Second, the immediate political environment of the transitions varied sharply. The PCP entered the post-April 1974 period as a recognised political actor embedded within a revolutionary upheaval and provisional governments. In Greece and Spain, by contrast, the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), the KKE Interior, and the Communist Party of Spain (PCE) had to negotiate their legalisation with conservative political authorities, navigating a political opening designed and controlled by elements of the outgoing regimes.

Despite their divergences, striking parallels emerge in the strategies of the Greek, Spanish, and Portuguese communist parties. Whether pro-Soviet or Eurocommunist, operating in revolutionary upheaval or negotiated reform, all converged on what Geoff Eley terms a “strategy of responsibility.” In his analysis of the PCE’s role in Spain’s transition, Eley uses this phrase to describe a posture of moderation and alliance-building that, while stabilising the democratic process, limited the party’s chances of achieving

left-wing hegemony.¹ Rather than acting as engines of unrestrained upheaval, communist parties in Portugal, Spain and Greece sought to position themselves as stabilising forces. Their early transition strategies combined an openness to popular energy with a determination to keep political change within frameworks they could influence and defend.

This chapter examines, through a comparative lens, the strategies, ideological adaptations, and complexities of communist-party engagement during these transformative years.² Rather than treating Portugal, Spain and Greece as separate case studies, it analyses how the PCP, PCE, KKE, and KKE Interior confronted common challenges: responding to spontaneous grassroots mobilisation, negotiating alliances, engaging with constitutional change, and positioning themselves within an international communist movement split between Eurocommunism and Soviet orthodoxy. Placing these cases side by side shows that their strategies emerged at the crossroads of national histories and transnational currents. Despite differences in context and ideology, all four converged on a “strategy of responsibility”, a defining factor in both shaping and containing the democratic transitions of Southern Europe’s “third wave.”

HISTORICAL LEGACIES AND THE COLD WAR CONTEXT

The historical trajectories of the communist parties in Portugal, Spain and Greece were shaped by decades of confrontation with authoritarian regimes, but the nature of that confrontation varied sharply across the three countries. These variations in formative experience –and in particular the presence or absence of civil war– left enduring imprints on the parties’ strategic cultures. In Spain and Greece, the trauma of the civil wars left an enduring imprint on the communist movement. The Spanish Civil War ended in crushing defeat for the Left, driving the PCE’s leadership into exile –often in the Soviet Union– and forcing its remaining networks deep underground. The Greek Civil War brought a similar outcome for the KKE: after the Democratic

1. Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 423.

2. Despite shared experiences of struggle, repression, illegality, and exile, comparative studies of the PCE, PCP, and KKE remain limited. See Andreu Mayayo and Javier Tébar, eds., *En el laberinto: Las izquierdas del sur de Europa (1968–1982)* (Granada: Comares, 2018); Eduardo Abad, “Una ortodoxia transnacional: Notas sobre la historia cruzada entre el PCP y los leninistas españoles,” in António S. Ferreira and João Madeira, eds., *As esquerdas radicais ibéricas entre a ditadura e a democracia: Percursos cruzados* (Lisbon: Colibri, 2020), 113–126; Anna Bosco, “Four Actors in Search of a Role: The Southern European Communist Parties,” in P. N. Diamandouros and Richard Gunther, eds., *Parties, Politics, and Democracy in the New Southern Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 329–387.

Army's defeat, tens of thousands of militants were imprisoned, sent into exile in Eastern Bloc countries, or pushed to the margins under harsh post-war repression.³ Many leaders and cadres of the Spanish and Greek communist parties had lived through these conflicts in the 1930s and 1940s, and such memories, as noted by scholars like Kostis Karpozilos and Paloma Aguilar, nurtured a distinctly cautious approach.⁴

In Greece, the legalisation of the Communist Left was framed by the Right as an act of “national reconciliation,” essential for democracy and European Economic Community (EEC) accession, but also symbolic in leaving behind the communists’ “anti-national” history.⁵ Spain’s transition, in contrast, was slower and more violent. The legalisation of the PCE in April 1977 provoked backlash from the army and conservative forces, with figures like Manuel Fraga denouncing it as a “coup d’état and a legal farce.”⁶ Removing anti-communist frameworks was not a linear process but a complex and contested one. In Spain, no significant purges occurred within the authoritarian state apparatus, while in Greece, purges were limited, and in Portugal, they were largely curtailed by 1976. For example, in Greece, political parties participating in the first elections were required to sign loyalty oaths. In Spain, the communist leader Santiago Carrillo reassured the public, stating, “Communists do not take property from peasants, do not oppose Christianity, and value family.” In 1975, Greek Interior Minister Konstantinos Stefanopoulos warned that “Greeks would never forgive those who took up arms against the nation,” and in 1979, Spain’s Prime Minister Adolfo Suárez cautioned against a “Marxist pact” between Socialists and Communists as a threat to democracy.⁷ In this context, the Communist Left in Spain and Greece –wary of political instability and the potential for military intervention– reluctantly accepted the dichotomy of “democracy or dictatorship.”

To smooth its integration into the new political system and counter right-wing accusations, the PCE sought to distance itself from both its military past of the 1930s and 1940s and the radical experience of the Second

3. Kostis Karpozilos, *Ελληνικός κομμουνισμός: μια διεθνική ιστορία, 1912–1974* (Athens: Antipodes, 2024).

4. Paloma Aguilar, *Políticas de la memoria y memorias de la política: El caso español en perspectiva comparada* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2008); Kostis Karpozilos, “Transition to Stability: The Greek Left in 1974,” in Elena Cavallaro and Kostis Kornetis, eds., *Rethinking Democratisation in Spain, Greece and Portugal* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 179–197.

5. Magda Fytili, “Including the Nation’s Enemies: The Long Politics of Recognition and Restitution during the Third Greek Republic,” *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 40 (2022): 195–222.

6. Antonio Pinilla, *La legalización del PCE: La historia no contada, 1974–1977* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2017).

7. Magda Fytili, «Μνήμη, λήθη και δημοκρατία: μια σύγκριση της ελληνικής με την ισπανική περίπτωση» (PhD diss., University of Athens, 2016).

Republic.⁸ Likewise, the KKE downplayed the Greek Civil War, emphasising instead the legacy of the Resistance – a legacy also claimed by the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK).⁹ In Portugal, the PCP had no need for such silencing, having endured the Estado Novo dictatorship (1933–1974) through disciplined clandestine organisation and a culture of conspiratorial resilience. When the regime collapsed in April 1974 in a military-led coup, the PCP emerged as a legal political force from the revolution's first day, joining provisional governments, shaping the course of political change, and openly embracing the legacy of the Carnation Revolution.¹⁰

The Cold War context further differentiated these parties' experiences. For the PCP and the KKE, alignment with the Soviet Union was not merely ideological but also a source of political legitimacy and a framework for interpreting global events. The PCE and the KKE Interior, by contrast, moved toward Eurocommunism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, distancing themselves from Moscow in favour of political pluralism and national autonomy. This divergence shaped their positions during the democratic transitions, yet all four entered the 1970s as seasoned organisations accustomed to operating under repression, with dense labour networks and a strong sense of historical mission.

Two major differences –the legacy of civil war and the contrast between revolutionary participation and legalisation struggles– shaped every strategic decision these parties made. The PCP's immediate entry into a revolutionary process offered opportunities for influence unmatched by its Greek and Spanish counterparts, which had to secure legality through negotiations with conservative elites. Yet long-term resistance, Cold War alignments, and the shared transition from illegality to political participation provided common ground for what became a shared “strategy of responsibility”.

OPENING THE POLITICAL SPACE: OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITS

The collapse of Southern Europe's dictatorships opened political opportunities that were far from uniform, and these initial conditions shaped commu-

8. Antonio Segovia Ganivet, “Memoria de los comunistas: Identidad, cultura y socialización del comunismo,” in José M. Maroto Blanco and Antonio Segovia Ganivet, eds., *Investigar a pie de campo: Problemas y desafíos en investigaciones críticas de humanidades y ciencias sociales* (Madrid: Dykinson, 2023), 137–153.

9. Magda Fytily, Manos Avgeridis, and Eleni Kouki, *Η δεύτερη ζωή της Εθνικής Αντίστασης. Πρακτικές αναγνώρισης και αποκλεισμού, 1944–2006* (Athens: Themelio, 2022).

10. Manuel Loff, Filipa Piedade, and Luís Soutelo, eds., *Ditaduras e Revolução: Democracia e políticas da memória* (Coimbra: Almedina, 2015); João Madeira, “Partido Comunista Português. Historiografia y Memoria,” *Nuestra Historia: Revista de Historia de la FIM*, no. 11 (2021): 159–184.

nist strategies from the outset. Immediately following the fall of the dictatorships, the communist parties were the only mass political organisations in these three Southern European countries.¹¹ In Portugal, the Carnation Revolution of April 1974 swept away the Estado Novo in a single day, with the Armed Forces Movement (MFA) inviting the PCP into the provisional government almost immediately. In this unique setting – a revolution led by military officers and buoyed by mass mobilisation – the PCP could act legally and openly from the first weeks of the transition, sharing political authority with other revolutionary forces, influencing economic policy (notably nationalisations), and building legitimacy through visible participation in government.¹² The Spanish and Greek communists faced the opposite scenario. After Franco's death in November 1975, the PCE remained illegal for more than a year, negotiating its recognition with Prime Minister Adolfo Suárez's government. Its eventual legalisation in April 1977 required significant symbolic and programmatic concessions, including acceptance of the monarchy and the national flag. In Greece, both the KKE and the KKE Interior emerged from illegality only after the fall of the junta in July 1974, with their legal status dependent on the political will of Prime Minister Konstantinos Karamanlis and his conservative New Democracy government.

These differences mattered. The PCP could claim legitimacy from shaping the post-revolutionary order from within, while the PCE and the Greek parties entered democratic competition having already conceded ground to secure legal recognition. For the latter, any display of radicalism risked recriminalisation or political isolation, encouraging moderation in both rhetoric and tactics. Despite this, similarities were evident. In all three countries, communists approached the early transition with caution, conscious of its fragility. Even the PCP, in a revolutionary context, avoided backing radical actions it did not control, wary of jeopardising alliances or provoking backlash.

MANAGING MOBILISATION: THE "STRATEGY OF RESPONSIBILITY"

In Portugal, Spain and Greece, communist leaders faced the same dilemma once authoritarian rule fell: how to respond to a surge of bottom-up mobilisation they had neither initiated nor fully controlled. Land seizures in Portugal's Alentejo, strikes and factory committees in Greece, and neighbourhood associations in Spain were already active before parties and unions

11. Richard Gunther, "Parties and Electoral Behavior in Southern Europe," *Comparative Politics* 37, no. 3 (2005): 253–275.

12. Carlos Cunha, *The Portuguese Communist Party's Strategy for Power: 1921–1986* (New York: Garland, 1992).

could reassert discipline. The PCP, PCE, KKE, and KKE Interior each moved to channel these energies into party-union structures, endorsing selective demands, negotiating concessions, and curbing actions likely to trigger repression or destabilise fragile openings – a pattern I call the “strategy of responsibility”, privileging governability, gradualism, and institutional leverage over unmediated street radicalism.

The Portuguese case was the most striking, as the revolutionary process set the state itself in motion. After April 1974, rural occupations and workers’ committees spread rapidly, followed in early 1975 by nationalisations in banking, insurance, and key industries. The PCP supported these reforms but strictly managed their pace and form. Anchored in the provisional governments and the *Intersindical* (later CGTP-IN), it condemned “wild” strikes and urged committees to operate through structures it controlled. The aim was not to halt change, but to channel it into frameworks capable of withstanding counter-mobilisation and external pressure. Even at the height of the 1975 “Hot Summer”, its line –back the provisional governments, avoid uncontrolled escalation, maintain order– reflected a belief that lasting gains depended on avoiding ruptures it could not control.¹³

In Spain, spontaneous activism centred on neighbourhoods and workplaces. In 1976–77, *asociaciones de vecinos* campaigned on housing, prices, and services in urban peripheries,¹⁴ while *Comisiones Obreras* (CC.OO.) –strongly influenced by the PCE– negotiated wage settlements amid rising strikes. The PCE welcomed mobilisation but steered it into a negotiated transition: securing rights and legalising parties. Its acceptance of the monarchy and the flag was part of the bargain for legality; later, support for the 1977 Moncloa Pacts, trading wage restraint for economic stability and institution-building, reflected the same strategy.¹⁵ This approach helped secure democracy but left many militants feeling tamed, while the PSOE outflanked the PCE electorally, reaping the benefits of the stability it had helped create.

In Greece, mobilisation flowed from two sources that had different rhythms: the student movement (whose radicalisation pre-dated 1974 and peaked in the 1973 Polytechnic uprising) and a post-1974 wave of workplace militancy. Both communist parties sought to harness these energies, albeit with distinct tones. The KKE Interior emphasised pluralism and parliamentary consolidation, urging activists to translate protest into durable

13. Raquel Varela, “O Partido Comunista Português e a esquerda militar: Contributo para o estudo da crise político-militar na Revolução dos Cravos,” *Ler História*, no. 63 (2012): 49–73.

14. Pamela Radcliff, *Making Democratic Citizens in Spain: Civil Society and the Popular Origins of the Transition, 1960–1978* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

15. Juan Andrade, *El PCE y el PSOE en (la) transición: la evolución ideológica de la izquierda durante el proceso de cambio político* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 2012).

organisational capacity and alliances – a Eurocommunist register that framed democracy not as a tactical pause but as the strategic terrain of socialist advance. The KKE defended mobilisation while warning against “adventurism” that could invite a security-state backlash. In practice, both channels converged on restraint in moments of potential escalation – a striking parallel to Portugal and Spain – with the argument that “Karamanlis or tanks” captured the peril of overreach in 1974–75.

In all three countries, parties often endorsed initiatives only after they had emerged independently. In Portugal, rural occupations and factory committees were acknowledged once established, then federated, legalised, and negotiated into state policy. In Spain, neighbourhood campaigns and strike committees that arose in 1976 were drawn into CC.OO. or allied platforms as the PCE steered them toward national agreements. In Greece, wildcat actions and student occupations were met with calls for unity and discipline, followed by efforts to institutionalise gains through unions and legal reforms. The pattern was consistent: initiative from below, conditional endorsement, incorporation into party-union structures, and restraint at moments of systemic risk – the choreography of the “strategy of responsibility”.

The parties’ trade-union strategies reinforced this pattern. In Greece and Portugal, the communist parties have consistently retained strong ties to labour and youth movements,¹⁶ while in Spain, the historical relationship between the PCE and the labour movement has been shaped by numerous internal conflicts.¹⁷ The PCP anchored itself in the *Intersindical*/CGTP-IN, giving the party a powerful lever to centralise bargaining and demobilise unpredictable actions. The PCE’s influence in CC.OO. enabled key agreements – including the Moncloa Pacts – that exchanged short-term militancy for lasting institutional presence.¹⁸ In Greece, despite a fragmented post-junta union landscape, both communist currents sought positions in national confederations and sectoral unions, aiming to turn protest into negotiable claims while avoiding provocations that might justify authoritarian reprisals.

However, the parties did not abandon radical goals. All four linked

16. Daniel Keith and Giorgos Charalambous, “On the (Non)Distinctiveness of Marxism-Leninism: The Portuguese and Greek Communist Parties Compared,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 49, no. 2 (2016): 147–161.

17. Javier Gimeno and Javier Tébar, “Comunistas en el sindicato, sindicalistas en el partido: Sindicato y partido durante el cambio político (1975–1982),” in David Ginard and Francisco Erice, eds., *Un siglo de comunismo en España II: Presencia social y experiencias militantes* (Madrid: Akal, 2022), 131–162; Sergio Gálvez, “El PCE en busca de una agenda sindical propia (1977–1983),” in David Ginard and Francisco Erice, eds., *Un siglo de comunismo en España II: Presencia social y experiencias militantes* (Madrid: Akal, 2022), 163–197.

18. Gloria S. Navarro, “Dinámicas transnacionales ibéricas en el sindicalismo español y portugués (1974–1982),” *Revista Historia Autónoma*, no. 6 (2015): 117–131.

mobilisation to structural change – agrarian reform and public ownership in Portugal; democratisation of state and enterprise in Spain; expanded civil liberties and social rights in Greece. What set their practice apart was an insistence on sequencing: constitutional frameworks first, reforms second, and any self-management experiments carefully embedded in law. Leaders framed this as prudence, not retreat – a stance shaped by two core differences. Spanish and Greek communists knew how quickly openings could close after defeat, while Portuguese communists, even amid revolution, faced counter-mobilisations, NATO pressure, and Western efforts to influence outcomes, making control over pace and form essential for survival.

Across cases, “extremism” was framed in similar terms. In Lisbon, communists condemned “savage” strikes that bypassed union channels; in Madrid, the PCE warned against “maximalist” demands that might fracture the opposition or invite repression; in Athens, both KKEs rejected “ultra-revolutionary” stances that could destabilise the fragile *Metapolitefsi*. Denunciations of “provocation” or “adventurism” were paired with appeals to national responsibility – stability, European normalisation, and constitutionalism as prerequisites for socialist advance.

The results were paradoxical. Communists became key stabilisers, legitimising procedures, securing social peace, and channelling protest – yet these very roles often strengthened rivals. In Spain, the PSOE gained most from normalisation; in Portugal, the PS used European social-democratic support to sideline the PCP; in Greece, PASOK captured the centre-left while the KKEs retained disciplined but limited bases. The “strategy of responsibility” thus secured democratic consolidation and tangible gains, but at the cost of ceding political leadership – a trade-off leaders defended by arguing that, without it, consolidation might not have occurred at all.

ALLIANCES AND CONSTITUTIONAL POLITICS

The “strategy of responsibility” was as evident in alliance-building and constitutional politics as in managing grassroots mobilisation. In Portugal, Spain and Greece, communist parties sought to be indispensable to post-authoritarian negotiations, even when the process was led by ideological rivals. This required accepting –at times significant– compromises to secure a place at the table shaping the new political order. In Portugal, the PCP was the only Southern European communist party to hold executive office during the transition. From May 1974, it joined successive MFA-led provisional governments, holding portfolios such as Labour and Social Affairs. This gave it direct influence over social and economic policy but required cooperation with moderate officers and the Socialist Party (PS), whose leader, Mário

Soares, worked to curb PCP influence. As the revolution ebbed after November 1975, the PCP's coalition options narrowed, and it shifted to opposition in the new parliamentary regime.

In Spain, the PCE faced the opposite challenge: lacking revolutionary leverage, it needed alliances to secure legalisation and entry into constitutional politics. PCE deputies subsequently played an active role in the Constituent Cortes, pressing for civil rights and regional autonomy but ultimately endorsing the 1978 Constitution, which maintained a capitalist framework. Its support for the October 1977 Moncloa Pacts –trading wage restraint and budget discipline for social reforms and anti-inflation measures– embodied its choice to legitimise state institutions through negotiation rather than extra-parliamentary pressure.¹⁹

In Greece, the KKE and KKE Interior faced a constitutional process dominated by Karamanlis's conservative New Democracy government. Excluded from executive office, both participated in the 1975 constitutional debates, advocating stronger protections for political rights and labour freedoms. The KKE Interior cast this as part of a long-term Eurocommunist strategy to deepen democracy, while the KKE, despite its Soviet alignment, also signalled commitment to the new order's legality. For both, alliances centred less on formal coalitions than on issue-based cooperation with PASOK and other democratic forces – coalition-building from below rather than through executive power.

In all three countries, coalition behaviour reflected the same structural differences outlined earlier. The PCP's revolutionary participation gave it early executive leverage but left it vulnerable to isolation once the revolutionary tide ebbed. The PCE and Greek parties, legalised from above, approached alliances with caution, wary of provoking elite backlash. In each case, alliances served to anchor them in the new order as responsible partners, even when that meant accepting constitutional settlements short of their maximalist goals.

INTERNATIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL PRESSURES

The “strategy of responsibility” was shaped –and at times decisively reinforced– by international and transnational pressures that steered all four parties toward moderation, sequencing, and institutional anchoring. Three factors were key: the Cold War security regime and détente; European party and state actors, especially social democrats, who backed non-communist

19. Carme Molinero and Pere Ysàs, *De la hegemonía a la autodestrucción: El Partido Comunista de España (1956–1982)* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2017).

left alternatives and constitutional stability; and intra-left transnational networks –from Eurocommunist forums to trade-union internationals– that spread models of controlled mobilisation and negotiated reform.

By the mid-1970s, superpower détente and Europe's *Ostpolitik* had reshaped risk calculations in Southern Europe. Washington sought to protect NATO's southern flank, while Moscow aimed to avoid crises that could disrupt détente. Revolutionary ruptures in Lisbon, Madrid, or Athens were thus seen as dangerous by both blocs. Communist leaders took the hint. The PCP recognised that accelerating the Portuguese revolution would face resistance not only from domestic centrists but also from anxious allies and neighbours committed to Atlantic security. The PCE and both Greek communist parties knew that any move threatening NATO, EEC ties, or defence agreements could unravel the fragile bargains securing their legality. The result was an "externalised" prudence: restraint at home to safeguard stability abroad.

Western Europe acted as both a model and a player. In Portugal, northern European social democracies backed the PS as a counterweight to the PCP in 1974–76 –providing funds, advisers, media support, and high-profile endorsements– helping the Socialists outpoll the communists and signalling Europe as the route to legitimacy and prosperity. In Spain, the SPD–PSOE alliance and Socialist International networks bolstered the PSOE's governing image, while European governments made EEC accession contingent on stable constitutionalism and market-oriented reforms.²⁰ In Greece, New Democracy's European ties and PASOK's later embrace of EEC membership set the terms of debate: communists could criticise Europe's economic model but could not ignore it as the destination of democratisation. The more Europe appeared as a gatekeeper to growth, aid, and recognition, the greater the cost of any tactic that risked its confidence.²¹

Transnational exchanges among the PCE, Italy's PCI, and parts of the French PCF promoted a language of pluralism, constitutionalism, and national roads to socialism.²² The KKE Interior embraced this milieu, drawing both its ideological vocabulary and practical models – coalition-building with non-communist lefts, rights-based constitutionalism, union pacts, and

20. Antonio Muñoz Sánchez, *El amigo alemán: el SPD y el PSOE de la dictadura a la democracia* (Barcelona: RBA Libros, 2012).

21. Sethelos Isidoros Balios and Antonio Muñoz Sánchez, "Transnational and International Dimensions of the Transitions," *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 53, no. 1 (2023): 127–154; Josep Sánchez Cervelló, "Las transiciones democráticas," *Ayer: Revista de Historia Contemporánea* 37, no. 1 (2000): 163–187.

22. Marco Di Maggio, *The Rise and Fall of Communist Parties in France and Italy: Entangled Historical Approaches* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

municipal strategies focused on competence and service delivery. The PCP and KKE, though rejecting Eurocommunism's ideology, engaged pragmatically, adopting practices that curbed polarisation and secured a place in parliamentary politics without surrendering core doctrine. In effect, all four shared repertoires –legalism, calibrated strikes, and issue-based alliances– even as their worldviews diverged.

The diffusion of concertation flowed as much through trade-union channels as through parties. Portuguese, Spanish, and Greek unionists adopted northern European crisis-management models that aligned with party strategies: contain inflation, trade wage restraint for social protections, codify collective bargaining, and stabilise expectations through pacts. The PCE's support for the Moncloa Pacts, the PCP's push for centralised bargaining in the *Intersindical*/CGTP-IN, and the Greek communists' focus on legal-institutional gains in union law all reflected this logic of "responsible" unionism.

External pressures did not dictate strategy, but they rewarded responsibility and penalised adventurousness. The four parties were not merely moderating; they were embedding their projects in an international field in which success meant constitutional stability, European integration, and predictable crisis management. The "strategy of responsibility" thus operated as a two-level game –prudence at home paired with reassurance abroad– that secured access and influence even as it increasingly favoured non-communist rivals.

CONCLUSION: CONVERGENCE, CONSTRAINTS, AND THE BOUNDARIES OF CHANGE

Placed side by side, the Portuguese, Spanish, and Greek experiences appear less as separate stories than as variations on a common strategic theme. The two key differences –the civil war legacies in Spain and Greece, and the contrast between Portugal's revolutionary transition and legalisation from above in the other two– shaped how each party entered the democratic arena. They explain why the PCP acted from within a process of state transformation, while the PCE and the Greek parties had to secure legality from outside, and why Spanish and Greek leaders carried the shadow of past defeats in ways Portuguese leaders did not.

Despite their different starting points, all four converged on a "strategy of responsibility", privileging stability and institutional presence over disruptive escalation. This helped embed the communists in the new political order but also narrowed the scope for transformative agendas. Their moderation often benefited rivals –the PSOE in Spain, the PS in Portugal, and PASOK in Greece– who reaped the political rewards of normalisation. Within the communist movement, discipline and restraint alienated militants and

blurred party profiles. The space for a rupture leading to socialist democracy or communist hegemony was narrow, hemmed in by domestic veto players and international pressures. Seen from today's perspective, this is not a morality tale of moderation over radicalism, but a political sociology of how left parties navigate transitions – balancing memory and fear, mobilisation and order, ambition and reassurance. In doing so, they shaped the democracies that followed and, in shaping them, also set the boundaries of what could change in the short term.

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[CHAPTER 7]

The Iberian Left and the Democratisation of the Police

Comparative Insights
from Portugal and Spain



What should be done with authoritarian police forces during a democratic transition? What role should the police play in a democratic society? How should a democracy organise, control, and deploy its police? To what extent do problematic police behaviours –often associated with dictatorship– reflect broader challenges inherent to policing in any complex society, including democratic ones? And how far does the quality of democracy depend on the quality of policing?

These questions came to the fore during the Portuguese revolution, the Spanish transition, and the broader process of democratic consolidation in the Iberian Peninsula. In both countries, the police embodied not only a practical challenge for governance but also a powerful symbol of either rupture with the past or continuity with authoritarian rule. The Iberian Left's engagement with police reform laid bare the deep tension between revolutionary ideals and the pragmatic imperatives of democratic state-building.

Despite their geographic proximity, Spain and Portugal underwent fundamentally different processes of democratisation, and these differences were sharply reflected in their approaches to police reform. Revolutionary Portugal initially moved swiftly and symbolically to sever ties with the dictatorship, most notably by shutting down and criminalising the political police (PIDE/DGS).¹ Spanish reformers, in contrast, deliberately refrained from implementing transitional justice mechanisms that would have criminalised or prosecuted the torturers of the Franco regime. Instead, they put forward a comprehensive police reform. By the mid-1980s, it was Spain –through its gradual, negotiated transition– that had implemented more far-reaching and structural reforms to its police institutions.

The contrast between these two paths highlights more than just policy differences; it invites a deeper reflection on the democratic left's role in shaping democratic policing. Comparing the Portuguese and Spanish

1. António Costa Pinto, "Dealing with the Legacy of Authoritarianism: Political Purges in Portugal's Transition to Democracy (1974–76)," in Stein U. Larsen et al., eds., *Modern Europe after Fascism, 1945–1980s* (New York: SSM-CUP, 1998), 1679–1717.

experiences offers valuable lessons, urging the democratic left not to shy away from the debate over what kind of police a good democracy truly needs – and how that vision can be achieved.

DEMOCRATIC POLICING IN HARMONIOUS COMMUNITIES

The ideal of a community-oriented and benevolent police force was a powerful vision during the democratic transitions in both Portugal and Spain. In Portugal, the first post-revolutionary issue of *Polícia Portuguesa* appeared under the headline “Policewomen at the service of children,” and between the 25 April 1974 Revolution and the journal’s closure in mid-1975, three of its six covers featured children interacting with police officers. While far-left groups continued to denounce the “repressive forces,” reformist sectors of the Left promoted a vision of the police as public servants rooted in working-class communities and everyday civic life. In Spain, the 1977 Moncloa Pact’s call for a “neighbourhood-focused” police reflected broader efforts to restore legitimacy and prevent the democratic transition from being tainted by persistent images of repression. During the 1979 local election campaign, the Communist Party (PCE) issued a poster showing a young girl handing flowers to a grandfatherly policeman – an emblem of trust and familiarity.

Sociological studies conducted at the time in Spanish working-class neighbourhoods confirmed that residents felt safer and more protected when officers patrolled on foot. The 1978 police reform not only renamed the *Polícia Armada* as the *Polícia Nacional* and changed its uniform colour from grey to brown, thereby making political change visible, but also sought to transform its mission. Some deputies even sought to establish the police as mediators in minor neighbourhood disputes. That same year, the Ministry of the Interior ordered the return to foot patrols as the preferred mode of policing – a break from the car-based, technocratic model favoured under Franco. Moreover, the new *Polícia Nacional* replaced the rigid Civil Guard in all municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants. Two additional police academies were opened to train thousands of young policemen, and between 1978 and 1979, 135 new police stations were established in working-class suburbs that had expanded during the industrial boom of previous decades. The goal was to project proximity and accessibility, restoring the popular sense of safety associated with visible, local patrols.

The vision of community policing as a democratic alternative to the securitarian approach clashed with the broader political and social realities of the 1970s. Both Portugal and Spain were deeply divided societies, marked by conflicts of class, ideology, region, and identity. Drug trafficking and addiction-related crime polarised community life in many working-class

neighbourhoods. The industrial crisis and unemployment ignited social conflict. The violent fringes of the radical right and the radical left endangered peaceful coexistence. In such contexts, policing was never just about assisting neighbours, preventing petty crime, and fostering a feeling of security – it also meant enforcing contested decisions, arbitrating between competing interests, quelling violent activism, and making democracy function in the face of resistance. The challenge for the democratic left was not only to humanise the police, but to reconcile the aspirational communitarian image with the messy, conflict-ridden work of democratic governance in complex modern societies.

PORTUGAL: POLICING THE REVOLUTION

One of the most immediate dilemmas facing the Portuguese provisional authorities in the wake of the Carnation Revolution was how to deal with the inherited repressive apparatus of the Estado Novo, both in symbolic and operational terms, in order to avoid a counter-coup. The PIDE/DGS (the political police) symbolised the coercive heart of fascist rule, and their disbandment was one of the revolution's most powerful symbolic acts. Yet the broader dilemma remained: what to do with other forces like the PSP (urban uniformed police) and GNR (gendarmerie-like rural police), which were also closely tied to the dictatorship's coercive governance? For the Left, especially its radical elements, any association with these institutions was politically toxic. Catarina Eufémia, a young mother killed in 1954 by the GNR during a rural protest, had been elevated as the protomartyr who epitomised the illegitimacy of the dictatorship.²

Public trust in the PSP and GNR collapsed, and civil obedience gave way to active defiance. As the Left rejected the police's role as an instrument of repression, it faced a fundamental dilemma: whether these institutions could be transformed and integrated into a democratic order. Deep mistrust, coupled with the threat that any use of force might lead to their dissolution, paralysed the police and created a vacuum of legitimate coercive authority.³

2. Henriques Pinheiro, "A morte de Catarina. Memória viva de uma tragédia," *Diário do Alentejo (Beja)*, 18 November 2005; José Pacheco Pereira, *Álvaro Cunhal: Uma biografia política*. vol. 3 (Lisboa: Temas e Debates, 2005).

3. A development of the arguments in this section in Diego Palacios Cerezales, "'Fascist Lackeys?' Dealing with the Police's Past during Portugal's Transition to Democracy (1974–1980)," *Portuguese Journal of Social Science* 6, no. 3 (2007): 155–183, https://doi.org/10.1386/pjss.6.3.155_1 (accessed 30 April 2026). More recent overview in Maria Fernanda Rollo, Adolfo Cueto-Rodríguez, and Pedro Marques Gomes, "La policía de seguridad pública portuguesa durante el cambio político (1974–1975): Hechos y memoria de un cuerpo policial en adaptación",

This vacuum opened up both opportunities and risks. Popular mobilisation exploded – through assemblies, demonstrations, occupations of factories, housing, and estates, and experiments in self-management across workplaces and schools. The Left embraced this energy as a source of revolutionary legitimacy but lacked the institutional capacity or political strategy to manage its consequences. The demoralised police withdrew, often refusing to patrol or intervene, fearing backlash, stigmatisation, or retribution. In many areas, law enforcement simply ceased to function, exposing the limits of a revolutionary project that had yet to reconcile its vision of liberation with the necessity of authority.

The military –particularly COPCON and other revolutionary units– stepped into the vacuum, but instead of suppressing mobilisation, they often sided with the protesters. For the radical left, this alliance offered a vision of a new type of order. Yet it carried significant risks for state coherence and legal authority, especially as tensions mounted in regions hostile to the revolutionary path. Business owners resented losing control over their enterprises, emigrants in France feared the occupation of the houses they were building in Portugal, and smallholders worried that agrarian reform might not stop at the large estates.

The dilemma for the Left was whether revolutionary legitimacy alone could sustain governance in a complex society, or whether some degree of repressive capacity was inevitable – and if so, how it could be reconciled with democratic values.

The radicalisation of the revolution after the defeat of the counter-revolutionary 11 March 1975 coup attempt forced the Left to grapple with competing models of policing: whether to reform the existing forces or construct new ones aligned with socialist ideals.

The April 1975 election for the Constituent Assembly was won by parties committed to Western-style pluralist democracy rather than revolutionary socialism. However, the Left wing of the Armed Forces Movement (MFA) retained control and was reluctant to abandon its role as the engine of the revolutionary process. This provoked a wave of anti-communist mobilisation during the summer, particularly in the North, where the revolutionary government's legitimacy and authority were openly contested. The Socialist Party, in alliance with right-wing and Catholic groups, sought to convert its electoral victory into effective political power. This coalition organised mass demonstrations, encouraged the siege and destruction of leftist offices –mirroring tactics previously used by the far-left against

in Ángeles González Fernández, Inmaculada Cordero Olivero, and Alberto Carrillo-Linares, eds., *El ámbito de lo posible: Crisis y reconstrucciones en el último siglo* (Madrid: Sílex, 2023), 537-552.

right-wing parties in the early post-dictatorship months– and, in some cases, resorted to violent confrontation.

For the Left and the Provisional Government, the challenge was profound: how to confront what they perceived as a counter-revolutionary threat without replicating the repressive methods of the dictatorship they had fought to overcome. While radical military sectors demanded decisive action –including mass arrests and military suppression of the protests– moderates warned that such repression would delegitimise the revolution and alienate crucial segments of the population.

The paralysis of the coercive apparatus, which had previously allowed radical mobilisation by workers, peasants, and residents of poor neighbourhoods, now opened the way for anti-communist groups to attack PCP offices and intimidate left-wing militants. Local police and military units refused to intervene. In response, the government deployed the naval infantry to police an anti-communist protest in Vila Nova de Famalicão (district of Braga). Amid heightened tension, soldiers fired on the crowd, killing two demonstrators, including a grassroots activist from the Social Democratic Party. It was the deadliest single episode of repression in metropolitan Portugal since 1945. The anti-communist coalition responded by activating the full symbolic repertoire of anti-repressive protest. Funerals became mass demonstrations against the government, and the victims' names were inscribed in the public space through street renamings in their hometowns.

The radical wing of the MFA reacted by acquiring riot-control equipment and advancing a narrative that framed the mobilisation as a reactionary plot to restore fascism. In their view, the demonstrations had to be confronted with resolve. But the reality on the ground was more complex. The mobilisation presented itself in the name of democracy, and its core demand –the implementation of the electoral result– resonated beyond the conservative North. For many officers who had initially supported the revolutionary project and the transformation of the military into a force for liberation, the experience of facing down anti-communist crowds changed their political horizon. Confronted with the risk of civil conflict and the erosion of popular legitimacy, these officers withdrew their support for continued revolutionary transformation and began to favour a negotiated transition to multiparty democracy.

In September, the Socialist and Social Democratic parties, which had won the April election, became dominant in the sixth provisional government. Confronted with a collapse of public order and the threat of civil conflict, they re-evaluated their priorities and decided to reassert state authority. They halted efforts to reform the police and launched a process of institutional stabilisation. The government quietly restored the police's

repressive capacities, reauthorising the use of firearms and rehabilitating previously discredited riot units. By early 1976, officials openly defended police violence as a necessary means of maintaining public order and consolidating democracy.

This shift marked the end of the revolutionary moment. Although leaders continued to invoke ideals of participatory governance and community-based policing, they recognised that any transformation of the police had to align with the practical demands of governing a fractured and increasingly polarised society. Reasserting police power exposed the limits of the revolutionary project and signalled the return of the state as a force rooted in law, coercion, and institutional continuity.

After the revolutionary period, democratic authorities not only reversed many of the changes introduced between 1974 and 1975 but also halted further police reform. Control of the urban PSP remained in military hands; police officers continued to be denied union rights; and the use of firearms was left unregulated, as the government feared that disciplinary measures might once again erode police authority. Although police training saw some improvements, the experience of state collapse during the revolution left a lasting fear of police demoralisation. This apprehension discouraged structural reform and postponed any major reorganisation of the Portuguese police until the 1990s.

SPAIN: NO RETRIBUTION AND INCREMENTAL REFORM

While Portugal's revolutionary rupture allowed the Left to reimagine the state, albeit only briefly, and ultimately backfired, Spain's transition to democracy followed a more cautious and negotiated trajectory. Franco's death in 1975 did not bring about a purge of authoritarian institutions, but instead opened a political process focused on preserving stability and continuity – even as mounting popular mobilisation made reform unavoidable. For the Spanish Left – particularly the PSOE and the PCE – this meant navigating a difficult landscape where democratic ambitions had to contend with state structures still controlled by Francoist elites.

Nowhere was this tension more visible than in the realm of policing. As the Left and the working class mobilised for amnesty, democratic rights, and better wages amid an economic crisis, the police frequently responded with force. While nine demonstrators had been killed by the police between 1967 and 1975, that figure rose to 38 between 1976 and 1982. Additional deaths resulted from mistreatment in custody, shootings at traffic checkpoints, and

clashes between police and armed activists.⁴ The same period also saw a surge in terrorist attacks, many of which targeted the police.⁵ These attacks fostered fear and resentment within police ranks, where many officers blamed their victimisation on the leniency of the post-Franco political elites.

The Left was not in power. Police reform was led by the centrist government of Adolfo Suárez, and it fell to the Left to decide whether to support these efforts or to denounce them as mere cosmetic change. The Minister of the Interior, Rodolfo Martín Villa, refused to risk destabilising the existing police apparatus. The Portuguese example taught a severe lesson: making the police accountable for excesses could alienate and paralyse them. Instead, he decided to move fast: meaningful reform without looking back. When the Left insisted on the need for a “democratic police,” Martín Villa famously replied that he knew of no such thing anywhere in the world, but that his aim was a police force capable of serving a democratic society.⁶

Sectors of the police itself became key allies in bringing about police change. Since the death of Franco, a small group of reform-minded officers had promoted a discourse of apolitical professionalism in clandestine newspapers. They called for accountability, a clear break with militarised policing, and linked union rights to the broader promise of democratic transformation – challenging the authoritarian ethos still dominant within the force. At the same time, men from the investigative police, who had harshly dealt with the democratic and revolutionary opposition, feared that democracy would criminalise their behaviour as it had done in neighbouring Portugal. They also organised, linking with far-right groups to oppose a democratisation that could imperil their lives and careers.

This climate gave rise to the first organised protests by police officers. Disaffected officers began using the internal radio systems of police vehicles to broadcast anonymous criticisms of the military chain of command. They condemned the arbitrariness of internal rewards, the abuses of the military top brass, and the lack of recognition for everyday police work.

In response to growing public and internal pressure, the government acted. In November 1976, it symbolically renamed the *Brigadas de*

4. David Ballester, *Las otras víctimas: La violencia policial durante la Transición (1975–1982)* (Zaragoza: Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza, 2022); David Ballester, *Una historia de la policía española: De los grises y Conesa a los azules y Villarejo* (Barcelona: Pasado & Presente, 2024); Sophie Baby, *El mito de la transición pacífica: Violencia y política en España (1975–1982)* (Madrid: Akal, 2018).

5. Gaizka Fernández Soldevilla and María Jiménez Ramos, eds., 1980: *El terrorismo contra la transición* (Madrid: Tecnos, 2021).

6. Diego Palacios Cerezales and Sergio Vaquero Martínez, *Uniformados y secretas. Breve historia de la policía en España* (Madrid: La Catarata, 2024).

Investigación Social as *Brigadas de Información*. The change marked an attempt to redirect these units away from persecuting trade unionists, students, and political dissent and towards the investigation of violent groups, especially in the context of growing terrorist activity.

The boldest moment of police mobilisation came on 17 December 1976, when over 1,000 uniformed officers from the *Policía Armada* and the *Guardia Civil* marched through the streets of Madrid. They demanded higher wages, an end to militarisation, full labour rights, and inclusion in the general social security system. The protest brought together officers genuinely committed to these demands and others seeking to undermine the reformist government and provoke an authoritarian backlash. The protest escalated when demonstrators confronted the Inspector General of the *Policía Armada*, who had arrived to disperse them, and physically assaulted him.⁷

In 1977, following the legalisation of freedom of association for civil servants, the government recognised that the plainclothes police could not be excluded from this new right. The *Asociación Profesional de Funcionarios del Cuerpo Superior de Policía* (APFCSP) was the first to organise, featuring men from the former Social Brigade at the forefront. Politically to the right of Alfonso Suarez's reformist government, it soon turned critical, publishing the 1978 manifesto "Dolorosamente hartos" ("Painfully fed-up"), which denounced the political abandonment of the police in the face of mounting terrorist attacks. This gave rise to the alternative *Unión Sindical de Policías* (USP), formed by the inspectors committed to democratic policing that had already surfaced in 1976. Importantly, the USP's collaboration with the Socialist Party helped channel reform from within the police once the socialists won the election in 1982. The APFCSP itself, after the backlash caused by their political positioning in 1978, reconvened as a union in 1980 (SPP – *Sindicato Profesional de Policía*) and both organisations launched a joint work-to-rule protest that secured salary increases and better staffing.

The uniformed *Policía Nacional* remained under military discipline even after the 1978 reform. Commanders often regarded unionisation as a direct threat to hierarchy and operational work. Among the rank and file, the slogan "We are policemen, not soldiers" captured the growing aspiration for professional recognition and autonomy, as well as a shift in identity. They welcomed more training and responsibility but resented military discipline.

Young reformist uniformed policemen organised the clandestine *Sindicato Unificado de Policía* (SUP), which released its first public statement in

7. Julián Delgado Aguado, *Los grises: víctimas y verdugos del franquismo* (Madrid: Temas de Hoy, 2005).

October 1978, expressing solidarity with police officers and their families who had mutinied in Bilbao after the Basque separatist group ETA machine-gunned a group of officers playing football near a police facility. The SUP rapidly expanded across local branches and, by 1980, had developed into a clandestine national organisation. Between 1980 and 1986, the SUP spearheaded a campaign for demilitarisation and union rights, employing bold and visible tactics – graffiti, sit-ins, and 24-hour *encierros* (lock-ins). The union’s rhetoric strongly supported democracy and demanded that democratic rights be extended to the police force itself.

After 1982, when the PSOE came to power, chose to professionalise rather than politicise police reform. The party justified these changes by pointing to future gains while carefully avoiding any disavowal of the police’s authoritarian past. Political violence, especially ETA terrorism, gave the government a strong rationale for reinforcing coercive institutions instead of dismantling them. At the same time, the Right dominated public discourse with a “law-and-order” narrative, making it politically risky for the Left to appear soft on crime or overly critical of the security forces.

To navigate this complex terrain, left-leaning politicians framed reforms as technical and professional upgrades, aimed at improving efficiency and modernising the police. Demands from police trade unions for demilitarisation and greater recognition further bolstered the case for reform. In response, the government implemented a series of major changes culminating in the 1986 *Ley Orgánica de Fuerzas y Cuerpos de Seguridad*. This landmark law restructured and civilianised the national police: it merged the uniformed and plainclothes corps into the new *Cuerpo Nacional de Policía*, ended military command over police units, and formally recognised union rights (while maintaining a ban on strikes). The law also established the *Consejo de Policía*, a democratically elected body tasked with mediating disputes between rank-and-file officers, senior leadership, and the administration.

By the late 1980s, police unionism had become a core element of professional identity. The creation of regional police forces in Catalonia and the Basque Country further deepened the break with the Francoist legacy. These new corps took over most policing functions, displacing the National Police and the Civil Guard, and effectively bringing an end to the centralising role that the police had long played in Spanish state-building.

Spain’s approach to police reform stood in sharp contrast to Portugal’s. In Portugal, officials followed a slower and more limited path. The main *Estado Novo* forces –the PSP, GNR, and PJ– remained in place after the revolution. Revolutionary attempts to unify or democratise the police failed, and lawmakers only introduced meaningful reforms in the mid-1990s, including demilitarisation, union rights, and updated firearms protocols. Revolutionary

overreach contributed to state fragility and delayed institutional reform. In Spain, a negotiated transition enabled deeper restructuring of the police, though at the expense of addressing demands for immediate justice.

The Iberian experience illustrates the enduring tension between the pursuit of transformative ideals and the pragmatic imperatives of democratic state-building. It suggests that bold, pragmatic engagement with coercive institutions –rather than moral denunciation– is essential for the survival of democracy and the protection of rights today.

COMPARATIVE LESSONS

Both the Portuguese and Spanish police underwent significant transformations during their respective transitions to democracy, though structural changes advanced more rapidly in Spain. These transformations contributed to a remarkable shift in public perception: in both countries, the police eventually became one of the most trusted institutions. Police forces in both countries learned reasonably well to navigate their dual role as a trusted service to the community and as enforcers of the law in conflictive situations. Yet serious challenges loom in the 21st century. Racism and undemocratic right-wing militancy among officers have surfaced in recent years, casting doubt on the police's role as a guarantor of rights for all citizens.

In Spain, some activists attribute every police shortcoming to the transition's inability to make a clean break with the Francoist past. This ideological shortcut ignores three key facts. First, the Spanish police underwent a profound transformation – remarkable by international standards. Second, a more radical break with the past, as attempted in Portugal, led to serious dilemmas and unintended consequences, including slower change in the police. And third, many of the problems facing the Spanish police today –such as some instances of excessive use of force, weak accountability, or politicisation– are not unique. They are also found in other democracies, including post-revolutionary Portugal.

The ongoing crisis of the French police reflects a broader pattern: police and society are caught in a spiral of antagonism marked by recurring abuses, waves of delegitimisation, high levels of burnout, and growing recruitment difficulties – without a clear resolution in sight. The French Left has contributed to this dynamic. By focusing almost exclusively on denouncing police racism and violence –often in confrontational terms– it has deepened mutual hostility while failing to articulate a credible reform agenda. As a result, it has remained politically marginal on policing, ceding the field to right-wing narratives centred on order and authority.

Spain's transition followed a distinctive path. It combined a bold

rebranding of the police with substantial investment in training, better working conditions, and deliberate efforts to build public trust. Reform-minded politicians worked in partnership with police actors, and the forward-looking vision they advanced helped enhance the institution's democratic legitimacy and prestige. While this model did not eliminate all deep-rooted problems, it offers an instructive contrast – showing how engagement, rather than antagonism, can create conditions for meaningful reform.

The comparison between Spain and Portugal offers valuable lessons for police reform in the twenty-first century. Change is more likely to succeed not through confrontation and blame, but through the cultivation of a sophisticated culture of trust and shared responsibility for security.

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[CHAPTER 8]

"Lost Time Is Never Found Again"

Greek Trade Unions and the Path Taken



INTRODUCTION

Research on democratic transitions has increasingly moved beyond interpretations centred on rupture, emphasising instead negotiated change, institutional continuities, and the persistence of authoritarian power relations within new democratic settings.¹ The Greek case is particularly instructive in this respect. While political liberalisation reshaped the main political arena –as exemplified by the legalisation of the Communist Party–, the extent to which democratisation transformed social and state-related institutions points to a more contested picture.² This is particularly evident in the case of trade unions: the transition to democracy did not necessarily lead to a major reconfiguration of state-labour relations or to greater organisational autonomy of working-class associations. On the contrary, the post-1974 period was marked by the resilience of structures whose origins predated the military regime of 1967.

Therefore, examining trade unionism in the context of the democratic transition reveals limitations, contradictions, and the reproduction of pre-existing patterns, thereby challenging the traditional view that it was radically reconstituted under the Third Hellenic Republic. In contrast to other social actors –most notably the student movement, which entered the post-authoritarian period with renewed legitimacy and organisational vitality– the labour movement emerged carrying deep-rooted legacies: organisationally weakened, financially dependent, and politically fragmented, with limited capacity for workplace mobilisation and entrenched patterns of state supervision and intervention.³ As a result, the reconstruction of trade unions

1. Kostas Kornetis, “Introduction: The End of a Parable? Unsettling the Transitology Model in the Age of Crisis,” *Historein* 15, no. 1 (2015): 5–12.

2. Vangelis Karamanolakis, Ilias Nikolakopoulos, and Tassos Sakellariopoulos, “Εισαγωγή,” in Vangelis Karamanolakis, Ilias Nikolakopoulos and Tassos Sakellariopoulos eds., *Η Μεταπολίτευση '74-'75, Στιγμές μιας μετάβασης* (Athens: Themelio Publications, 2016), 23–33.

3. Giannis Kouzis, “Τα βασικά χαρακτηριστικά του σύγχρονου ελληνικού συνδικαλιστικού κινήματος,” in *Εργασία και πολιτική: συνδικαλισμός και οργάνωση συμφερόντων στην Ελλάδα, 1974–2004* (Athens: Sakis Karagiorgas Foundation, 2006), 323–342.

after 1974 did not unfold on an institutional blank slate, but rather within a framework shaped by long-standing arrangements and inherited constraints dating back to their consolidation as auxiliaries to the anti-communist state in the late 1940s.

In this chapter, I examine the contested terrain of “democratisation” in post-1974 Greece, focusing on the demands of labour unions and working-class movement, as well as on the “liberties” granted by successive governments – the conservative administration of Konstantinos Karamanlis (1974–1980) and the socialist one of Andreas Papandreou (1981–1989).

Exploring the interactions and tensions between these actors sheds light on the form of pluralism that emerged during the *Metapolitefsi*. In particular, it invites us to consider whether the expansion of democratic freedoms strengthened the autonomy of civil society or, alternatively, reinforced the role of an already powerful and interventionist state – sometimes with the participation, or even the invitation, of workplace organisations themselves.

Within the field of labour relations, democratisation unfolded in two distinct phases: 1974–1981 and 1982–1989. Neither phase, however, even allowing for the differences, led to the consolidation of genuinely autonomous and democratic trade union structures. Rather, the *Metapolitefsi* produced a form of party-mediated and state-dependent unionism. This trajectory also reflects a specific form of path dependency: organisational structures and patterns shaped prior to the dictatorship continued – albeit in modified forms – to dominate the field during the post-authoritarian period.

To explore these dynamics, this chapter briefly examines developments across three interrelated levels. First, it considers governmental initiatives and labour legislation; second, institutional trade unionism, including the hierarchical structure of the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE), local labour centres, federations and primary unions; and third, social mobilisation and workplace activism. By bringing these dimensions together, the chapter seeks to assess the “balance between rupture and continuity”⁴ contributing to discussions on the nature and limits of democratisation in post-authoritarian Greece.

PARTIAL DEMOCRATISATION AND CONTROLLED TRANSITION (1974–1981)

Unlike the immediate post-war years, when labour mobilisation briefly flourished before being marginalised through anti-communist state intervention, the post-1974 transition was not marked by a sustained and organ-

4. Ilias Nikolakopoulos, “Τα διλήμματα της Μεταπολίτευσης: μεταξύ συνέχειας και ρήξης,” in *Η Μεταπολίτευση '74-'75*, 35–46.

ised challenge to the existing institutional framework. Rather, change unfolded as a predominantly top-down reorganisation, with the Ministry of Labour setting the pace. The absence of a strong grassroots counterweight to state-orchestrated reform facilitated a controlled restructuring of institutional unionism. As a result, the proclaimed "purification" of trade union structures remained neither comprehensive nor fully effective, raising doubts about the government's willingness to pursue a genuine policy of "de-juntafication".⁵

The transformation of labour organisation and institutional unionism was mediated primarily by unionists prominent in the pre-dictatorship period and rooted in the anti-communist conservative Centre. In the aftermath of the Colonels' downfall, leading figures of this milieu assumed key positions both within the Ministry of Labour and within the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE). This development can be interpreted in part as a form of political reward for their anti-dictatorial activity, particularly through DEKE (Democratic Workers' Movement of Greece), which maintained links with international trade union organisations – notably the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTUC).⁶

A transnational actor, the ICFTU effectively became a source of legitimacy for the newly appointed national trade union leadership. When ICFTU General Secretary Otto Kersten visited Greece in early August 1974, he met both with Konstantinos Laskaris, the newly appointed Minister of Labour, and Nikos Papageorgiou and Christos Karakitsos, who would subsequently staff the transitional GSEE administration and would remain in office until 1981.⁷

This constellation of actors, combined with the logic of a top-level institutional co-ordination, shaped the early phase of trade union democratisation. The restructuring of institutional unionism thus emerged as a controlled process mediated by governmental initiatives, transnational trade union networks, and established political personnel.

The restructuring of institutional unionism was further systematised through a series of legislative measures introduced in the immediate post-authoritarian period (Legislative Decree 42/1974, Law 6/1975, Law 89/1975). These measures formally abolished dictatorship-era legislation and removed the junta-appointed administrations from Labour Centres and Federations. Yet, this process remained partial and uneven.

5. Stefanos Vamiedakis, "Το εργατικό κίνημα στη συγκυρία της Μεταπολίτευσης (1974–1975)," in *Η Μεταπολίτευση '74–'75*, 187–200.

6. General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE), "Press Release," 8 August 1974, Historical Archive of GSEE (Athens), Press Office, file 1.12.

7. *To Vima* (Athens), 6 August 1974.

At the primary union level, however, dictatorship-appointed leaderships were allowed to remain in place and played a crucial role in organising the first post-authoritarian elections within their respective unions. Union administrations retained control over membership registers, determined the composition of electoral committees, and supervised electoral procedures, thereby facilitating their own re-election and the renewal of their legitimacy as representatives of the working-class. At the same time, left-wing organisations that had been dissolved by the dictatorship –as well as newly formed unions after 1974– were excluded from participating in these electoral processes. As a result, the conditions for a democratic representative congress of GSEE were not fully met. Its alignment with the newly elected Konstantinos Karamanlis was thus effectively secured through the reproduction of an established order.

The first post-authoritarian congress of the GSEE was held in April 1976, nearly two years after the fall of the dictatorship. Rather than marking a clear break with the past, the congress largely reproduced familiar features of the pre-dictatorship landscape: high fragmentation, the persistence of “paper unions”, allegations of electoral malpractices, ideologically motivated exclusions under formal pretexts, and continued financial dependence reinforcing the entanglement between the state and institutional unionism. Moreover –indeed as a consequence–, trade unionists active during the dictatorship retained significant influence within the new structures.

Neither the transition nor subsequent democratic consolidation produced a decisive rupture with pre-dictatorial union structures and practices. Despite institutional reforms, core organisational features remained intact: a centralised confederative structure dominated by the GSEE; strong dependence on state funding – a practice dating back to the 1930s when unions were financed by the state under a corporatist authoritarian regime; judicial oversight of union functioning, and continued governmental involvement in collective bargaining. Union membership remained limited, particularly in the private sector, while representation in small and medium-sized enterprises was weak.⁸ In this sense, pre-junta patterns of corporatist unionism were largely reproduced.

At the same time, a significant transformation was underway: the emergence of organised factions within trade union structures, typically aligned with the dominant political parties. This development reflected a broader shift in the Greek political system after 1974, often described as a

8. Christos A. Ioannou, “Trade Unions in Greece: Change and Continuity,” *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research* 2, no. 3 (1996): 500–518.

"party-centred democracy".⁹ In contrast to the post-war period –when unified electoral lists had been promoted as a marker of ostensibly depoliticised unionism– the rise of party-affiliated factions institutionalised political competition within the trade union movement itself. On one hand, this development reinforced democratising dynamics, as both established and emerging forces of the Left entered the sphere of institutional trade unionism. On the other hand, it contributed to the consolidation of a pattern that constrained the emergence of an autonomous working-class movement. This tension would prove crucial in the years to come.

THE POST-AUTHORITARIAN SURGE OF LABOUR MOBILISATION (1974–1981)

If the reconstruction of institutional unionism followed a predominantly top-down trajectory, developments at the level of social mobilisation unfolded along a different path. The first strike of the post-authoritarian period was declared two and a half months after the fall of the dictatorship, on 8 October 1974, at the National Can factory in Elefsina, and lasted four days. This strike marked the beginning of a broader wave of mobilisation, particularly in industrial workplaces across the country, characterised by prolonged "wildcat" strikes: that is, direct and participatory forms of collective action, most frequently initiated without the support –or even against the wishes– of established union leaderships.

This mobilisation was driven by a new workforce, often composed of temporary, unskilled, or recently incorporated workers, for whom factory employment represented a transitional condition rather than a stable occupational identity. This heterogeneous group included students, women, rural internal migrants, and short-term immigrants, many of whom experienced multiple forms of inequality beyond wage disparities. Within the broader political climate of the *Metapolitefsi*, these workers tested the limits of workplace discipline and challenged forms of authoritarianism consolidated during the dictatorship. Their demands therefore extended beyond wage increases or narrow economic claims to encompass a broader contestation of hierarchical power relations within the workplace. Arbitrary workplace regulations and authoritarian supervisory practices –extensively reinforced during the dictatorship– became central targets of working-class protest.¹⁰

The politicisation of workplace demands reflected the broader democratising climate. During clashes at the National Can factory, for instance, workers

9. Giannis Voulgaris, *Η Ελλάδα της Μεταπολίτευσης 1974–1990: σταθερή δημοκρατία σηματοδότη από τη μεταπολεμική ιστορία* (Athens: Themelio, 2001).

10. Katerina Labrinou, *Μικρή ιστορία από το "Ρουρ της Ελλάδας". Στιγμές του Εργατοϋπαλληλικού Κέντρου Ελευσίνας* (Athens: Institute of Labour of the GSEE [INE/GSEE], forthcoming 2026).

reportedly seized police helmets and batons, chanting that “the working class will not allow the return of the tanks”.¹¹ Such moments illustrate the close connection between political democratisation and workplace activism, as workers sought to extend democratic practices into everyday labour relations.

Two features of this early wave of mobilisation are particularly noteworthy. First, demands extended beyond the pure economic demands to include co-management and worker participation in decision-making, reflecting a broader process of reclaiming political agency. Second, a significant share of this mobilisation unfolded within multinational corporations – particularly those associated with American capital. Even the centre-right leadership of the GSEE referred to a generalised “behaviour of foreign companies toward Greek workers”, while public discourse increasingly framed these practices in terms of a “colonial” relationship toward Greek labour.¹² Labour mobilisation thus assumed, at least in part, the character of a struggle for “economic sovereignty”.

At the same time, mobilisation was concentrated in strategically important enterprises –such as shipyards, oil refineries, and mines– belonging to major domestic business groups, including Andreadis, Latsis, and Bodosakis, whose economic interests had been closely aligned with the dictatorship. Labour unrest in these sectors therefore reflected a broader contestation of the political and economic alliances formed under authoritarian rule. In this sense, early post-authoritarian labour mobilisation can also be interpreted as a form of economic democratisation, directed not only against workplace authority but also against the perceived continuity of economic elites associated with the previous regime.¹³

This surge in mobilisation was followed by a coordinated and widespread employer backlash targeting the newly found factory-based unions. Their emergence challenged the traditional skill-based unions, juxtaposing grassroots activism with bureaucratic procedures and directly contesting managerial dominance in the workplace. The rapid proliferation of workplace unions between 1975 and 1979 met with punitive measures against trade union activists: dismissals, arrests, and blacklisting were common practices aimed at curbing both the expansion and the transformative potential of independent workplace organisation, while reasserting managerial authority in the workplace. The scale of collective dismissals alarmed

11. *Ο Αγώνας* [*Struggle*]: A Film by Six (1975), dir. Dimitris Giannikopoulos, Ilias Zafeiropoulos, Giorgos Thanasoulas, Thodoros Maragkos, Kostas Papanikolaou, and Filippos Oikonomidis.

12. General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE), Athens, 8 August 1975, Historical Archive of GSEE (Athens), Press Office, file 1.12.

13. Katerina Labrinou, *Μικρή ιστορία από το “Ρουρ της Ελλάδας”*.

even the GSEE, which called for state intervention against employer practices deemed to threaten "social peace".¹⁴

The right-wing government, however, followed a different path, introducing additional restrictions on trade union freedoms. In 1976, Law 330 was adopted with a dual objective. On the one hand, it sought to reinforce the primacy of institutional unionism over more spontaneous or grassroots forms of organisation, as only officially recognised unions were permitted to declare strikes. On the other hand, it provided employers with additional instruments to contain the dispersed and militant labour mobilisation: solidarity and "political" strikes were prohibited, workplace sit-ins were criminalised, and employers were granted the right to impose lockouts.

Despite these restrictions, workplace mobilisation continued to generate new organisational forms. In 1979, six factory-based unions established the Federation of Industrial and Factory Workers' Unions (OVES), a secondary-level organisation designed to represent industrial workers across multiple sectors. This initiative reflected attempts to institutionalise grassroots mobilisation and further challenged the traditional confederative structure of Greek unionism.



With the end of the right-wing Karamanlis governments, the first phase of the post-authoritarian period closed with an ambivalent –if not negative– balance for trade union development. Democratisation from above remained incomplete: no substantial purge of dictatorship-era union personnel took place, and no fundamentally new framework for union functioning emerged. Instead, pre-dictatorial organisational logics, networks and prominent actors dominated the field, while governmental and employer strategies increasingly converged in containing mobilisation.

Workplace mobilisation from below had challenged this process, blending workplace demands and broader claims of democratisation. By the end of the decade, however, labour activism gradually shifted from workplace-centred struggles to broader political and often general strikes, signalling the integration of grassroots activism into party-centred political contestation.¹⁵ This shift marked the limits of autonomous trade union democratisation during the period.

14. General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE), to the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Labour, 18 March 1977, Historical Archive of GSEE (Athens), Correspondence, file 6.2(B); General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE), to the Ministries, 26 March 1977, Historical Archive of GSEE (Athens), Correspondence, file 6.2(B).

15. Christos A. Ioannou, "Η άνιση ανάπτυξη του συνδικαλισμού: οι απεργίες, 1976–1981," *Epitheorisi Ergasiakon Scheseon* [Review of Labour Relations], no. 6 (April 1997): 5–27.

Taken together, developments between 1974 and 1981 thus suggest a process better understood as institutional layering rather than rupture.¹⁶ New freedoms expanded the scope of union activity while the emergence of organised factions within the GSEE transformed the political dynamics of institutional trade unionism. At the same time, new legislative provisions and workplace mobilisation were grafted onto pre-existing structures of centralised and state-dependent unionism.

**REFORM, EXPANSION AND DEPENDENCE:
TRADE UNIONISM IN THE 1980S (1982–1989)**

The electoral victory of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) in 1981 generated strong expectations for the radical fulfillment of long-standing labour demands. However, the evolution of trade unionism during this period was shaped by complex and, in many respects, contradictory dynamics.

Three key characteristics defined the period between 1982 and 1989. First, the Greek economy entered a slowdown that culminated in a fiscal crisis in 1985, with significant implications for employment and wage policies. Second, major legislative initiatives were introduced, addressing long-standing demands of the labour movement and expanding formal trade union freedoms. Third, the trade union movement became explicitly structured along party lines. Taken together, these developments produced a paradoxical trajectory: expanded rights and participation co-existed with party-mediated unionism and persistent patterns of state intervention.

Law 1264/1982, widely regarded as a landmark reform, was seen as a second, and decisive, opportunity to democratise the Greek trade union movement. The law regulated the structure and operation of trade unions, introducing proportional representation, cleansing registries of inactive unions, prohibiting employers' lockouts, and strengthening workers' protection from retaliatory practices. The new legal protections also contributed to curbing employer arbitrariness in the workplace, enhancing the capacity of workers to engage in collective action. Trade union organisations underwent a process of expansion during the 1980s, with union density reaching its highest levels in the post-war period, in contrast to previously low levels of membership.

These changes were reflected at the institutional level. In 1983, the GSEE held a congress widely regarded as democratic. It thus marked a departure from the contested congresses of the previous period and reinforced

16. Kathleen Thelen, *How Institutions Evolve: The Political Economy of Skills in Germany, Britain, the United States, and Japan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

expectations that the 1982 reform could pave the way for a more autonomous and representative form of unionism.

However, throughout the 1980s, despite expanded freedoms and increased participation, several mechanisms of state control over the trade union movement remained in place,¹⁷ illustrating the paradox of the 1980s.

First, control persisted through financial dependency. Trade unions continued to rely on funding through mechanisms administered by the Workers' Housing Organization and other state-linked institutions allocated by the Ministry of Labour.¹⁸ Over time, preferential funding often favoured pro-government unions over dissenting ones.

Second, trade unions operated as legal entities subject to judicial oversight, which extended to electoral procedures, the legitimacy of leadership bodies, and the functioning of organisations. The requirement of a minimum number of members for the legal establishment of a union limited labour organisation in small enterprises, contributing to a persistent decline in workplace representation.¹⁹ Judicial intervention became particularly pronounced during the 1980s, reaching a symbolic climax in 1985, when a court decision mandated the appointment of a new GSEE board.

Third, trade union factions increasingly functioned as extensions of political parties. This dynamic intensified as the alternation of governmental power became an established feature of the political system in the late 1980s. Competition between the communist-aligned faction (ESAK) and the socialist-aligned PASKE deepened over time, while the right-wing New Democracy established its own union faction no sooner than 1985 following its electoral defeat.

By recognising factory-based unionism, the PASOK government contributed to the predominance of PASKE within the institutional structure of the labour movement. The case of the Federation of Industrial Workers' Unions (OVES), which was granted collective bargaining rights and financial support by the PASOK government, illustrates how grassroots organisational innovations that had emerged in the 1970s from workplace mobilisation were gradually incorporated into a framework of state-regulated unionism.²⁰ In this way, reforms that expanded union freedoms simultaneously reinforced party politicisation and constrained the autonomy of factory-based unionism.

17. Giorgos Mavrogordatos, *Μεταξύ Πιτυοκάμπη και Προκρούστη. Οι επαγγελματικές οργανώσεις στη σημερινή Ελλάδα*, 2nd ed. (Athens: Odysseas, 1988).

18. Giorgos Koukoulas, *Ελληνικά συνδικάτα, οικονομική αυτοδυναμία και εξάρτηση* (Athens: Odysseas, 1984).

19. Christos A. Ioannou, "Trade unions in Greece: change and continuity."

20. Giorgos Mavrogordatos, *Μεταξύ Πιτυοκάμπη και Προκρούστη*.

Unionism thus increasingly came to mirror the polarisation of the Greek party system. The GSEE congresses of 1986 and 1988 were dominated by PASKE alone, as other factions refused to recognise their legitimacy. Similarly, collective agreements in 1984 were concluded without the participation of the General Secretary of the GSEE, who belonged to the communist ESAK. The alignment between GSEE leadership and government policy became increasingly explicit. It is indicative that, at the 1986 Congress, the report delivered by the President of the GSEE, Giorgos Raftopoulos, closely resembled a celebratory endorsement of government policy, illustrating the subordination of trade union identity to party affiliation.²¹

At the same time, government policy in the early 1980s revealed a contradictory approach toward trade union freedoms. The PASOK government attempted to restrict strike activity, first through an unconstitutional amendment in 1982 and subsequently through limitations imposed on public utility sectors in 1983. The use of strike-breaking practices by PASKE during the forty-two-day strike of the Federation of Bank Employee Unions of Greece (OTOE) further exposed the limits of PASOK commitment to labour-union freedoms.

Similarly, governmental initiatives aimed at promoting worker participation between 1983 and 1988 had limited, if any, impact. Workers' Councils were implemented only marginally, while legislation on the "socialisation" of enterprises proved short-lived and largely symbolic. Introduced without prior consultation with trade unions, these reforms ultimately reinforced the top-down character of institutional change.

Finally, the framework governing wage regulation, as well as collective bargaining, remained largely intact despite the ongoing radical economic and socio-political transformations. A law dating back to 1955 continued to allow state arbitration, effectively substituting the bargaining power of the social partners and reflecting the persistence of state paternalism. Free collective bargaining was introduced only in 1990 (Law 1876/1990), belatedly granting the social partners a degree of autonomy – a feature considered instrumental in modern industrial relations.²²

A decisive development during this period significantly reshaped trade union activity: the gradual entry of the Greek economy into a prolonged period of economic stagnation. From the early 1980s onward, unemployment rose sharply, inflation accelerated, capital investment declined, and

21. General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE), "Address by President Giorgos Raftopoulos at the 23rd Congress of the GSEE, 4–6 April 1986," Historical Archive of GSEE (Athens), Organs, Congress, file 1.41.

22. Christos A. Ioannou, "Trade unions in Greece: change and continuity."

wage increases were constrained by salary caps.²³ These developments were reflected in the rhetoric and practice of labour unions: the demands for state involvement intensified, while workplace strikes declined in favour of mobilisations directed at the Ministry of Labour.

The trajectory from profitability to indebtedness and eventual bankruptcy was not a sudden development but rather the outcome of a longer-term slowdown in industrial growth. Industries such as textiles, beverages, paper production, metal products, and shipbuilding experienced mounting financial pressures, leading to widespread closures amid a broader process of de-industrialisation.

In 1983, the Organization for the Reconstruction of Enterprises (OAE) was established as a state-owned body responsible for the restructuring of indebted industrial and commercial firms, through reorganisation, liquidation, or debt-to-equity conversion. Approximately 141 enterprises, employing around 30,000 workers, were incorporated into this framework.²⁴

Between 1983 and 1989, debates surrounding the fate of these "problematic" enterprises dominated labour and economic policy. Discussions focused on whether these firms should be socialised, privatised, or closed, and trade unions became deeply involved in these negotiations. As a result, labour mobilisation increasingly unfolded within a context of economic uncertainty, where the central interlocutor was no longer primarily the employer – as had been the case during the labour struggles of the 1970s – but the state itself, and more specifically, a politically mediated state.

This shift relocated labour demands from the workplace to the centre of governmental decision-making. In turn, this dynamic reinforced the interdependence between unions and state authorities, contributing to the consolidation of a clientelist dimension within trade union activity. Rather than strengthening autonomy, the new context deepened patterns of dependence, further embedding trade unionism within the structures of state-mediated negotiation.

This second phase of democratisation concluded in 1989 with a "unification" Congress of the General Confederation, amid a significant political turmoil that marked a pivotal moment in Greek politics. The stabilisation of trade union institutions thus emerged less as the outcome of internal dynamics and more as a byproduct of wider political realignment.

23. Chrysafis Iordanoglou, "Η οικονομία 1974–2000: Επιβράδυνση – Στασιμότητα – Ανάκαμψη," in Vasilis Panagiotopoulos, ed., *Ιστορία του Νέου Ελληνισμού*, vol. 10 (Athens: Ellinika Grammata, 2003), 65–100.

24. Theodoros Sakellariopoulos, "Οικονομική κρίση και κρατική παρέμβαση: η ιστορία των προβληματικών επιχειρήσεων," in Theodoros Sakellariopoulos ed., *Οικονομία και Πολιτική στη Σύγχρονη Ελλάδα*, 4th rev. and expanded ed. (Athens: Dionikos Publications, 2011).

In this context, the reforms of the 1980s can be understood as a combination of institutional layering and institutional conversion: while they expanded trade union rights and organisational opportunities, these were incorporated into existing structures of state dependence, while reinforcing increasingly party-mediated forms of representation, without fundamentally altering the underlying structure.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Greek democracy, after the collapse of the dictatorship, emerged as a party-centred system, driven primarily by competition among political parties – a dynamic that extended into the trade union movement. Rather than evolving as autonomous actors within civil society, trade unions increasingly operated as party-mediated networks of representation reflecting the pattern of political polarisation.

Despite the expansion of political freedoms and significant legislative reforms – particularly during the 1980s – the institutional framework of trade unionism remained marked by continuity: state funding and supervision persisted alongside state-mediated regulation of collective bargaining. As a result, the official Greek trade union movement continued to exhibit features of what has been described as “bureaucratised paternalistic unionism”.²⁵

These patterns were not simply legacies of the dictatorship but dated back to the years of post-war reconstruction. Greek trade unionism had not experienced a “golden age” after the Second World War. Between 1944 and 1967 – marked by intense anti-communism and the outlawing of the Greek Communist Party – trade unionism was characterised by strong state intervention, the imposition of conservative leadership within the General Confederation, and the systematic containment of labour mobilisation. The dictatorship, therefore, did not dismantle a vibrant and expanding labour movement; rather, it further entrenched institutional arrangements already shaped by earlier forms of state control.

The evolution of Greek trade unionism during the *Metapolitefsi* thus reflects a process of gradual institutional transformation rather than a clear rupture. Democratisation unfolded through mechanisms resembling institutional layering and partial institutional conversion, whereby new democratic provisions were grafted onto pre-existing structures. Within this framework, the internal functioning and everyday practices of trade unions were gradually redefined within a party-centred logic.

In this sense, the evolution of Greek trade unionism after 1974 followed a path-dependent trajectory, in which organisational structures and

25. Angelos Elefantis, *Στον αστερισμό του λαϊκισμού* (Athens: Politis Publications, 1991).

practices developed during earlier decades persisted –albeit in modified forms– through successive waves of democratisation. This trajectory operated in tandem with a structural characteristic of the Greek economy which remained more labour- than capital-intensive. Ultimately, this persistence underscores the resilience not of dictatorial institutions per se, but of a broader state-centred framework rooted in a long-standing tradition: the subordination of labour priorities to state politics rather than the reverse, even during democratic consolidation.

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[CHAPTER 9]

Democratisation and the Politics of Memory

National Reconciliation in the Third Hellenic Republic



**INTRODUCTION: DEMOCRATISATION AND
RECONCILIATION AS A SINGLE PROCESS**

National reconciliation policies in Greece were closely and organically linked to democratisation. Today, it is almost impossible to think about the political transition of 1974 without simultaneously evoking the legalisation of the Communist Party, the release of political prisoners and exiles, and the possibility of return for the refugees of the Civil War. Likewise, we cannot imagine the Third Hellenic Republic without the later free and massive repatriation of those refugees, the official recognition of the National Resistance in 1982, or the lifting of the consequences of the Civil War in 1989.

In that sense, the *Metapolitefsi* was not just a sudden shift from dictatorship to parliamentary democracy; it was the beginning of a longer and uneven process of democratising Greek society and its institutions. This process unfolded through what was called, at the time, “national reconciliation”. Yet neither the path of democratisation nor that of reconciliation followed a linear trajectory. If we take the long view of the last fifty years, what we see is not a smooth march towards closure, but a series of advances, delays, conflicts, and revisions – moments of inclusion and moments of renewed exclusion.

I use the term national reconciliation deliberately, because it was the term that almost everyone used, from the Right to the Left. But it did not mean the same thing for all political forces, nor did everyone agree on what steps were necessary to achieve it. It was not a neutral, self-evident goal. Rather, it was a strategic choice of post-dictatorship democratic governments, responding both to pressing social demands from below and to intense political processes within the state and the party system. These demands were long-standing; they had their own history. They did not suddenly appear after the fall of the dictatorship in July 1974. They came from the experience of persecution, discrimination, exile, and silence that had structured the lives of large segments of the population since the 1940s.

At the same time, although the policies of national reconciliation were presented as policies of “inclusion”, they also entailed new exclusions of both

people and uncomfortable aspects of history. Regardless of their often positive results, they were always policies of remembrance and forgetting. They invited society to remember certain facets of the past and to forget others. In the name of national reconciliation, entire categories of people were sacrificed once again, such as those classed as “non-Greeks by birth”, who were barred from repatriation and rights. For these people, the *Metapolitefsi* never really happened. The new democracy arrived, but not for everyone.

This chapter explores these dynamics through three closely interconnected dimensions of national reconciliation: the legalisation of the Communist Left and the gradual repatriation of political refugees; the redefinition of official memory through the recognition of the National Resistance; and, finally, the lifting of the consequences of the Civil War and the decision to destroy the security files. Taken together, these developments show how the Third Hellenic Republic tried to come to terms with its violent twentieth century, and where it chose to draw the boundaries of memory and belonging.

LEGALISATION OF THE COMMUNIST LEFT AND THE REPATRIATION OF POLITICAL REFUGEES

One of the most visible expressions of national reconciliation in the first phase of *Metapolitefsi* was the lifting of the institutional framework that had defined the Communist Left as an internal enemy and its gradual reintegration into the political community. The legalisation of the communist parties and the release of political prisoners and exiles were among the most immediate actions of the government of National Unity headed by Konstantinos Karamanlis in the first months after the fall of the junta. In September 1974, Civil War Law 509/1947, which had outlawed the Communist Party and treated its members as enemies of the state, was finally repealed. At the same time, the operation of all political parties, including the communist parties, was legalised.¹

This legalisation, however, was not entirely unconditional. It was accompanied by a formal requirement: parties were asked to declare their respect for the democratic regime and their lack of intention to engage in the violent seizure of power. This precondition –clearly aimed at the Communist Left– was in practice accepted by all major political forces, with only a few small revolutionary left groups refusing to sign. Interestingly, the condition was quickly emptied of real content: even organisations that did not submit such declarations were able to participate in the 1974 elections without

1. Legislative Decree 59/1974, “On the Establishment and Reoperation of Political Parties,” *Government Gazette of the Hellenic Republic A* 259/1974.

serious obstacles. This reveals two parallel shifts: on the one hand, a shift within the state, which was no longer willing or able to exclude parties through legal technicalities; on the other, a shift within the Left, which accepted parliamentary legality as the central terrain of struggle.²

The abolition of Law 509 had immediate visible effects: the return of exiled political figures, the reopening of left-wing newspapers, and the emergence of a new public sphere in which previously silenced voices could speak. It also opened a new chapter in the long story of the refugees of the Civil War.³ Yet the free and massive return of thousands of political refugees from the Eastern Bloc –from the Balkans, central and eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union– was anything but automatic. In fact, the first post-dictatorship governments of *Nea Dimokratia* were reluctant to deal comprehensively with this open question. Their official line was that the existing legislation was sufficient and that no new measures were necessary. The same attitude appeared with regard to the question of recognising the National Resistance.

The 1975 Constitution did include a provision for restoring Greek citizenship to those who had been deprived of it, but the mechanism it provided was individualised and bureaucratic. People had to submit applications, pass through special committees, and wait for decisions that could take years. In this way, thousands of people were eventually able to return, yet the process was slow, uneven, and often arbitrary. There were long delays, unresolved cases, and even rejected applications.

The demand from the Left and from refugee communities, by contrast, was for free repatriation and mass restoration of citizenship for all refugees of the Civil War, including their spouses and children.⁴ This demand was not fully met until several years later, under the PASOK government. A crucial turning point came in December 1982, when a joint ministerial decision by the Ministries of Interior and Public Order created a framework for the collective repatriation of political refugees, signalling a decisive change in the state's stance.⁵

2. Kostis Karpozilos, "Transition to Stability: The Greek Left in 1974," in Maria Elena Cavallaro and Kostis Kornetis, eds., *Rethinking Democratisation in Spain, Greece and Portugal* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 179–97.

3. For the refugees of the Civil War, see Kostis Karpozilos, "The Defeated of the Greek Civil War: From Fighters to Political Refugees in the Cold War," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 16, no. 3 (Summer 2014): 62–87.

4. For a discussion from that period concerning the citizenship of the children of political refugees, see Kostas G. Choromidis, *Η ιθαγένεια των ελληνοπαίδων πολιτικών προσφύγων* (Thessaloniki, 1977).

5. Katerina Tsekou, "Πρόσφυγες. Η ρύθμιση του επαναπατρισμού," in Vasilis Vamvakas and Panagis Panagiotopoulos, eds., *Η Ελλάδα στη δεκαετία του '80. Κοινωνικό, Πολιτικό και Πολιτισμικό Λεξικό* (Thessaloniki: Epikentro, 2014), 490.

Repatriation, however, was not only a matter of citizenship. The return and reintegration of tens of thousands of people into Greek society required a series of measures and regulations relating to housing and health care, confiscated property, outstanding conscription issues, social insurance and pensions, employment rehabilitation, the recognition of diplomas and professional qualifications, and much more. For the second and third generations, additional difficulties arose, including language barriers.

Regardless of whether all these problems were resolved –and many never were– the 1980s marked a clear change in the attitude of the Greek state. Until then, refugees who wished to return had to seek their way back individually, often renouncing rights, making compromises, and relying primarily on family, friendship, or party networks. From the 1980s onwards, the Greek state began, through a range of measures, to signal that their return was not only tolerated but, in fact, desired. Of course, this did not apply to everyone: the new policies excluded those categorised as “non-Greeks by birth”. Reconciliation had clear limits, and these limits were drawn along lines of ethnicity and belonging.⁶

Through this process, tens of thousands of Civil War refugees either returned or settled for the first time in Greece, mainly in urban centres. Many others remained abroad permanently. But the shift in state policy is striking: people who had been expelled from the country, viewed for decades as rebels, fugitives and enemies of the nation, could now present themselves –and be officially recognised– as fighters of the National Resistance. They were political refugees, expatriated under the responsibility of the Greek state, which now acknowledged a moral and material obligation to compensate them for what they had suffered.⁷

RECOGNISING THE NATIONAL RESISTANCE: MEMORY, SILENCE, AND THE NEW DEMOCRATIC NARRATIVE

If the legalisation of the KKE and the repatriation of political refugees signalled a first step towards dismantling the post-Civil War regime of exclusion, the recognition of the National Resistance marked a parallel shift at the level of official memory. National reconciliation was not only a matter of

6. Manos Avgeridis, “‘Να γυρίσουμε’. Οι πολιτικοί πρόσφυγες του Εμφυλίου και τα επίδικα της επιστροφής,” *Archeiotaksio* 24 (December 2022): 78–88.

7. Eleni Paschaloudi and Stratos N. Dordanas, “Οι πολιτικοί πρόσφυγες και η ελληνική πολιτεία, 1946–1989: από τη στέρση της ιθαγένειας στον επαναπατρισμό και την αποκατάσταση,” in *Έλληνες πολιτικοί πρόσφυγες στην Ανατολική Ευρώπη* (Athens: Hellenic Parliament Foundation for Parliamentarism and Democracy, 2017), 64–67.

laws and rights; it was also a matter of redefining the story the state told about the 1940s, the Nazi Occupation, and the Civil War.

The state's recognition of the National Resistance was, like the refugee question, a long and complex process – legal, political, and social – that lasted for more than fifty years. The three major institutional milestones, the three central laws of recognition, were each linked to major moments of crisis and transition in the Greek state: the end of the Civil War in 1949, the period of the military dictatorship, and finally the *Metapolitefsi*. In the second half of the twentieth century, each new regime produced its own official definition of “Resistance”: what counted as resistance, when it began and when it ended, who were the legitimate actors, and who were the enemies. Recognition thus functioned not simply as historical justice, but as a way of drawing the boundaries of the political community in the present.⁸

In this long history, the post-dictatorship demand for recognition emerged out of both memory and experience: the memory of the EAM-led movements during the Occupation, and the experience of persecution, discrimination, and silencing during the post-Civil War state and the junta. Yet even after 1974, the recognition of the communist-led National Liberation Front (EAM) was not universally perceived as a necessary precondition for national reconciliation. The year 1974 was undoubtedly a historical rupture, but it also contained powerful continuities, especially within the state apparatus. One telling example is that throughout the 1970s, the recognition law passed by the military dictatorship remained in force and was applied by the Army, which continued to recognise right-wing paramilitary groups of the Civil War period as resistance organisations. In this context, the *Nea Dimokratia* governments again argued, as in the case of the refugees, that the existing institutional framework was sufficient and that no new law was needed.

What had changed, however, was the intensity and visibility of the demand for recognition of EAM. The demand for a new official memory of the Resistance became central to a wide range of political forces and to a dynamic part of society. It was increasingly seen as a precondition for real democratisation. From 1974 to 1981, public events, commemorations, publications, and symbolic acts multiplied, signalling a shift in the balance of memory and exerting pressure on the state to redefine its narrative.

8. Magdalini Fytili, Manos Avgeridis, and Eleni Kouki, “Heroes or Outcasts? The Long Saga of the State’s Recognition of the Greek Resistance (1944–2006),” *Contemporary European History* 33 (2024): 1365–83. For a detailed analysis of the long history of the recognition of the Greek Resistance, see Magda Fytili, Manos Avgeridis, and Eleni Kouki, *Η δεύτερη ζωή της Εθνικής Αντίστασης. Πρακτικές αναγνώρισης και αποκλεισμού, 1944–2006* (Athens: Themelio, 2022).

A few months after its electoral victory in 1981, PASOK fulfilled a central campaign promise by introducing a bill for the recognition of the National Resistance. The parliamentary debate began on 17 August 1982, deliberately chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the mass Nazi execution in Kokkinia in 1944 – a refugee neighbourhood of Piraeus that had become a stronghold of the Resistance and of the Left during the Occupation. Law 1285/1982 was ultimately passed only with the votes of PASOK and the KKE. Yet its impact went far beyond its immediate parliamentary support. It represented a major paradigm shift in the state's attitude towards the past.

This law became the backbone of a new official memory of Greek democracy: it told a patriotic story of national unity, presenting the Resistance as unified, indivisible, and universal, with the Nation as its main protagonist and with the National Liberation Front at its centre. In this narrative, the Resistance appeared as a great collective uprising of the Greek people against foreign occupation, a foundational moment of modern democracy. The old dichotomies between “national” and “anti-national” actors were softened or erased; the emphasis was on a shared patriotic struggle.

This narrative, however, was marked by significant silences and absences. It downplayed or ignored the political and ideological conflicts within the resistance movements, the internal clashes and purges, and, above all, the issue of collaboration with the occupiers, which remained a taboo topic. The political and social divisions that ran through the Resistance –and that would later feed into the Civil War– were largely left outside the frame. In this sense, Law 1285/1982 did not simply “recognise” an already existing, self-evident Resistance; it actively constructed a particular version of that past. Like every official state memory, it contained its own blind spots and strategic omissions.⁹

During the 1980s, the National Resistance became central not only in official discourse but also in collective memory and public history. At the same time, the first academic historiographical works on the period began to appear. A “memory boom” took place: new monuments were erected, streets were renamed, testimonies and memoirs were published, public events and conferences were organised, and television documentaries were aired. The establishment of the anniversary of the Gorgopotamos sabotage as a national day of the Resistance symbolised this process, presenting an Allied operation as the unifying moment of Greek resistance. Local communities claimed their own “sites of memory”, while political

9. Magda Fytili, “Including the ‘Nation’s Enemies’: The Long Politics of Recognition and Restitution during the Third Greek Republic (1974–2006),” *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 40, no. 1 (May 2022): 195–222.

organisations and former fighters' associations competed over interpretations and symbolic capital.¹⁰

In many ways, this “resistance memory boom” can be seen as the belated Greek version of the anti-fascist patriotic paradigm on which many European states built their post-war reconstruction. Elsewhere in Europe, the image of a united resistance had already served, from the late 1940s, as a legitimising myth for new democratic regimes. In Greece, because of the Civil War and the long anti-communist period that followed, a comparable paradigm emerged only in the 1980s, after decades during which the memory of the Resistance had been contested and suppressed by the Right.

Law 1285/1982 abolished the dictatorship's recognition law but not the Civil War legislation, which remained in force. It nonetheless removed from the Army the authority to recognise resistance fighters, individualising and partially democratising the process. Importantly, it emphasised not only recognition but also moral and material rehabilitation as a necessary completion of recognition. In this way, recognition became both a matter of justice and an instrument of social policy: it opened the way for pensions, benefits, and symbolic honours for former fighters.

However, the implementation of the law and its accompanying regulations proved to be a complex and slow process. Bureaucratic obstacles, political disputes, and structural problems in the legislation delayed the recognition of many fighters. Committees were formed and reformed, criteria were revised, and documentation was often incomplete or contested. It is telling that in 2002 there were still applications pending that had been submitted in 1989, and that the last review committees met as late as 2006. For many individuals, recognition came very late, if at all; for others, it never came. Official memory, once again, moved on a different timetable than lived experience and personal expectations.

Yet, despite these limits, the new recognition framework altered the symbolic geography of the Greek twentieth century. Former “bandits” and “subversives” could now be publicly honoured as “resistance fighters”; families could claim certificates, pensions, and a place in the national story. At the same time, the very success of this patriotic narrative of a unified Resistance contributed to pushing the darker aspects of the 1940s –the mechanisms of collaboration, the bitterness of the Civil War, and the long afterlife of anti-communism– into the background.

In this sense, the recognition of the National Resistance was both an act of democratisation and a new compromise. It opened the political community

10. Manos Avgeridis, “Debating the Greek 1940s: Histories and Memories of a Conflicting Past since the End of the Second World War,” *Historiein* 16, nos. 1–2 (2017): 8–46.

to those previously excluded, but it did so through a narrative that prioritised unity over conflict, heroism over ambiguity, and nationalism over social division. It allowed Greek democracy to anchor itself in an anti-fascist, patriotic past, while leaving unresolved many of the questions that would resurface later in new “memory wars” over the 1940s.

LIFTING THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE CIVIL WAR AND BURNING THE SECURITY FILES

The final act in the state’s attempt to “close” the Civil War chapter –at least at the level of institutions– came with the lifting of its legal consequences and the decision to destroy millions of security files. If earlier measures of reconciliation were framed as recognition and rehabilitation, this stage added a different, complementary register: the deliberate choice of oblivion.

The conclusion and symbolic completion of national reconciliation came in 1989 with a law to “lift the effects of the Civil War” and with the decision to destroy police security files. This time, the process was carried out “without intermediaries”, as contemporaries remarked: directly by a coalition government of the Right and the Communist Left. The law had three key dimensions. First, it recognised the Civil War as such, stipulating that wherever the terms “bandit war” and “bandits” appeared in existing legislation, they would be replaced by the terms “civil war” and “Democratic Army” respectively. This was more than a semantic adjustment; it signalled a fundamental shift in the state’s language and in its official understanding of the conflict.

Second, the law lifted all convictions imposed because of participation in the Resistance, the Civil War, or because of citizens’ social and political beliefs up to 1974, effectively “clearing” criminal records that had weighed on thousands of lives for decades. People who had been marked, legally and symbolically, as enemies of the state now saw their criminal status annulled in one stroke. The law thus addressed not only the past repression of acts but also the long-term stigmatisation of political identities.

Third, it extended pension rights to various categories of citizens who had become disabled as a result of their participation in the Civil War. In this way, the law combined symbolic recognition, legal rehabilitation, and elements of welfare policy. It translated the language of “lifting consequences” into concrete social entitlements, making reconciliation visible not only in the legal code but also in everyday material life.

National reconciliation, as pursued by state policies on the past during the first fifteen years of the Third Hellenic Republic, culminated shortly afterwards in a highly symbolic act: the ritual burning of millions of citizens’

security files. For decades, these files had been compiled by the police and security services, recording individuals' political beliefs, activities, associations, and "reliability". They were the bureaucratic infrastructure of exclusion and persecution, used to deny jobs, promotions, passports, permits and basic rights.¹¹

The public burning of these files was a performative statement. It was an explicit choice of forgetting with regard to the Civil War and its legacies, in stark contrast to the choice of memory embodied in the recognition of the National Resistance. Where Law 1285/1982 had expanded the official narrative and brought previously marginalised actors into the national story, the destruction of the files signalled that certain forms of knowledge about the past –especially those used to track and punish dissent– should no longer exist. The state declared that it would no longer keep systematic records of political loyalty in this way and that, symbolically at least, the era of "filed" citizens was over.

This choice, however, was not without tension. From the point of view of civil liberties and the victims of surveillance, the burning of the files could be seen as a victory: the destruction of tools of control and stigma. From the point of view of historians and some victims' families, it also meant the loss of invaluable sources for understanding the mechanisms of repression, the extent of state surveillance, and the detailed trajectories of individual lives. Oblivion could be liberating, but it also erased traces that might have been used to document responsibility and reconstruct hidden histories.¹²

In any case, the destruction of the files did not mean the end of interest in the 1940s or the Civil War. On the contrary, the combination of the 1989 law, the burning of the files, and the end of the Cold War was followed by a new "memory boom", this time focused more directly on the Civil War itself. New books, documentaries, public debates, and controversies emerged, often under the sign of "memory wars". Different political and social actors demanded recognition of their versions of the past, while historians increasingly intervened in public discussions, not only becoming targets themselves but also, at times, helping to intensify these disputes.

This new era of dealing with the 1940s –both in politics and in society– began, as always, from the concerns of the present: from new political crises,

11. See Vangelis Karamanolakis, *Ανεπιθύμητο παρελθόν. Οι φάκελοι κοινωνικών φρονημάτων στον 20ό αιώνα και η καταστροφή τους* (Athens: Themelio, 2019).

12. Vangelis Karamanolakis, "Historians and the Trauma of the Past: The Destruction of Security Files in Greece (1989)," in Stefan Berger, ed., *The Engaged Historian: Perspectives on the Intersections of Politics, Activism and the Historical Profession* (New York: Berghahn, 2019), 237–49.

new ideological confrontations, new questions about responsibility, victimhood, and reconciliation. Conflicts over memory became especially intense in times of transition and crisis, when the boundaries of the political community once again seemed open to renegotiation. The measures of the 1970s and 1980s had not resolved these questions once and for all; they had provided a framework within which new disputes could unfold.

In that sense, the law lifting the consequences of the Civil War and the burning of the security files can be seen simultaneously as an endpoint and as a starting point. They brought to a close a cycle of institutional measures aimed at integrating former “enemies” into the democratic order and at neutralising some of the most visible legacies of the Civil War in the legal and administrative sphere. At the same time, by changing the language of the state and removing some of the most oppressive instruments of surveillance, they opened space for new ways of remembering, debating, and contesting the past.

The choice of oblivion was thus never absolute. It coexisted with new forms of remembrance and with a growing role for historians, archivists, cultural producers and social movements in shaping public understandings of the 1940s. What had changed was the grammar of state involvement: from classifying and persecuting citizens on the basis of their political history to officially recognising, compensating and, in some respects, trying to forget.

CONCLUSION: RECONCILIATION, EXCLUSION, AND THE ONGOING POLITICS OF MEMORY

The history of national reconciliation in the Third Hellenic Republic is not simply a story of progressive opening and inclusion. It is, above all, a history of choices: about who belongs, whose suffering counts, which memories become official, and which are pushed to the margins or deliberately erased.

On the one hand, the policies pursued from 1974 to 1989 enabled major steps towards democratisation. The legalisation of the Communist Left, the release of political prisoners and exiles, the repatriation (for many) of political refugees, the recognition of the Resistance, the lifting of Civil War convictions, and the burning of security files all contributed to dismantling a repressive and exclusionary post-Civil War order. They allowed former “enemies of the nation” to re-enter the political community, at least as “Greeks by birth”, and they reshaped the official narrative of the twentieth century around the central axis of resistance to occupation and dictatorship.

On the other hand, these policies were always selective. National reconciliation was never merely about “closure” or “forgiveness”. It involved the construction of new silences: about collaboration, about internal conflicts and

violence within the Resistance, about the experiences of those excluded from repatriation, about minorities and those designated “non-Greeks by birth”. It also imposed certain narrative frameworks –of unity, patriotism, and consensus– that often obscured ongoing social and political conflicts. The state’s new story about the past made democracy more inclusive, but it did so by smoothing over some of the sharpest edges of historical experience.

Seen in comparative perspective, the Greek trajectory both resembles and diverges from those of Portugal and Spain. In all three countries, democratisation was linked to some form of “reconciliation from above”, combining amnesties, legal normalisation, and new master narratives about the authoritarian past. Yet the balance between memory and oblivion varied. In Spain, the 1977 Amnesty Law and the so-called *pacto del olvido* foregrounded forgetting as the price of a peaceful transition, with public recognition and judicial reckoning for victims arriving much later. In Portugal, the absence of a civil war and the central role of the Carnation Revolution allowed an earlier and more straightforward celebration of anti-dictatorial and anti-colonial struggles, even as difficult questions about empire and colonial violence were postponed. Greece, by contrast, arrived late to an official anti-fascist narrative and had to negotiate not only a dictatorship but also the long, contentious afterlife of a civil war.

Seen from today’s perspective, fifty years after *Metapolitefsi*, national reconciliation in Greece appears not as a finished chapter but as a field of continuous renegotiation, much like in Portugal and Spain, where new generations also revisit transitions previously presented as consensual. In the Greek case, younger cohorts return to the 1940s, the Civil War, the dictatorship, and the transition, asking different questions and bringing new sensitivities: about gender, about violence, about everyday life, about victims who remained invisible in earlier narratives. The rise of far-right forces in recent years, revisionist narratives about the past, and polarised debates show that the boundaries drawn in the 1970s and 1980s are not fixed. They can be contested, redrawn, or instrumentalised, just as current Spanish and Portuguese debates over memory laws, exhumations, and colonial legacies show that their own “settlements” were also provisional.

In this shifting landscape, historians are among the actors who intervene in the public life of memory. Their research has informed new interpretations of the 1940s and the dictatorship, and their presence in the media, museums, school curricula, and public debates can contribute to questioning inherited myths – but it can also expose them to political pressures and accusations of partisanship. Archival work, oral history projects, and local studies have brought to light experiences that older reconciliation frameworks had ignored or marginalised, while at the same time feeding into

“memory wars” in which historical arguments are mobilised for contemporary struggles. The recent appearance of the photographic documents from Kaisariani, capturing the final moments before the execution of the 200 communists on 1 May 1944, is a powerful reminder that the memory of the 1940s remains a matter of urgent public concern, not merely of scholarly or archival interest. Their emergence brought to the surface both the enduring emotional force of the Resistance in Greek society and the fragility of the state’s policies regarding the preservation, acquisition, and public accessibility of such historical evidence. In this sense, the case of Kaisariani shows that the politics of memory in Greece are still shaped not only by official acts of recognition, but also by sudden recoveries, social mobilisations, and ongoing struggles over who safeguards the material traces of the past and on what terms.¹³ In this sense, the work of historians does not simply “resolve” the tensions around national reconciliation; it can both complicate and, at times, reinforce them, opening up spaces for more plural understandings of the past, but also generating new lines of conflict over what should be remembered and how.

The Greek case therefore provides an illustrative example for thinking about the politics of memory and democratisation in Southern Europe. Reconciliation policies can open space, heal wounds, and expand citizenship, but they can also reproduce exclusions and build new forms of oblivion. They are never neutral. They are part of the ongoing struggle over how societies remember violence and injustice – and over what kind of democracy they imagine for the future. In Greece, the Third Republic was built on a double movement: the recognition of resistance and the partial erasure of civil strife. Understanding how that balance was struck, and at whose expense, is essential not only for grasping the achievements and limits of democratisation after 1974, but also for situating the Greek experience within the wider, still unsettled, memory landscape of post-dictatorial Southern Europe.

13. Helena Smith, “‘We Can See That Courage’: Greece Recovers Long-Lost Photos of Nazis’ May Day Executions,” *The Guardian*, 21 February 2026.

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[CHAPTER 10]

Ruptures and Continuities

On the 50th anniversary
of the Portuguese Carnation
Revolution



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In 2025, on the 50th anniversary of the independence of the former Portuguese colonial territories in Africa, the Portuguese Official Commission for the Commemorations of 25 April, led by the historian Maria Inácia Rezola, commissioned a survey focused on the Portuguese decolonisation and its legacies. 79 per cent of Portuguese respondents felt that not everything went well during the process, and 20 per cent attributed responsibility to the Portuguese negotiators of that time. Significantly, 57 per cent of respondents stated that they would have supported independence for the colonies during the colonial war, while 28 per cent admitted that they would have sided with the Portuguese government at the time.¹

These numbers seem to show a certain softening of negative views regarding the decolonisation process. Despite this, another survey conducted on the 50th anniversary of 25 April, by the television station SIC and the newspaper *Expresso*, highlights the persistence of favourable representations of colonialism in Portuguese society. When asked if Portuguese colonial history was characterised “by the ability of Portuguese to mix with the colonised peoples,” 56 per cent responded positively, 20 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed, and 16 per cent responded negatively. Regarding the question whether Portuguese colonialism was “fundamental to the development of the colonised peoples”, 52 per cent answered affirmatively, 21 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed, and 19 per cent responded negatively.²

As is well known, during the second half of the twentieth century, Portugal underwent two paradigmatic changes. The first corresponded to the transition from dictatorship to democracy. On 25 April 1974, the fall of the Estado Novo dictatorship, established at the dawn of the 1930s, with the

1. Survey conducted by the Catholic University, based on 1,104 inquiries. See: https://50anos-25abril.pt/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Relatorio_50-Anos-Independencia-Portugal.pdf. (accessed 30 April 2026). A similar survey was also conducted in Angola and Cabo Verde.

2. Cláudia Monarca Almeida, David Dinis, and Sofia Miguel Rosa, “Sondagem *Expresso*/SIC: 34% preferem “líder forte” (e sem eleições). Colonialismo reúne visão favorável”, *Expresso*, 18 April 2024.

rise of fascism in Europe, gave way to a revolutionary process and the emergence of a democratic regime. The second significant transformation was the dissolution of the colonial empire in Africa. The African liberation movements were the catalyst for this change, which was consolidated by the uprising carried out by middle-ranking Portuguese military officers involved in a lost war.

Both shifts are closely interconnected: the end of the dictatorship and the end of colonialism were part of the same historical process. Despite this, the public memory of both events tends to be separate. In this text, I will briefly examine how the memory of colonialism and the colonial war has been shaped in Portugal, in a singular way – through a historical relation and a mnemonic dissociation with the political transition in 1974.

TWO MONUMENTS

To illustrate this, I will focus on two specific monuments. The first is entitled the “Monument to the Heroes of the Overseas”. It was inaugurated on 13 May 2010, in the town of Santa Comba Dão, in central Portugal. The monument honours those who died in the colonial war, featuring a famous excerpt from the epic poem *The Lusiads* [*Os Lusíadas*] written in the 16th century by Luís Vaz de Camões: “And those, who through valiant deeds / Release themselves from the law of death.” The sculpture is divided into seven segments, each representing a former colonial territory (Angola, Mozambique, Guinea, Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, Timor, and the Portuguese State of India), with a map of these territories and the dates marking Portugal’s presence in each.³

The monument also had another particularity. It was built on the exact same site that had hosted, since 1965, a statue of António de Oliveira Salazar, the dictator who ruled Portugal for more than four decades and who was, in fact, born in Santa Comba Dão. After the Carnation Revolution, the statue was removed, after anonymous hands had decapitated it in a radical act of

3. André Caiado referenced 482 monuments built up to 2023, most of them –specifically, 420– built after the year 2000. Their proliferation results mainly from the cooperation between the Veterans League and local authorities. Despite their differences, as the researcher notes, many of these monuments tend to highlight the names of fallen soldiers from the region, use symbolism related to war (weapons, laurel wreaths, figures of combatants in heroic poses), and feature patriotic markers, many of which are associated with the “Discoveries” and colonialism (such as the armillary sphere, maps of the empire, or representations of the pattern used during the maritime exploration period to mark Portuguese presence). André Caiado, “Os monumentos evocativos da guerra colonial em Portugal: 60 anos em retrato,” in Miguel Cardina (org.), *Guerra Colonial e Lutas de Libertação: Memória, Política e Usos do Passado* (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2025), 123–148.



The two monuments in Santa Comba Dão: a decapitated statue of Salazar (*Diário de Notícias*, 18 February 1975), and the Monument to the Heroes of the Overseas (photo: Miguel Cardina)



resignification.⁴ The same square that once housed a bronze representation of the dictator, in his hometown, was later occupied by a monument that combined an apologetic remembrance of the empire and a funerary evocation of the war. The monuments are, obviously, different objects. However, they show us how, despite the clear historical interdependence between the break with both dictatorship and colonialism, their public memorialisation followed distinct paths.

The dictatorship of the Estado Novo and the figure of Salazar have been subjects of rejection in the public space, as exemplified by the removal of statues and the renaming of streets and bridges, the most well-known of which is the change of the name of the bridge over the Tagus from *Ponte Salazar* to *Ponte 25 de Abril*. Despite the existence of a few streets bearing the name of the dictator, Portuguese democracy has positioned itself at a distance from the memory of the dictatorship and Salazarism. In contrast, the public commemoration of figures and events recalling the colonial past has remained largely unaltered, as evidenced by the considerable number of squares and streets named after military leaders who led the so-called “pacification campaigns” against the colonised peoples, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, or by references to historical events that perpetuate the old nationalist semantics of “martyrs” and “heroes of the Overseas.”

The (non-existing) measures of “transitional justice” also reflect this. As I wrote with Magda Fytili, in an article on the representations of the regime change in Portugal, Spain and Greece,

“If the reckoning with the repression of the PIDE/DGS [the Portuguese secret police] was quite timid, the one regarding the colonial war was simply non-existent. A particular Portuguese version of the *pacto del olvido* around the colonial violence lasted for decades. A political change in which the military played a key role did not offer the conditions to adjudicate a very recent past in which the typical atrocities of a colonial war (massacres of populations, brutal treatment of prisoners, etc.) were committed by the armed forces”.⁵

4. On the topic, see: Francisco Bairrão Ruivo, “Entre a revolução e a ‘normalização’: A cabeça de Salazar,” *Cadernos do Arquivo Municipal* 21 (2024): 1–19.

5. Magda Fytili and Miguel Cardina, “From History to Memory: Representations of Regime Change in Portugal, Spain and Greece,” in Pamela Radcliff, Kostis Kornetis, and Pedro Aires Oliveira, eds., *50 years of Scholarship on the Southern European Democratic Transitions: A Comparative Approach*, *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 53, no. 1 (2023): 162.

THE COLONIAL SHADOW

The persistence of the colonial imaginary resulted from a long process that cannot be separated from the specific reality of colonialism as a system of control, administration, and exploitation. It is essential to recognise that Portugal played an early and significant role in the modern processes of colonial domination, serving as a crucial supplier of enslaved labour to Europe and the Americas. According to data from the *Slave Voyages* database, from the late sixteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, approximately six million Africans were forcibly transported under Portuguese or Brazilian flags.⁶

In the nineteenth century, the economic aspirations that the African continent aroused reconfigured European imperialist intentions within the framework of the “Scramble for Africa”, with Portugal emerging as a relevant but also inadequate colonial power in some international perceptions. Years later, colonial ideology was intensified and redefined during the years of consolidation of the Estado Novo dictatorship, a regime established in the early 1930s and personified in its uncontested leader, Oliveira Salazar.

The dictatorship fostered the epic of empire through gestures enshrined in legislation, propaganda, education, cultural productions, and public undertakings. This dynamic, however, had roots that predated the dictatorship. During what could be defined as a “long twentieth century” –beginning in the mid-nineteenth century– an ideological system was consolidated, based on the superiority of the white man and the legitimacy of the civilising mission; on the foundational role of the Portuguese discoveries and Portugal’s presence in the world; and on the supposed harmonious relations consistently established by the Portuguese with other peoples.

Despite the limited public investment in the colonies by the emerging Estado Novo regime, throughout the 1930s, a regulatory framework was developed with the aim of benefiting the metropolitan economy, where exports to the colonies became a crucial factor for expansion and survival. At the same time, the over-exploitation of Africans became a central element in the accumulation process that fuelled Portuguese capitalism. Fernando Rosas, in his seminal works on the Estado Novo dictatorship, emphasises that in the post-Second World War period, new interests linked to the rise of large economic groups diversified colonial exploitation strategies, initiating the industrialisation of certain sectors, expanding the extraction of mineral resources, developing a necessary public works plan, and expanding

6. <https://www.slavevoyages.org/> (accessed 30 April 2026).

the transportation network. This phenomenon contributed to the broadening of the social base of support for Portuguese colonialism and the popularisation of colonial ideology.⁷

It is also important to highlight the increase in the migration of the white Portuguese population to the African colonies, particularly Angola and Mozambique. Until the late nineteenth century, this movement had been relatively limited. However, it gained significant momentum in the twentieth century, especially after the Second World War, in a context where international decolonisation movements were gaining strength. Cláudia Castelo notes that by 1940, the white population in Angola had reached 44,083 individuals, and in Mozambique, it totalled 27,438. Ten years later, these numbers had nearly doubled. By 1973, on the eve of the fall of the empire, approximately 324,000 whites were recorded in Angola, and around 190,000 in Mozambique.⁸

On the other hand, the Statute of the Indigenous established a social hierarchy determined by skin colour and culture. Decree No. 12,533, of 23 October 1926, later adapted, defined as ‘indigenous’ individuals of African descent who, by their education and customs, could not be distinguished from the common members of that race.⁹ A status of non-citizenship was granted to the vast majority of the inhabitants of Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea (as well as Timor): by 1950, around 98 per cent of the population was classified as ‘indigenous.’ This legally entrenched racist framework forced the colonised peoples to undergo a series of cultural, educational, and material processes and requirements to attain the status of ‘assimilated.’

At the same time, forced labour was also a central pillar in the development of the colonial economy and the “civilising mission” that the Portuguese, like other European imperial powers, claimed for themselves. In this context, Indigenous Labour Codes and Statutes of Indigeneity functioned as legal-political structures based on racial discrimination against colonised populations, subjecting them to a civilising process that involved forced labour for public or private purposes, including public works, transportation, cleaning, or work for private companies, as was the case with cotton, cocoa,

7. See, for example: Fernando Rosas, *O Estado Novo* (Lisbon: Editorial Estampa, 1998); Fernando Rosas, *Salazar e os Fascismos* (Lisbon: Tinta da China, 2019); Fernando Rosas, “Os quatro regimes,” in Fernando Rosas, Francisco Louçã, João Teixeira Lopes, Andrea Peniche, Luís Trindade and Miguel Cardina, *O Século XX Português. Política, economia, sociedade, cultura, império* (Lisbon: Tinta-da-China, 2020).

8. Cláudia Castelo, *Passagens para África: O povoamento de Angola e Moçambique com naturais da metrópole (1920-1974)* (Porto: Afrontamento, 2007), 215 and 241.

9. “Estatuto político, civil e criminal dos indígenas de Angola e Moçambique”, Decreto n.º 12, 533, de 23 October 1926.

and coffee. This system of native labour, much like the Statute of Indigeneity, would only be officially abolished in the 1960s.

Late colonialism was also characterised by a reimagining of the colonial relationship through the concept of lusotropicalism. The theories of lusotropicalism, formulated by the Brazilian intellectual Gilberto Freyre, argued for the exceptional nature of Portuguese colonialism, portraying it as benign and interracial. These theories were employed in international forums to resist the pressures arising from the decolonisation wave that began after the Second World War.

It is important to note that Portugal –a founding member of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) in 1949 and a member of the United Nations since 1955– was seeking diplomatic support from certain Western countries. On the international stage, it invoked the principle of non-interference and sought to prevent international oversight of its colonies. It is worth recalling that, according to Article 73 of the United Nations Charter, member states administering colonial territories were required to regularly provide information on how they were preparing these territories for self-determination. Domestically, the 1951 constitutional revision aimed to ensure the legal specificity of the African territories under its jurisdiction: the Colonial Act was revoked, and the term “colonies” was replaced with “overseas provinces.”

A PYRRHIC DEFEAT

In 1961, war broke out between the liberation movements and the Portuguese state: first in Angola and later extended to Guinea and Mozambique. The war was a clear refutation of the notion of harmonious coexistence between peoples and races that the adoption of lusotropicalism had emphasised. Taking place thousands of kilometres away from the “metropole”, this war on three fronts required substantial financial resources –40 per cent of the General State Budget by the end of the conflict– and was pursued on a social scale that can be grasped simply by reference to certain statistics.

With the exception of Israel, Portugal was the Western country with the greatest number of men in arms. In Africa, it deployed an army five times greater, proportionally, than the one used during the same period by the United States of America in Vietnam. Out of a population of around nine million, approximately 800,000 young men were sent to Africa and forced to fight far away from their communities by the Portuguese state. In addition, the records show that over 200,000 failed to enrol for military service –in other words, around 20 per cent of the young men called up for medicals in what was known as the metropole at the time, most of whom had fled in

secret to central Europe– and there were around 9,000 deserters and an estimated 10,000 to 20,000 draft evaders. The official figures also indicate approximately 10,000 deaths, 30,000 wounded, and over 100,00 cases of post-traumatic stress disorder, on the Portuguese side alone. To these numbers should be added the more than 500,000 Africans who were recruited into the Portuguese army.

In an indirect movement related to the war, but also to the country's endemic poverty, around a million Portuguese emigrated during this period, most of them to France. The exhaustion caused by thirteen long years of war would lead to the end of the regime. On 25 April 1974, a military coup led by middle-ranking officers from the armed forces deposed Marcelo Caetano, who had replaced António de Oliveira Salazar as head of the country in September 1968, overthrew the *Estado Novo* dictatorship. Portugal would experience a kind of "Pyrrhic defeat": it suffered a political defeat in the war but gained a revolutionary process that would determine the nature of its democracy. In other words, Portuguese democracy is indebted to this (anti-) colonial legacy.

However, the end of the imperial era did not mark the end of the colonial imaginary. On the contrary, this imaginary survived, albeit in a reconfigured form, not so much because of the inertia of a time that would take time to erase it, but because it has been given new uses, deeply linked to the mechanics of preserving coloniality and reproducing narratives about national identity. There are many examples: Expo 98, thematic parks (Portugal dos Pequenitos or World of Discoveries), memorial complexes (such as Belém, in Lisbon), discursive mobilisation of the imperial past (in politics, in sport, in tourism, and in advertising).

The colonial legacy continues to resonate in post-colonial Portugal, shaping the "organised forgetting" around colonial violence and contributing to the maintenance of socio-racial hierarchies and ways of remembering the past that glorify maritime expansion and redefine Portuguese colonialism based on its convivial character. On the other hand, the permanence of this imaginary of "Africa" is articulated in a tense –but not necessarily contradictory– way with the imaginary of "Europe", intensified from the 1980s onwards, with integration into the European Union and its impact on the different phases and crises the country went through in the last decades.

The perception of the Age of Discoveries as a moment of overcoming crisis and a turning point in identity particularly resonated in post-revolutionary Portugal, on its way to its "European destiny". A small illustration of this appears in 1987, through the voice of the socialist Mário Soares, former Prime Minister and then President of the Republic, at the official opening of the National Commission for the Commemoration of the Portuguese

Discoveries. Soares referred to the “modern, democratic, European, and solidarity-based Portugal” that the Portuguese were seeking to build, a Portugal that is reflected in the “lesson of the Discoveries”. Mário Soares defined this historical process as “the key event in Portuguese history,” the foundation of “the modern era of universal history”, which gave rise to a new spirit that was “modern, scientific, experimental, and critical”. The then President of the Republic lamented the “centuries of decline and decadence” that followed the Age of Discoveries, and celebrated this new “European Portugal”, calling on “the Portuguese scattered around the world to engage in the celebrations of the Portuguese Discoveries, marking the fifth centenary of Bartolomeu Dias’ passage around the Cape of Good Hope”.¹⁰

The Discoveries –and a certain idea of Africa– are implicitly present in the Portuguese European identity. But the memory of colonialism tends to be absent in the Portuguese and European official discourses and memories. It could be argued that the colonial imagination forged from the mid-nineteenth century is European or, more precisely, Eurocentric. The idea of a “civilising mission” served as justification for multiple processes of European colonial exploitation and occupation, framed within ideological constructs that identified the act of colonising with that of civilising, with the backdrop of constructing the inferiority of the colonised subject. How is this European history that took place outside Europe addressed today?

THE PUBLIC MEMORY OF DICTATORSHIP AND COLONIALISM

Aline Sierp, in an interesting article, examined how, since the 1990s, the European Union has dealt with Europe’s bloody past. She highlights the initial focus on the Holocaust and later, with the accession of new Eastern European countries in 2004, the amalgamation of National Socialism and Stalinism, a process formalised in 2009 with the establishment of 23 August as the “Day of Remembrance for the Victims of All Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes”. While there has been increased funding for projects on slavery and colonialism, the amnesia of this past remains present. The examples of various memorial processes related to Nazism and Stalinism lead Sierp to emphasise that the EU has limited power to promote and deepen these logics of remembrance and atonement without effective and vigorous prior involvement at the national level.¹¹

10. “Portugal europeu reconhece-se na lição dos Descobrimentos”, *Diário de Lisboa*, 11 June 1987.

11. Aline Sierp, “EU Memory Politics and Europe’s Forgotten Colonial Past”, *Interventions* 22, no. 6 (2020): 686–702.

The Portuguese case is illustrative of this. When colonialism ended as a political reality, its echoes persisted in various social and political arenas. While it is true that today in Portugal there is still a rhetoric based on what Ann Laura Stoler –talking about the French context– called “colonial aphasia”,¹² it is also true that this past has increasingly become a battleground, with national controversies emerging about the nature of the domination in the colonies, about the war and its impacts, or about the persistence of mythologising readings of this past.

We should note that states play an active role in the production of memory. This is what leads Berber Bevernage and Nico Wouters to speak of a “memorialising state”,¹³ endowed with power and resources to fund public structures and promote mechanisms for the consecration of specific visions of the past. Similarly, one could argue that states and other social structures and interests also act to propagate modes of “organisation of forgetting”. These involve the activation of political, economic, cultural, social, discursive, and subjective dynamics that contribute to shaping or suppressing interpretations of a particular historical phenomenon.

We might say, necessarily in simplistic terms, that the dominant public memory –especially that propagated by the state– will tend to construct a representation of the Carnation Revolution in which its revolutionary dimension is eroded. Unlike what happened in Greece, Spain, or, later, in Latin America, the Portuguese democratisation process went much further in dismantling authoritarian structures, not only within the state but also in labour relations. It succeeded in replacing political, economic, and social elites through the expropriation and socialisation of significant segments of property, which lasted at least for some years, and produced a constitution with a socialist character.

Although it is true that the revolutionary period paved the way –albeit in a conjunctural manner– for considering the place of anticolonialism in creating the conditions for the fall of the dictatorship, it is also true that the predominant memory of 25 April would, over the years, downplay this dimension. In the case of colonialism, we have a remembrance of the war marked by two memory selectivities –the erasure of colonial violence and the devaluation of the role of liberation struggles in the defeat of the former regime– and by the persistence of a certain benign representation of colonialism.

Especially since 2017, several actions and controversies have given

12. Ann Laura Stoler, “Colonial Aphasia: Race and Disabled Histories in France”, *Public Culture* 23, no. 1 (2011): 121–156.

13. Berber Bevernage and Nico Wouters, org. (2018), “Introduction,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of State-Sponsored History after 1945* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

new impetus to the debate on colonialism.¹⁴ This new context has led to two developments. First, there is today a debate in Portuguese society about the challenges of coloniality, which focuses on five key areas: (1) questioning the presence in public spaces of monuments, statues, and street names that honour slave traders and colonialists; (2) questioning lusotropical representations in the field of education; (3) discussing issues of provenance, restitution, and the decolonisation of museums; (4) considering gestures of symbolic or material reparation in relation to that past; and (5) confronting racism as the longest continuity of the colonial legacy (manifested in police operations, housing and segregation politics, nationality laws, as well as in the self-representations of the country). On the other hand, these debates have recently had less public space and are increasingly confined, with limited ability to connect to perspectives capable of building broader social majorities and linking different struggles and social aspirations.

CODA

As a matter of fact, the conditions of enunciation and debate surrounding the colonial past are hypersensitive to the political context. And today, that context is marked by a new right-wing government and the rise of the far-right in Portugal. Even though the weight of dissident voices has grown in the public sphere, particularly during the period between 2017 and 2023 (in academia, the arts, social movements, and among some sectors of the political left), images of a great imperial past remain socially embedded. The country still lives in a melting pot of imperialphilia, which defines discourses around Portuguese identity and history. The radicalisation of the so-called “democratic right” and the rise of the far-right bring new challenges. A critique centred on a pedagogy of moral shock, of a depoliticised anti-fascism, will have little effect. And not only because the new far-right gives an organic body to what already existed inorganically in Portuguese society (machis-

14. Here are some examples: the erection of a statue of Father António Vieira in Lisbon, a Jesuit missionary in the Americas, with indigenous children at his feet; the statements of the President of the Republic, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, in Gorée (Senegal), a former slave-trading post, praising Portugal’s pioneering role in human rights (when the country abolished slavery); his visit to Batepá, in São Tomé and Príncipe, where hundreds of people were killed in February 1953 in what became known as the “Batepá Massacre”; the proposal for the construction of a “Museum of the Discovery” in Lisbon; the approval, in the Participatory Budget, of a monument to Enslaved People, also in Lisbon; and the discussions over colonial crests in the garden of Praça do Império, in Belém. For an analysis of this wave, see chapter IV of Miguel Cardina, *O Atrito da Memória. Colonialismo, Guerra e Descolonização no Portugal Contemporâneo* (Lisbon: Tinta-da-China, 2023).

mo, racism, coloniality, xenophobia, homophobia, aporophobia, etc.). It is also because a part of the (dis)informational content consumed by broad sectors of the population is based precisely on the idea that there is an “us” against a “them,” in a discourse that intersects various hatreds, elects new idols, and has an individualistic and neo-authoritarian foundation that, ultimately, is the enemy of the solidarity-based morality that generically shaped the foundational discourse of the democratic regime.

The Left will need to reclaim anti-fascism not as a cultural myth but as a practice of struggle, and to forge a wise balance between resistance and hope. Resistance in the face of lies, hatred, attacks on easy targets, social unraveling, coloniality, and neofascism; hope in order to build responses that open the way for a popular left which, in all its diversity, is capable of shaping a mobilising horizon based on the deepening of democracy, rights, and equality. As we know, history continues. The association and dissociation between (anti-)colonialism, dictatorship, and revolution will evolve as part of the ongoing battles for the meaning of history. These are always battles for the meaning of the future.

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Timeline of Events 1973–1978

GREECE • SPAIN • PORTUGAL

1973	
FEB 21 Students occupy the Law School in the centre of Athens for two days. The occupation ends peacefully, marking the first massive public student protest against the dictatorship. NOV 14 A group of students occupy the Polytechnic University in the centre of Athens. In the following days, it will become the epicenter of a massive anti-dictatorship movement, until its bloody suppression by the regime on 17 November. NOV 25 The dictator Georgios Papadopoulos is overthrown in a coup by a group of officers led by Dimitrios Ioannidis.	
JUL 15 N. Samson, with the encouragement and support of the Ioannidis junta, overthrows the elected President of the Republic of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios. JUL 20 Turkey invades Cyprus, triggering a crisis that fatally undermines the Greek military regime and accelerates its collapse. JUL 23 The military dictatorship collapses. In a joint meeting of colonels and politicians it is decided that Konstantinos Karamanlis should take over the government of the country. JUL 24 The government of National Unity is sworn in with K. Karamanlis as Prime Minister. The first measures taken include the release of political prisoners, the amnesty of political crimes and the lifting of the citizenship restrictions imposed by the junta. AUG 01 The Constitution of 1952 is reinstated, except for the provisions concerning the form of government. A process of purging to remove pro-dictatorship personnel from the public sector and universities begins. SEP 03 Andreas Papandreou founds the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), which becomes the main party of the centre-left in post-junta Greece. SEP 23 The Mandatory Law 509/1947, which had outlawed the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), is abolished. OCT 23 The dictators G. Papadopoulos, S. Pattakos, N. Makarezos, I. Ladas and M. Roufogalis are arrested and exiled in Kea Island. NOV 17 The first parliamentary elections of the <i>Metapolitefsi</i> are held with a broad victory for the conservative party New Democracy (Nea Dimokratia) of Konstantinos Karamanlis. DEC 08 A referendum on the form of government is held. The monarchy is voted against by 69.2% and the Third Hellenic Republic is established.	

1974	
DEC 20 The Prime Minister Luis Carrero Blanco is assassinated by the Basque separatist group Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA). DEC 30 Proceso 1001. The entire leadership of the illegal trade-union and anti-Francoist federation Comisiones Obreras is sentenced to many years of imprisonment.	
JAN 04 Carlos Arias Navarro forms the last government under Francoist dictatorship. AUG 31 Influenced by the events in Portugal, a group of military officers forms the illegal organisation Democratic Military Union (Unión Militar Democrática). OCT 11-13 Felipe González is elected General Secretary of the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) at the party congress in Suresnes, France.	

1975	
APR 19 The Partido Socialista is founded in a town near Bonn in West Germany and Mário Soares is elected General Secretary. SEP 09 In a clandestine meeting of mostly lower-ranking officers, the illegal organisation Armed Forces Movement (Movimento das Forças Armadas- MFA) is founded.	
MAR 14 The government dismisses Generals Spínola and Costa Gomes as Chief and Deputy Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, accelerating military operations against the regime. APR 25 The broadcast of the José Afonso's song "Grândola Vila Morena" by Rádio Renascença, is the password to start operations. Strategic points are occupied. General Spínola, mandated by the MFA, receives the surrender of Marcello Caetano and the Government. APR 26 The National Salvation Junta (Junta de Salvação Nacional) is formed with the participation of seven members of the Portuguese armed forces. APR 29-30 Mário Soares, leader of the Partido Socialista and Álvaro Cunhal, leader of the Partido Comunista Português return to Portugal. MAY 01 Around 500,000 people participate in the May 1st march in Lisbon. The demonstrations continue and a large popular movement of squatted housing emerges. MAY 16 The first Provisional Government is formed with Adelino da Palma Carlos as chairman. General Spínola is appointed President of the Portuguese Republic. In the government participate members of the PCP, social democrats from the Socialist Party (Partido Socialista-PS) and liberals of the Democratic Popular Party (Partido Popular Democrático-PPD). JUL 12 The second Provisional Government is formed with General Vasco Gonçalves as chairman.The right of all African colonies to independence is recognised. SEP 07 The Lusaka Accord is signed in Zambia, between the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) and the Portuguese government, recognising Mozambique's right to independence. Two days later Guinea-Bissau becomes officially independent. SEP 28 A demonstration of the conservative parts of the Portuguese society and supporters of the deposed regime (the so-called "silent majority") is organised. A counter-demonstration of civilians and military is held. Hundreds of right leaning citizens are arrested, while many others flee to Spain. SEP 30 General Spínola is dismissed as President of the Republic and General Costa Gomes is appointed. The third Provisional Government is formed, headed by Vasco Gonçalves.	

1976	
FEB 24 An unsuccessful coup d'état is attempted by a group of military officers supporters of the deposed dictatorship. All the involved are arrested. JUN 07 The new Constitution is approved by the Greek Parliament. JUN 12 Greece applies to join the European Community. JUL 27-AUG 24 Trial of the coup leaders. G. Papadopoulos, St. Pattakos, N. Makarezos are sentenced to death, but the government decides to commute the sentence to life imprisonment. DEC 23 The CIA station chief in Athens Richard Welch is assassinated by the far-left terrorist organisation November 17 (17N). DEC 30 The trial for the bloody suppression of the Polytechnic uprising in is concluded. All the accused are sentenced to life or many years of imprisonment.	
MAY 25 Clashes between police and striking demonstrators during protests against the bill on trade union organisations. During the incidents, an elderly woman is killed after being struck by a police water cannon vehicle near Omonoia sq. Sixty-eight people are injured by the police forces, and more than a hundred are arrested. OCT 12 Six torturers of the dictatorship are sentenced to multi-month prison terms. DEC 14 The torturer of the junta E. Mallios is assassinated by the far-left terrorist organisation November 17 (17N).	

1977	
SEP 27 Two members of the Basque separatist group ETA and three members of the anti-Francoist marxist-leninist group Revolutionary Anti-fascist Patriotic Front (FRAP) are executed after being convicted and sentenced to death for the murder of police officers and civil guards. The executions trigger a wave of protest in Spain and Europe. It was the last time the death penalty was applied in Spain. NOV 20 Francisco Franco dies, terminating the decades-long dictatorship and triggering the process for the transition to democracy. NOV 22 Juan Carlos I is crowned King and Spain becomes a monarchy. DEC 12 Carlos Arias Navarro remains President and forms the first government of the restored Monarchy.	
FEB 07 Santiago Carrillo, General Secretary of the clandestine Communist Party of Spain returns secretly to the country. MAR 03 The Vitoria-Gasteiz massacre: during a general strike, armed policemen attack an assembly of workers in a church, killing five people and injuring over a hundred, marking one of the bloodiest episodes of the Spanish transition. MAY 09 The Montejurra incidents: far-right gunmen attack a gathering of the Carlist movement in Navarre, killing two militants and wounding several others, revealing the role of the Spanish security apparatus in political violence. JUL 01 Carlos Arias Navarro resigns at the request of the King. Two days later Adolfo Suárez is appointed President. OCT 09 The party Alianza Popular (Popular Alliance) is founded by the former minister of the Francoist regime Manuel Fraga Iribarne. In 1989 it is refounded as Partido Popular (Popular Party-PP). NOV 18 The Political Reform Act is passed by the Spanish Parliament in order to enable the gradual dismantling of the Francoist institutional structures. DEC 11 Antonio María de Oriol y Urquijo, president of the Council of State and member of the Council of Realm is abducted by the far-left organisation GRAPO, who, among others, demand in exchange the release of left-wing political prisoners. DEC 18 The Political Reform Act is approved by referendum with 94.17% of the vote. DEC 23 Santiago Carrillo, who had clandestinely returned to Madrid on several occasions during that year, is arrested. He will be released at the end of the month following widespread international and domestic protests.	

1978	
MAR 11 An unsuccessful coup d'état is attempted by the former President General Spínola. After the unsuccessful attempt, Spínola and other officers flee to Spain. The National Salvation Junta and the Council of State are replaced by the Revolutionary Council. MAR 12 The Revolutionary Council decrees the nationalisation of the main banks and insurance companies, expanding state control over a significant part of the economy and marking a radicalisation of the Ongoing Revolutionary Process (Processo Revolucionário em Curso, PREC). APR 11 An agreement is signed between the MFA and the Portuguese political parties, acknowledging the need to preserve the MFA's influence over the country's political life during a transitional period of three to five years, culminating in a constitutional revision. APR 25 Constituent Assembly elections are held with the participation of 91.7% of the population. Partido Socialista (PS) wins the elections with 37.9% of the vote. JUN 25 Mozambique becomes independent, a key step in the rapid decolonisation process linked to the Portuguese democratic transition. JUL 05 Cabo Verde wins its independence. JUL 08 The "Documento Guia Povo-MFA" is published by the MFA illustrating the political views of MFA's left wing. JUL 12 São Tomé and Príncipe declares independence from Portugal, further advancing the dismantling of the Portuguese colonial empire after the Carnation Revolution. JUL 13 An assault at the headquarters of the Communist Party of Portugal (PCP) triggers a wave of violence by the conservative forces against leftist parties and organisations. This period of political, social and military instability is known as "Hot Summer of 1975". AUG 07 The manifesto "Documento dos Nove" is published reflecting the political views and goals of nine moderate military officers, the "Group of Nine", led by Melo Antunes, who are opposed to the leftist manifesto "Documento Guia Povo-MFA". AUG 30 Vasco Gonçalves is dismissed as Prime Minister. On 19 September Pinheiro de Azevedo forms the sixth Provisional Government. NOV 25 A coup d'état is attempted by the so-called leftist military forces. The President of the Republic, Francisco da Costa Gomes, decrees a state of siege in the Lisbon region. Military forces loyal to the Group of Nine maintain the control of the situation and prevent the coup.	
APR 02 The new Constitution is approved by the Portuguese Parliament. APR 25 The first free legislative elections are held. The Partido Socialista wins almost 35% of the vote. JUN 27 The first free presidential elections are held. The social democrat António Ramalho Eanes wins the elections and becomes the first President of the Portuguese Republic. JUL 23 Mário Soares is sworn in as Prime Minister.	

1977	
FEB A series of bomb attacks targeting parties, organisations, and left-wing premises are conducted by far-right terrorist groups. AUG 25 The opposition (PASOK, KKE, EDA) submits a bill proposing the recognition of the National Resistance and the repeal of Legislative Decree 179/1969 of the dictatorship, under which right-wing paramilitary groups were recognised as resistance organisations. The New Democracy government rejects it. NOV 20 Parliamentary elections are held: New Democracy secures a comfortable majority with 41.85%, PASOK, with 25.33%, becomes the main opposition, while the Left increases its share (9.36%).	

1978	
JAN 23 Arturo Ruiz García, student and left-wing activist, is assassinated by a far-right extremist during a pro-amnesty demonstration in Madrid. His assassination triggers a series of violent incidents, known as the "Black Week of Madrid". JAN 24 Far-right extremists attack a law firm in Atocha street in Madrid killing five people. GRAPO also abducts Emilio Villaescusa Quilis, a military officer. Antonio María de Oriol y Urquijo and Emilio Villaescusa Quilis are both released by the police on 11 February 1977. APR 09 The Communist Party of Spain becomes legal. Santiago Carrillo is the General Secretary. MAY "Semana Pro-Amnistía" in the Basque Country: mass mobilisations in favour of political amnesty lead to several deaths and injuries due to police repression, increasing pressure for a full Amnesty Law. JUN 15 The first parliamentary elections of the post-Francoist period are held with a broad victory for the conservative party Union of the Democratic Centre (Unión de Centro Democrático-UCD) of Adolfo Suárez. OCT 15 The Amnesty Law is passed by the Spanish Parliament, releasing political prisoners and permitting those exiled to return to Spain, while guaranteeing impunity for those who participated in crimes, during the Civil War, and the Francoist period. OCT 25 The Moncloa Pacts are signed between the government, political parties and trade unions, in order to address inflation and unemployment problems.	
SEP 19 An agreement is signed between the Democratic Convergence of Catalonia and the Democratic Union of Catalonia, forming the Convergència i Unió (Convergence and Union-CiU) political party that ruled in Catalonia from 1980 until 2003. OCT 31 The new constitution is debated and approved by the Spanish Parliament. NOV 16 A secret plot to impose a coup d'état codenamed "Operación Galaxia" is revealed. The Guardia Civil Lieutenant-Colonel Antonio Tejero and Major Ricardo Sáenz de Ynestrillas Martínez are arrested. DEC 06 The new constitution is approved by referendum with 87.9% of the vote.	

1979	
MAR 28 Portugal applies to join the European Community. APR 25 Portugal seeks financial support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) by signing a Stand-by Agreement, in order to stabilise its economy.	
JUN 05 Portugal signs the second Stand-by-Agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). AUG 28 A government crisis leads to the dismissal of Prime Minister Mário Soares by the President António Ramalho Eanes and the appointment of Alfredo Nobre da Costa as his successor. NOV 22 Carlos Mota Pinto is appointed Prime Minister by the President António Ramalho Eanes, forming a centre-right wing government.	

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[ILLUSTRATIONS CAPTIONS]

- Cover:** Sketch based on a photograph by Estudio Fotográfico Arenas, taken during the funeral of Manuel José García Caparrós, who was killed by the police in Málaga in 1977
- p. 24:** Sketch based on a photograph taken during a demonstration in solidarity with Spanish strikers in Brussels in 1962, from Archivo Fundación 1º de Mayo
- p. 36:** Sketch based on a photograph from an anti-dictatorship demonstration in Amsterdam on 31 March 1973
- p. 48:** Sketch based on the theatrical release poster of the film "*Bienvenido, Mr. Marshall!*" (1953, Luis García Berlanga), by Jano (Francisco Fernández-Zarza)
- p. 66:** Sketch based on record covers by José Santa-Bárbara (for *Cantigas do Maio*, José Afonso, 1971) and António Campos Rosado (for *Heróis do Mar*, Heróis do Mar, 1981)
- p. 78:** Sketch by Hans Joachim Gerboth published in the newspaper *Kölnische Rundschau* on 19 March 1975
- p. 98:** Sketch based on a photograph by Nikos Panayotopoulos, taken during the 1981 electoral campaign of the KKE Interior
- p. 112:** Sketch based on a poster designed by José Gutiérrez Carbonell for the PCE's campaign for the 1979 municipal elections
- p. 124:** Sketch based on a photograph from a strike at a garment factory in 1984
- p. 140:** Sketch based on a photograph from the May 1st march of 1977, commemorating the 200 communists executed at the Kaisariani Shooting Range on 1 May 1944
- p. 154:** Sketch based on a photograph published in the newspaper *Diário de Notícias* on 18 february 1975, showing a decapitated statue of Salazar

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in Greece, Spain and Portugal
Transitions and their Legacies, Fifty Years On**

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HALF A CENTURY AFTER THE FALL OF THE DICTATORSHIPS IN GREECE, PORTUGAL AND SPAIN, THE MEANINGS AND LEGACIES OF SOUTHERN EUROPE'S DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS REMAIN CONTESTED. THIS VOLUME REVISITS THOSE TRANSITIONS NOT AS LINEAR PASSAGES FROM AUTHORITARIANISM TO DEMOCRATIC "NORMALITY", BUT AS UNEVEN, CONFLICTUAL, AND OPEN-ENDED PROCESSES SHAPED BY SOCIAL MOBILISATION, INSTITUTIONAL CONTINUITIES, POLITICAL COMPROMISE, AND COMPETING MEMORIES.

BRINGING TOGETHER SCHOLARS WORKING ON GREECE, SPAIN AND PORTUGAL, THE BOOK EXAMINES THE OPERATION OF AUTHORITARIAN RULE, THE EVOLUTION OF OPPOSITION, AND THE DIVERSE LANDSCAPES OF RESISTANCE THAT EMERGED ACROSS NATIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL SETTINGS. IT THEN TURNS TO THE TRANSITION YEARS, EXPLORING POLITICAL STRATEGY, INSTITUTIONAL REFOUNDING, EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXTS, AND THE DILEMMAS FACED BY THE LEFT AS BOTH AN AGENT OF MOBILISATION AND A PARTICIPANT IN DEMOCRATIC STABILISATION. FINALLY, IT FOLLOWS THE LONGER AFTERLIVES OF DEMOCRATISATION IN LABOUR RELATIONS, POLICING, CITIZENSHIP, NATIONAL RECONCILIATION, DECOLONISATION, PUBLIC MEMORY, AND POLITICAL CULTURE.

EMERGING FROM THE INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP "DICTATORSHIPS/ DEMOCRACIES: POLITICAL TRANSITIONS AND THE LEFT IN SOUTHERN EUROPE", HELD IN ATHENS IN NOVEMBER 2024, THE VOLUME SPEAKS TO BOTH SCHOLARLY AND PUBLIC DEBATES. IT ARGUES THAT REVISITING THE SOUTHERN EUROPEAN TRANSITIONS IS NOT AN EXERCISE IN COMMEMORATIVE NOSTALGIA, BUT AN INVITATION TO RETHINK DEMOCRACY AS A CONTESTED FIELD OF INCLUSION, EXCLUSION, CONFLICT, AND POLITICAL POSSIBILITY.