

# **A Tale of Foes over Friends. Franco Nogueira's Hispanophobia between the Portuguese New State and Democracy**

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Abstract

In the Portuguese nation's narrative, Spain was traditionally looked upon as the perilous 'other', an antagonist and a threat justifying the demonization of the Iberian neighbour. Centuries of a deep rooted anti-castilianism, if not pure Hispanophobia, were thus a grounding ingredient of Portuguese nationalism. One of the staunchest defenders of such a discourse in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was Alberto Franco Nogueira, the New State's Foreign Minister between 1961 and 1969 who later became an outright spokesman against any Iberian friendship in or through democracy and Europe during the 1980s and early 1990s. Exploring his written views, spread over 30 years, on the Portuguese-Spanish relations, and how he adamantly stood against any Hispanophile approach allows the historian to cast light on a mood that, far from being just a politically incorrect individual eccentricity, modelled many latent national Portuguese views that still counter the present day ruling cosmopolitanism.

Keywords: Portugal, Spain, Hispanophobia, Hispanophilia, Iberianism, Franco Nogueira

## **1.**

Throughout history, the Portuguese negative outlook towards Spain implied an anti-Castilian, or otherwise hispanophobic, narrative that turned the so-called 'Spanish danger' into a defining ingredient of our nationalism. Indeed, ever since the 12<sup>th</sup> century until the end of the New State regime, Castile and later on Spain represented a rival and a threat, real or presumed, justifying several attitudes of stigmatization and demonization of the neighbouring country (see Sardica, 2013, or Torre Gómez, 1998).

The aim of this text is to recall one of the figures that highly contributed to the rhetoric and the strategy of hispanophobia, and whose legacy still resounds in some present day critical appraisals of the Lisbon-Madrid relationship. That figure is Alberto Franco Nogueira. As New State's Foreign Minister between 1961 and 1969, and, retired from politics, until the beginning of the 1990s, Franco Nogueira was the strongest audible enemy of any Iberian friendship. Spanning along thirty years, his writings allow the historian to reconstruct an intellectual mood still lingering today, in those who evoke the 'Spanish danger' as a readymade symbol for any anti cosmopolitan fight.

## 2.

Born in September 1918, Alberto Franco Nogueira entered the diplomatic service in 1941 and soon specialized in African issues, working locally or in the UN range. The climax of his career came in May 1961, when he was chosen by Salazar to succeed Marcelo Mathias as Foreign Minister. He would leave office by personal request in October 1969 (already under Marcelo Caetano), totalling thus 8.5 years leading that ministerial portfolio. In a decade full of decisive challenges for the salazarist and marcelist New State regime, Nogueira was an adamant defender of the integrationist policy, stating the all too sacred character of the historical and civilizational uniting ties between the metropolis and the overseas extensions of the Portuguese nation (see Lucena, 2015, or Martins, 1996). Consequently, his “africanism” translated into an attitude of “back turning” towards Europe and its problems, and especially towards Spain, valorising instead the strengthening of the Atlantic relationship with Great-Britain, the US and Brazil.

It was this integrationism and anti-Europeanism that eventually separated Nogueira from the government’s president, Marcelo Caetano, leading to his demise in 1969. After leaving the government, he obtained an unlimited license from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while working as member of the Overseas Council and as attaché at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. Meanwhile, in the newspaper *Política*, beginning in 1970, he never ceased to doom the marcelist “liberalising” plans, all more so whenever the topic was the announced progressive autonomy to be granted to the Portuguese overseas territories.

Despite the 25<sup>th</sup> April 1974 coup, or because of the ensuing revolutionary radicalization of 1974-76, Nogueira never relinquished his critical views about Europe, democracy or the re-encounter with Spain, nor did he ever depart from his past allegiance to the New State and its founding values. He was arrested by the revolutionary forces in 1974-75, before moving to London, where he worked in the private entrepreneurial sector. Nogueira returned to Portugal in 1981, and went on teaching in various universities. He died in Lisbon in March 1993, aged 74 and bearing the honourable title of “Ambassador”.

It is over simplistic to reduce the “historical reserve” upheld by the New State’s 1960s Foreign Minister towards Spain to a simple effect of the imperial outlook towering his political views. One should rather emphasize how much Franco Nogueira was not alone in his hispanophobia. Far from being a unique eccentricity, the mistrust, fear or hate he nurtured towards Spain were common-held positions in the corridors of power and amidst some national intelligentsia (writers, journalists, corporate businessmen, and so on), all along the period during which Nogueira finished his intellectual education and professional ascent and performed as leader of the Portuguese diplomacy.

Indeed, and countering ingrained ideas, it is rather to be underlined that throughout decades, even after the turmoil of the Spanish Civil War and the II World War, the relationship between the two Iberian dictatorships was “much more a tale of disagreements and divorces than a tale of agreements, comprehensions and mutual cooperation” (Oliveira, 2006: 53), since “a subterranean anti Spanish feeling drove salazarism, while the ignorance about Portugal drove francoism” (Loff, 2004: 20). And despite the democratization and the European integration that brought, in more recent decades, political freedom, cultural openness and material development to both Portugal and Spain, those feelings did not wider away completely. Franco Nogueira’s hispanophobic thought was as much a product of these circumstances as it was also an element broadening them, and perpetuating the portraying of Spain as the natural enemy of a smaller Portugal.

### 3.

A professional diplomat with a vast international experience, Franco Nogueira always posited, before being minister, while in office, and also (or especially) after leaving government, as the spokesman for the Portuguese nationalist right wing, as the crusader of the overseas integrationism and of the cherished African vocation, nursing against Spain an unsurpassable historical reserve. All this led him to consider any idea of Iberianism or peninsularism (that is, any kind of political, cultural or economic proximity with Madrid), as nothing short of a State treason. In his orthodox view, Portugal was and should go on being a grand mediator between the old and the new worlds – between Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America. A global lusophony was a much higher asset than any short-spaced European bilateral relationship. And only such an Atlantic outreach could deter Madrid to do what geography and history instilled Spanish to pursue: to correct the anomaly of a split Peninsula and of a Spain amputated of her westernmost maritime strip.

If not before, it was through the international discussion around Portuguese colonial policies that Franco Nogueira cemented his hispanophobia. It is widely known that all along the 1950s and 1960s, within the UN, Madrid did not want to jeopardize international friendships by holding to tiny irrelevant African enclaves. In contrast, Salazar always answered to any UN decolonizing pressures with the argument that Lisbon did not hold “colonies” but “overseas provinces”, that were as Portuguese, and thus unalienable, as any territorial piece of the European metropolis (see Torre Gómez, 2012). When he was sworn in as Foreign Minister, in the spring of 1961, Nogueira was already aware of such a tense issue, since he had previously represented the country in several UN meetings. But he better understood it in May 1963, in Merida, in the 7<sup>th</sup> and

last bilateral Iberian summit between Salazar and Franco. Officially, there were no problems between Portugal and Spain to be solved. But when the Portuguese asked what were the decolonizing arrangements running between Madrid and the UN, both the *Caudillo* and his own Foreign Minister (Fernando Castiella), were evasive. Franco Nogueira realized, with no surprise but with bitter discontent, what was surfacing:

Salazar concludes that the Spanish authorities, given the first opportunity, are willing to abandon everything in black Africa, to avoid any embarrassments with the UN; and that, out of their idea of a grand policy in the Arab world, they will sacrifice something to that mirage (Nogueira, 1984: 484).

The Merida summit reinforced the mixture of mistrust, repudiation and distance that Nogueira felt against Spain. In November 1961, accompanying President Américo Tomás' State visit to Spain, he noted in his diary all the malaise he suffered with the "feeling of greatness" witnessed in every place – from the Palace of Oriente to the monastery of Escorial, from the Valle de los Caídos monument to the Alcazar in Toledo. He simply considered that the rival country went on being what it had always stood for, since the era of Charles V of Philip II: an imperial, militaristic and domineering power. Siding Spain, Nogueira regretted

We, the Portuguese, look like simple, candid and lay people, provincially fascinated, and do not realize how much the menacing shadows of a count-duke of Olivares, a José Carvajal, a Floridablanca, a Godoy or an Alfonso XIII, and many more, are always lurking, with tenacious heirs, until our days (Nogueira, 1986: 18-19).

In December 1967, once again in Spain, Nogueira talked about Iberianism with the vice-President of the Spanish government, general Agustín Muñoz Grandes, to whom he remembered that the "ruling Spanish obsession towards annexing Portugal" was "as lively as ever". Muñoz Grandes replied that indeed some 90% of his fellow countrymen did envisage "the political disappearance of Portugal", "immediately and by any means available", while a meagre 10% wished the same, but through a peaceful 50 to 70-year time-span. Muñoz Grandes was among the latter, seeking no "violence", but only a voluntary peninsular unity. Nogueira thanked the sincerity but added that the Portuguese would never want, nor accept, any Iberian union (Nogueira, 1986: 270).

Contrary to Salazar, Marcelo Caetano was an admirer of Spain, and from the end of 1968 onwards, he replaced the cold and suspicious salazarist approach with a more open and cooperative attitude, seeking to boost bilateral contacts and agreements (see Martins, 2014). It was no surprise Nogueira's entrenchment as one of the leading critics

of the marcelist Europeanism and hispanophilia. He went on defending that such paths would only denationalize Portugal, neglecting Africa and diluting the small metropolis in foreign political interests. As a cabinet member, and later outside government, Nogueira never ceased to voice his deep seated hispanophobia, in a new era in which hating Spain was becoming more and more politically incorrect. His perspective remained unchanged: Portugal was a multi continental country facing the Atlantic and Africa, and its European setting was just a geographical detail. Deprived of the Atlantic and Africa, restricted to its tiny continental rectangle, the country would be unviable, losing all the extra-European extensions and outreach that had secured independence ever since the 15<sup>th</sup> century. That's why, he foresaw, decolonization and the loss of Africa would rapidly imply the unavoidable absorption of Portugal by Spain.

In October 1969, campaigning for the marcelist elections, Franco Nogueira once again laid down his staunch defence of the Portuguese empire and his correlated anti Spanish resentment:

All our national policy must be drawn to maintain the overseas territories [...] Aside England, which is an island, we are the only country in Europe who has borders with just one other country; and it so happens that our neighbour is three or four times larger in area, resources and population. Deprived of various neighbours, we have no possibility of defending ourselves against any pressure or threat by siding with one neighbour against another (Nogueira, 1970 [1969]: 334-335).

Between Spain and the open ocean, then, the choice was between subservience and asphyxia, on the one side, and greatness and breathing, on the other side. There was no half-term or possible conciliation.

This led him to criticise all Iberianisms, invariably “absorbing and imperialistic” in nature – as set by Manuel Azaña or Alcalá Zamora, by Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz or Alejandro Lerroux, by Calvo-Sotelo or Gil Robles, by Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera or Franco, by Serrano Súñer or Martín Artajo, by Fernando Castiella or Laureano López Rodó (Nogueira, 1992: 148-149). The different political shades separating all these names did not interest him. There were no good or bad Iberianisms and whatever their contour, they should simply be fought against: “those entire theses are bluntly suicidal. We should neither believe, nor accept, that Iberianism can be a solution for any Portuguese problem, lest we want to lose our independence” (Nogueira, 1992: 28). It was in coping with this logic that Nogueira denounced writers like Oliveira Martins, António Sardinha or José Pequito Rebelo, as unfortunate authors of such ill-fated and negative Iberian illusions. The key distinction all three of them drew between peninsularism (or alliancism), and plain political unity was something that Franco Nogueira never wanted

to understand and less still come in terms with (Nogueira, 1992: 137-140, and Matos, 2007: 180-183).

After the 25<sup>th</sup> April 1974 coup that toppled the New State regime, the catastrophic scenery imagined by the former Foreign Minister never happened. Deprived of its African colonies, Portugal didn't lose independence and wasn't absorbed by Spain. On the contrary, it was able to redefine its identity and to set a path towards European integration and membership, which came (alongside Spain) in 1986. Franco Nogueira forgot nothing and learned nothing. In 1981, returning to Portugal from his six-year self-imposed exile in London, he came to the fore to state how EEC accession would entail denationalization, leading to a "common Iberian market", where Portuguese losses would be greater than any gains – and a market veered by "the will and power of the stronger party", where "we all know how economic domain is followed suit by political domain" (Nogueira, 1992: 39).

A fundamentally identical claim would yet again surface, a decade later, in 1992. European integration had already a six-year history behind and euro enthusiasm was the political and cultural mainstream tone. In Portugal, the so-called "cavaquismo" (Cavaco Silva's government), was peaking, while Spain dazzled the world with the great Seville Universal Exposition and the Olympic Games seated in Barcelona. It was within this context that Franco Nogueira published (a year before his death), perhaps the most violent hispanophobic treaty ever written by any Portuguese author (Nogueira, 1992, especially chapter III). He had witnessed the salazarist and francoist departures, the revolution and the European democracy blossoming Portugal and the Peninsula to the world. What the grand majority of the people would consider as an unequivocal progress, Nogueira thought of as a denationalizing and decaying path at the hands of the old rival and enemy.

The broad picture sketched in 1992 was fully coherent with his everlasting opinions: "If there is any constancy in the peninsular dialectics, it expresses the Spanish wish and obsession in taming the abnormality of an independent Portugal. It was a driving thought and action that crossed centuries, always vivacious" (Nogueira, 1992: 97). That's why he alerted how "behind any Spanish there emerged a count-duke of Olivares" (Nogueira, 1992: 113). Felipe González (the then socialist cabinet President) was but the latest of these reincarnations. As for the peninsular convergence in Europe, it was just the last expression of a detestable Iberianism, always "blatant, centralizing, integrationist and annexionist, cherished by Spain and revealing a naïf, opportunistic and subservient Portugal" (Nogueira, 1992: 100). Spain, insisted Nogueira, "can never have good intentions; because its ultimate goal goes on unmentioned, and the reasons backing such plans go on unrevealed" (Nogueira, 1992: 98). The menacing shadow of Philip II was well

alive in 1992, shadowing a Portugal that Franco Nogueira described as numb by foreign economic interests and refractory to sovereignty and independence notions alike. All considered, there came his final recommendation: considering the everlasting Spanish threat, “times are not new, nor are they different; and the phantoms of the past are well awake in the present, because they are not phantoms” (Nogueira, 1992: 157).

#### 4.

Harsh nationalism and intolerant xenophobia are attitudes that European integration, worldwide globalization and the international cooperative and peace-enforcing institutions rendered obsolete in the transition from the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the 21<sup>st</sup> century... or so we hope. One cannot believe, however, that Franco Nogueira, had he lived longer, would have ever abandoned his ingrained anti castilianism. But it is worth stressing that his anti-Spanish rhetoric and feelings – though especially vehement – were not isolated cases, countering everything and everybody surrounding him.

For decades, and up until recent times – not to quote past centuries – every hispanophile voice in Portugal was matched by a hispanophobic one. From Fernando Pessoa to António Sardinha, from Eduardo Lourenço to José Saramago, many tried to row against the tide of Spanish hating; and from João Chagas to Salazar, or from Franco Nogueira to the Olivença’s activists and all those denouncing the Spanish “invasion” of Portuguese economy, many were those who creased the refusal of any cultural, political or material Iberianism and peninsularism, turning hispanophobia into a compensating strategy of an otherwise collective feeling of jealous, asphyxia or fear. Still in 1990, José Saramago, the future literature Nobel Prize winner, would recall:

As any other Portuguese, I was educated in the conviction that my natural enemy was, and would always be, Spain. I paid little attention to the fact that the French had invaded and looted Portugal, or that the English had explored, humiliated and governed our country [...] Absolute, from our Portuguese perspective, was the rancor against the Spanish, an attitude called patriotism which we relentlessly pursued throughout centuries (quoted by Molina, 1990: 5-6).

One can then judge how much hispanophobia, with or without the tone and adjectives used by Franco Nogueira, was always, and until recently, a sort of underlying identity of our national self-representation. What remains to be seen is whether or not such feelings will go on occupying the Portuguese imagination in the new generations of our unfolding 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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