

ANTÓNIO PEDRO'S "MONDAY CHRONICLES": THE VOICE OF DEMOCRACY ON THE BBC BROADCASTS TO PORTUGAL DURING WORLD WAR II

Abstract: In the final phase of the Second World War, António Pedro became one of the most emblematic voices of the BBC's Portuguese Section, mainly due to his "Monday Chronicles" in which he presented his views on British society along with comments on military and geopolitical developments occurring at that time. He achieved a high level of popularity among listeners in Portugal during the almost two years he was a regular on the microphones, i.e. between January 1944 and October 1945. His chronicles were considered the most important programme of a political nature in the broadcasts to Portugal.

Part of this success was due to Pedro himself, his style of writing and way of talking at the microphone, but it is also important to remember that broadcasts from London in Portuguese, which had begun in June 1939, achieved great success right from the start of the Second World War because they were the main source of information on the developments in the conflict. The number of BBC listeners increased even more after the opening of the Eastern Front, which coincided with a tightening of censorship in Portugal and the consequent omission of news in the national media about Russian military advances. This obviously generated greater interest in listening to foreign broadcasts, especially the Voice of London, the station that had the greatest impact in Portugal during the war.

António Pedro joining the BBC marked a change in the editorial line of the Portuguese Section, and he contributed decisively to familiarising Portuguese listeners with words like "democracy". It is however undeniable that the success of the broadcasts he made from London can only be truly understood in the context of the role played by the BBC in Portugal during the Second World War.

The present article relies on document research conducted in archives located in Portugal and the UK. Due to the absence of recordings from the BBC Portuguese Service, the quotes from Pedro's "Monday Chronicles", with the sole exception of the texts that were censored and that can be found at the BBC Written Archives, were taken from the manuscripts the author himself prepared for publication after the war and that are held at the Portuguese National Library.

A Liberdade é como o ar que se respira – ou é limpo e rejuvenesce ou se apodrece de miasmas e assassina.¹

BBC Broadcasts to Portugal

Although the BBC had been broadcasting in Portuguese to Latin America since March 1938, it was only in June 1939, and after much insistence by Sir Walford Selby (the British ambassador in Lisbon at that time), that the BBC began its broadcasts to Portugal. These broadcasts initially consisted exclusively of a news report at 10 pm. Investment in the Portuguese section would be extended during the war. Besides the creation of new broadcasting periods, the broadcasts to Portugal from February 1941 onwards included talks and variety features, transforming the BBC into the most listened foreign radio station in the country, competing in number of listeners with national broadcasters. This success was due to several reasons, including the fact that the BBC had managed to create an aura of credibility that contrasted with the perceived image of the other foreign stations that broadcast in Portuguese, which were usually considered to be mere vehicles of propaganda.

The BBC, by promoting itself as an objective voice, came to secure a significant audience. People often met in cafes and clubs at the time of the broadcasts from London, since the majority of Portuguese households had no radio receivers. Nonetheless, despite its popularity, the station always had to juggle its mission to inform with the need to function as an instrument serving the interests of the British government (Ribeiro, *BBC Broadcasts to Portugal in World War II (BBCB)*).

Equally important to the success of the Voice of London, along with the image of credibility promoted by the BBC itself and, in general, by all the British propaganda structures in Portugal, was the existence of a pro-Anglophone environment in the country. Besides the fact that Portuguese neutrality had been presented in the context of the Portuguese-British alliance (Rosas 7: 303), the Allies' cause had plenty of support inside the Estado Novo² itself (Barros 74). This created an environment that was favourable to the broadcasts of the Voice of London. In fact, in order to prove the warm reception originally afforded the broadcasts by the regime itself, the State radio broadcaster, Emissora Nacional, rebroadcast the BBC news on its programme at 11:30 pm between June and November 1939 (Ribeiro, *A Emissora Nacional nos Primeiros Anos do Estado Novo (AEN)* 219).

In terms of public opinion, the fact that Fernando Pessa joined the Portuguese Section in 1940 was also relevant since he had previously been the most charismatic radio presenter of the Emissora Nacional station during the first few years after the official start of broadcasts in 1935 (Ribeiro, *AEN*

1 "Monday Chronicle." 15 October 1945. script in Portuguese National Library. Esp E5/366-366A.

2 The dictatorship known as Estado Novo (New State) ruled in Portugal between 1933 and 1974. It was an authoritarian regime different from all others since the Head of Government did not see the State as an omnipotent entity. Nevertheless, it had strong corporatist and authoritarian elements namely a severe control over the freedom of expression.

127). In the BBC, his special presentation style associated with the ironic tone he used to pronounce the names of Hitler and Mussolini, earned him recognition among Portuguese listeners. His main admirers were from the working classes, who considered his presentation style to be truly remarkable. One of his most appreciated characteristics was that when reading the news, especially bad news for the Allies, he always tried to use a pitch and tone of voice that might convey a positive attitude. His aim was to emphasize the idea that better days would come and that the piece of news was just a slight setback in the war against the Axis powers (Costa 33-34).

The feedback received by the BBC indicates that the programmes in general, and those of Fernando Pessa in particular, were very successful especially among the middle and lower classes. This is described by a British citizen residing in Porto in July 1943:

If . . . your aim had been to please the uneducated and uncritical sections of your audience, then you have succeeded to a remarkable degree, and you can do no better than to continue on the lines you have been following up to the present But if your object had been to appeal to the educated classes, then I fear you have failed rather badly.³

The talks, broadcast after the news, tended to use very simple language and some used humour to ridicule Axis personalities⁴ which were the source of their populist appeal. Pessa's particular style of presenting was seen as a specific source of this.

The issue the BBC had to address during 1943 was whether, in order to hold the greatest number of listeners, the broadcasts should continue to offer features which offended or disappointed its more educated listeners. After internal discussions on this matter, it was decided that the Corporation should regard the need to conquer the upper class as a priority. This led to a decrease in the number of entertaining programmes presented by Pessa. The view that his broadcasts had a broader appeal among the lower classes was not well accepted by B.S. Willmore, who became the new editor of the Portuguese Section in 1943 (Briggs 3: 480). In fact, he was among those who did not see him as being essential to success. The relationship between the two rapidly deteriorated (Costa 31), which led Fernando Pessa to tender his resignation on 9 September. He continued to work at the station until the end of November.⁵ Later on, many regular listeners protested about his absence from the microphone and demanded his return. He was re-instated in March 1944.

It was during this period, when the station was struggling to secure a high profile audience and its most well-known announcer was about to leave the Corporation, that the British Embassy in Lisbon

3 "BBC Survey of European Audiences – Portugal", 10 September 1943, in the BBC Written Archives.

4 Ibidem.

5 Internal documents from the BBC addressed to Press Office in Lisbon by Willmore, 5 October 1943, in the BBC Written Archives, R13/199/2.

tested a few possible announcers. During the summer of 1943 several candidates, including António Pedro, were tested by a selection committee. The recordings were later sent to Bush House in London where they were analysed by the management of the Portuguese Section. Of all those tested, Pedro was considered by the Lisbon examiners as “the best candidate of all those dozen or more tested this year”.⁶ Miss Margery Withers, who had been appointed as the BBC Lisbon Representative in March 1943,⁷ also commented on Pedro, mentioning how his presence at the microphones would be to the advantage of the Service:

His voice is good, he reads intelligently and comes over the microphone as a person of education and culture. He has considerable journalistic experience and is a man of means who is anxious to have a share in the war effort of the United Nations.⁸

Despite this recommendation, in September 1943 Willmore wrote to the Press Office of the Lisbon Embassy stating that he had selected José Castelo to become the Portuguese Service’s new announcer. Castelo used to work for the Catholic Church-owned Rádio Renascença in Lisbon and, according to the editor of the Portuguese Section, he “was preferred to Pedro, who sounded more like a programme assistant and whose voice, though promising on recording, showed that he needed microphone training”.⁹ In spite of this opinion, Pedro was once more considered a good option for the BBC the following month, especially since the entire section was being restructured. Besides Pessa, three other staff members were forced to leave presentation duties due to their level of culture being considered too low. This meant that more announcers and programme assistants were needed:

Pessa’s coming departure will leave a hole which Pedro might very well fill. I hope, if staff discussions here during the next few days make it possible for me, to offer Antonio Pedro a contract very shortly.¹⁰

Pedro’s contract with the BBC was signed in Lisbon by Margery Withers in representation of Gordon Yates, the Corporation’s European Establishment Officer. The expectation was that he would enable broadcasts to reach upper class listeners:

6 Letter from Willmore to Press Office in Lisbon, 5 October 1943, in BBC Written Archives, L1/112. I thank Bruno Silva Rodrigues for the copies of documents from this folder which he made available to me.

7 Cf. Foreign Office internal report, 1944, in the National Archives, FO 371/39616.

8 Letter from Willmore to Yates, 27 October, 1943, in BBC Written Archives, L1/112.

9 Ibidem.

10 □ Letter from Willmore to Press Office in Lisbon, see note 6.

He is, I think, just the man to create us an audience among the more cultured Portuguese. He has the right background and they will listen to him with interest and pleasure. It may be useful to you to know that Snr. Pedro is a very wealthy man who is coming to London because he wants to do what he can to help the Allied cause and because he wants the experience of living in a country at war. You are therefore getting someone of a much higher calibre than would be attracted by the salary.¹¹

Gordon Yates also stated that his support for Pedro's application was due to his "cultural background which [the BBC] need[ed] to create an audience among the more cultured Portuguese".¹² In fact, Pessa's resignation was intended to open a new chapter in the life of the Portuguese Service. It was in this context that both José Castelo and António Pedro joined the Corporation in January 1944. While the former would be limited to reading the news and talks, the latter would become responsible for writing and presenting several features, namely talks.

The First Year of the "Monday Chronicles"

António Pedro first appeared at the BBC microphones presenting a chronicle entitled "Lisbon to London" where he described his journey to England and his first impressions of the British people and their fight against the Axis powers. In his opinion, what was taking place on the battlefields was a crusade for the dignity of mankind led by Britain. "The glory and sacrifice of defending it [dignity] against tyranny and barbarism has fallen on the shoulders of Britain."¹³

This was the first talk of the series entitled "Monday Chronicle" broadcast every Monday evening and dedicated to English culture and politics as well as to the war's political and military developments. These talks, which were aired from January 1944 until Pedro left the BBC in October 1945, also contained responses to some attacks against the British that were made by German propaganda circulated in Portugal. Although Pedro was also responsible for the series "London Calendar" and for the presentation of several reports, interviews and other features on the Portuguese Service, during his stay at the BBC he would become best known for presenting the "Monday Chronicle".

On this series he regularly praised the British people and their determination to resist the German attacks despite all the bombing that was going on in London. Known for his opposition to the Estado Novo, Pedro was not very much concerned with the regime's reactions to his comments.

11 Letter from the Press Office in Lisbon to Willmore, 23 November 1943, in BBC Written Archives, L1/112.

12 Memo from Yates to Miss Leggett (Staff Administration), 13 December 1943, in BBC Written Archives, L1/112.

13 "Monday Chronicle", 17 January 1944.

Accordingly, on several occasions, the neutral countries, Portugal included, were not spared from criticism:

. . . A inacreditável atitude deste povo que se decidiu a resistir sozinho, através de tudo e de todos os sacrifícios, perante a falta de preparação da América, perante o medo dos países neutrais, depois de toda a Europa continental dominada, à arremetida temerosa das forças do Eixo que parecia ir levar o mundo todo de vencida.¹⁴

In several chronicles, Pedro described in detail daily life in London and expressed his admiration for the fact that people on the streets went about their everyday life despite the threat of air raids. On some occasions he even described his own experience when the city was being bombed by the enemy. The RAF was praised,¹⁵ as well as the British capacity for organization and the ability to achieve high levels of agricultural and industrial production despite the war. During his stay in Britain he was given the opportunity to visit several factories and farms as reported in his chronicles, explaining how the British managed to increase their productivity during the war years.¹⁶

A regular theme of the “Monday Chronicle” was the military developments on the several war fronts, namely the Eastern front. On some occasions, the role of the Soviet Union was mentioned and its achievements were praised despite the fact that communism had been identified by Salazar as the main threat to humanity. Unable to mention all the anti-communist propaganda that was then being distributed in Lisbon, since the BBC did not allow broadcasts to directly criticize the Estado Novo, he instead condemned similar campaigns that were then taking place in Madrid:

As descrições patéticas do perigo comunista fazem tremer as colunas dos periódicos madrilenos em que vêm impressos. A Inglaterra e a América – segundo dizem – ainda estão a tempo de salvar a Europa da catástrofe – unindo-se com as outras nações contra a Rússia sua aliada. . . . O papão comunista – a Inglaterra e a América sabem-no bem – as campanhas anti-comunistas, são fórmulas demasiado conhecidas e gastas de propaganda nazi.¹⁷

The National Socialist regime was also a regular theme tackled by Pedro, who tended to use a very caustic style to describe all its actions and those of its leaders. On New Year’s Day 1945, the attempted murder of Hitler that had taken place months before was remembered using the following terms:

14 “Monday Chronicle”, 14 February 1944.

15 Cf. “Monday Chronicle”, 27 March 1944.

16 Cf. “Monday Chronicle”, 28 February 1944, 6 and 13 March 1944.

17 “Monday Chronicle”, 10 April 1944.

E se a Providência que ele (Hitler) costuma invocar o salvou da bomba que lhe era destinada, não o salvou depois dela . . . de cair sob o comando de um energúmeno ainda maior – Himmler – que transformou a nação de que o Fuhrer fizera uma caserna, numa imensa penitenciária inquisitorial da Gestapo.¹⁸

Other chronicles that must have been of concern for the Salazar regime were those on British politics. Even though in the early 1930s Pedro had been a member of the fascist movement Nacional-Sindicalista, when he arrived in London his political beliefs had changed and he confessed his admiration for the British parliamentary system. As early as January 1944 Pedro spoke about the House of Commons, describing it as the “backbone of British politics and the Areopagus of its democracy”.¹⁹ The following month, he would once more use events taking place in Britain to speak about democracy. Despite the fact that the Estado Novo’s propaganda was then presenting democracy as a regime not suitable for Portugal due to the energy wasted on “sterile discussions”, this did not prevent Pedro from extolling its virtues:

Democracia. Que significa realmente esta palavra tão vilipendiada? Governo do povo, a tradução literal, é uma expressão vaga. A democracia inglesa é mais do que um regime, mais do que uma forma de pensar posta em acção – é uma forma de ser. O inglês tem a sua vida social organizada numa série de escalões que terminam no palácio real. A vida inglesa é assente numa série de estratificações sociais que vão do operário e do agricultor à Câmara dos Lordes. Mas todos, Lordes e operários, têm os mesmos deveres e têm os mesmos direitos em face da sociedade. Mas todos, lordes e operários podem subir ou descer essa escadaria social segundo a sua conduta. . . . Do que não há dúvida nenhuma é de que, para que uma sociedade se organize e funcione a ponto de poder ser possível a existência de um Churchill e dum povo inglês coincidindo na sua acção porque mutuamente se representam é fundamental existir uma completa, igualitária, total liberdade de pensamento e de expressão.²⁰

Although it is clear that Pedro’s strong political views could not always be expressed in the terms he considered most suitable, it is also true that his arrival at the Portuguese Service coincided with a particular critical period in relations between London and Lisbon. This made it possible for him to speak about themes that displeased the Estado Novo which, before then, had not been addressed on

18 “Monday Chronicle”, 1 January 1945.

19 “Monday Chronicle”, 31 January 1944.

20 “Monday Chronicle”, 14 February 1944 (underlining in the original).

the Portuguese Service. From the beginning of 1944 the British government applied pressure on Salazar for him to stop exporting tungsten to Berlin and the BBC was used as one of the means to exercise that pressure.

In January, answering a question in Parliament, the Minister of Information stated that the BBC was “taking steps to acquaint the Portuguese people with the dissatisfaction felt in the United Kingdom on account of Portuguese exports of tungsten to Germany.”²¹ The issue was first addressed in broadcasts to Portugal on 10 April when a warning by the American Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, to the neutral countries was broadcast. The inclusion of passages of Hull’s speech on the Portuguese Service marked the beginning of a new tone. During April and May, the “Monday Chronicle” frequently addressed the issue of tungsten exports. These were the cases of “Nazism versus Neutrality”, aired on 17 April, “The Position of Neutrals” (24 April), “Liberty and Intervention” (8 May), and “A Year after the Dissolution of the Comintern” (15 May).²²

In “The Position of Neutrals”, Pedro spoke openly about the ideological divide between the two blocs at war. He ended his chronicle with a question which was received in Portugal as a direct criticism of the Lisbon government’s attitude towards the war:

O que se passa nos campos de batalha não é apenas um conflito de potências. Atrás desse conflito há com tanta ou mais importância do que ela, uma tremenda luta de ideias, ou melhor – a oposição irreconciliável de duas ideologias que representam dois modos opostos de encarar a vida. Uma glorificando a violência e rebaixando o homem a um instrumento despersonalizado ao serviço do Estado, outra dignificando a Lei, e respeitando fundamentalmente os direitos da pessoa humana. . . . Quem pode ser neutro perante esta batalha?²³

The following week, despite never mentioning that Portugal was among the group of neutral countries (something that his listeners were obviously aware of) Pedro once more addressed the issue of neutrality, stating that all those who continued to trade raw materials with the Germans were directly responsible for the continuation of the war:

Nenhum neutro pode ter a sua economia e a sua vida interna inteiramente desligada da economia e da acção dos beligerantes. É necessário escolher entre eles. E assim, se perante o conflito das ideias nenhum homem se pode honestamente afirmar sem partido, perante o

21 Parliamentary Question, 26 January 1944, in the National Archives, FO 371/39616.

22 Cf. “BBC Survey of European Audiences – Portugal”, 1 August 1944.

23 “Monday Chronicle”, 17 April 1944.

conflito das nações nenhuma nação se pode dizer integralmente neutral. . . . Nas suas recentes declarações, o ministro americano, Sr. Cordell Hull, disse aos neutros que tinham de suspender os seus envios de matérias primas para a Alemanha, isto é – avisou os neutros de que tinham de limitar a extensão da sua neutralidade. . . . Se a sorte da guerra já não deixa dúvidas a ninguém, a sua duração depende, em muito, da facilidade ou da dificuldade com que a indústria alemã encontrar as matérias primas de que carece. Negociá-las com ela é atentar contra a paz no mundo. Não é só utilizar a neutralidade circunstancial ao serviço dum partido a cuja causa se não pode ser indiferente, é também prejudicar, na baixa mira de um interesse imediato, o próprio interesse nacional, que só tem a perder com o prolongamento da guerra.²⁴

The BBC, mostly through the “Monday Chronicle”, continued to address the issue of tungsten until Salazar formally undertook to stop exports to Germany. Meanwhile, the issue was silenced in the Portuguese press because the agency messages concerning the subject were suppressed by the censors. On 31 March and 5 April, the reports of questions and discussions in the British House of Commons on the subject of tungsten were all censored in the press. State-broadcaster Emissora Nacional also made no comment on this matter. Pedro continued, however, to address the exports to Germany by neutral countries, considering that it broke neutrality and supported the “shameful game of the politicians of the Third Reich”.²⁵ On 7 June, the BBC would be one of the first news sources to announce the signing of the Tungsten Agreement between Britain and Portugal.²⁶

It was the Foreign Office’s strategy of using the BBC as a means of pressuring Salazar that enabled António Pedro to speak openly on the position of neutral countries in the war and even to criticize some of their attitudes. After “D-day” Pedro presented a series of talks concerning the nature of democratic and authoritarian regimes. His main aim was to acquaint listeners with the characteristics of the British political system because, as he described, in Latin countries the concept of democracy needed to be “rehabilitated from the bad use they had made of it.”²⁷ Aiming to explain to Portuguese listeners the main characteristics of democracy, he presented it as a regime committed to the wellbeing of the people,²⁸ and one that promoted freedom of speech:

Uma vida digna – a possibilidade de viver sem medo e sem fome, o direito de exprimir livremente o pensamento, e a educação necessária para admitir a livre expressão do pensamento alheio, todo aquele conjunto de regras sociais, ou melhor, o processo de vida que

24 “Monday Chronicle”, 24 April 1944.

25 “Monday Chronicle”, 1 May 1944.

26 Cf. BBC Survey of European Audiences – Portugal”, 1 August 1944.

27 “Monday Chronicle”, 25 September 1944.

28 Cf. “Monday Chronicle”, 8 May 1944

é o único que garante a plena floração da personalidade humana, o seu pleno desenvolvimento, e uma vida comum que se não caracteriza pela arbitrariedade de uns e pela escravidão dos outros – isto que se convencionou chamar democracia, não se obtém senão por conquista, não se merece sem se ter ganhado.²⁹

These chronicles must have irritated Salazar who, seeking to avoid foreign interference in internal politics as soon as the Allied victory became foreseeable, stated that whoever won the war would not have the right to impose a specific regime on other countries. Furthermore, in an attempt to dissuade all those in Portugal who sought the establishment of a democratic government, Salazar made it clear that democracy had given clear proofs of being inefficient:

If there is one thing demonstrated by experience, it is that democracy and liberalism were exhausted in the last century, and this is for two reasons that justify the death or replacement of political and economic regimes: first, they are emptied of their ideological content, . . . and secondly, they do not meet the needs of these new times. (Salazar 345)

As a believer in democracy, Pedro not only disagreed with Salazar's views on the matter but he used his chronicles to disseminate the concept of democracy in Portugal whenever he could. Nevertheless, the "Monday Chronicles" never mentioned that this type of regime should be implemented in Portugal and, furthermore, Salazar's government was never openly criticized. In order to understand this, one must bear in mind that during the war the BBC was an instrument of war (Nicholas 2; Taylor 170) and the Portuguese Section, as all other sections, followed the directives of the Ministry of Information (Ribeiro, *BBCB* 461).

The talks produced by Pedro, as well as all others aired on the Service, were written under the supervision of the Portuguese Editor but, as Willmore himself recognized, Pedro used in the Monday Chronicle "his own considerable journalistic and political abilities to the full".³⁰ In fact, he was given the liberty to speak openly about issues that would have irritated Salazar. This contrasted with the first years of the BBC broadcasts when the Voice of London had adopted a more diplomatic approach towards the Lisbon Government.

As an example, the following excerpt from the "Monday Chronicle" broadcast on 4 September 1944 clearly demonstrates Pedro's unique style and how he was able to criticize the Lisbon regime without mentioning it directly:

²⁹ "Monday Chronicle", 3 July 1944 (underlining in the original).

³⁰ Memo from Willmore to Controller European Services, 6 November 1944, in BBC Written Archives, L1/112.

Para saber se um governo ou uma nação vive em regime que possa fazê-la considerar entre as nações amantes da paz, o Snr. Churchill considera haver sete “tests” cuja resposta é resposta suficiente. “Existe o direito da livre expressão da opinião da oposição e da crítica ao governo vigente?” pergunta ele. . . . A simples existência duma polícia política, funcionando fora das regras judiciárias, invadindo a seu talento a casa de cada um, escutando e fazendo escutar conversas, . . . prova que o partido e governo que dela se servem . . . devem a sua existência no poder a uma imposição servida pela violência. . . . A mensagem de Churchill dirige-se à Itália mas é bom que o mundo todo a leia como sendo para si.³¹

Pedro, faced with the obligations imposed on the BBC's editorial line not to directly criticize the government of Salazar, instead took advantage of every pretext to indirectly expose the dictatorial nature of the Estado Novo and disseminate the concept of parliamentary democracy. In addition to the above-mentioned examples, he stated in May 1944, referring to the British government, that many decisions were supported by several parties “not because the opposition were prohibited or . . . in prison, but because the three major British parties decided . . . to accept a political truce for the duration of the war.”³² Moreover, when the chronicles made reference to the Axis powers’ regimes, Pedro also spared no effort to mention - although never explicitly - the similarities to the Estado Novo.

As the Allied victory became increasingly evident, Pedro did not fail to remind his listeners that this meant the victory of the democratic regimes. The Estado Novo set about changing the name of various bodies in an attempt to hide its ideological proximity with the Axis powers, including in these changes the National Propaganda Secretariat that would be called, as of February 1944, the National Secretariat of Information and Tourism:

Não são só os exércitos das três nações que vão ser derrotados nesta guerra. É derrotado com eles o princípio que os lançou nela. O fim desta guerra não será apenas a vitória das democracias que nela combatem contra os governos totalitários – será também a vitória da Democracia que provou à sociedade no decorrer destes cinco anos, ser, como regime, não apenas capaz, como o nazismo de parecer florescente na vitória, mas ser capaz também de se manter dignamente, nas horas de negrume, de ansiedade, e de derrota aparente.³³

31 “Monday Chronicle”, 4 September 1944.

32 “Monday Chronicle”, 29 May 1944.

33 “Monday Chronicle”, 18 December 1944 (underlining in the original).

These kind of comments, as discussed below, will become less well received within the BBC itself since, as we approach the end of the war, the British government would choose to maintain good relations with Oliveira Salazar and support his continued hold on power.

Listener Reactions to Pedro's Talks

Besides being António Pedro's most successful feature during the twenty-two months he spent at the BBC, the "Monday Chronicle" also became the Portuguese Service's "most important political commentary".³⁴ On several occasions it occupied the entire programme slot of 15 minutes, broadcast after the evening news.

Pedro's strong anti-Nazi tone was appreciated by Portuguese listeners and contributed to the series developing a large audience. The success of the "Monday Chronicle" became well-known at the BBC after Margery Withers reported the results of a tour she did in the south of Portugal, during which several BBC listeners were interviewed:

The Lagos landowner said that António Pedro was the next best announcer to Pessa and that the subjects of his talks were interesting and good for a Portuguese audience. The Vila Real businessman mentioned him among his favourite speakers.³⁵

Pedro's success with the audience was also proven by the German propaganda that satirised him. A pamphlet entitled *Alerta* circulated in Lisbon and some inland cities commented on the content of the chronicles:

He [Pedro] said, as a matter of interest, that the English were already civilised and had the best universities in the twelfth century, but he did not speak of the pirate Drake, one of the builders of the Empire, nor of the savageries practised by England in the world after that century... And to conclude "Pedrinho" (dear little Peter) said that the whole of the British Isles is actually a large garrison where preparations are being made for the liberation of Europe. But he forgot to mention that this brilliant operation had begun with the liberation of Azores.³⁶

³⁴ Memo from Willmore to Controller European Services, see note 30.

³⁵ Ibidem.

³⁶ "BBC Survey of European Audiences – Portugal", 16 May 1944 (underlining in the original).

The Corporation received positive and negative feedback concerning its right to suggest that dictatorships were all morally evil. Many upper class listeners were supportive of Salazar's regime and not only did they not enjoy Pedro's broadcasts but even protested against them. In a talk entitled "Freedom and Intervention", broadcast on 8 May on the topic of Portuguese exports of tungsten to Germany, Pedro said that "Each people must freely find by their own experience how to live. But it is essential that this way of life does not generally involve oppression and misery for the country's own citizens."³⁷ This comment was badly received by pro-Salazar listeners and some complaints did reach Bush House. One listener considered that no one had the right to criticize the Government for not having put an end to the exports.³⁸

Similar feedback would be received after "D-day" when Pedro presented talks on democracy. Some of the upper and middle class listeners complained about the editorial line of the Service that enabled Pedro to present these talks. As an example, a businessman writing from Porto said that "not only had Pedro failed to realise the difference between real dictatorships and the Portuguese National Corporative State, but also seemed to be unaware that the policy followed by Portugal during the war had been of great service to England."³⁹ Taking up a point which was repeatedly made by the state-run broadcaster Emissora Nacional in its editorials, the same Porto businessman pointed out that, although democracy was probably the best system of government for England, this did not mean that it could and should be applied in other countries with different cultures and traditions:

. . . What is one man's meat may also be another man's poison. . . . [It is] nonsensical and perfectly childish to assume that the same political methods can be rigorously applied to people who differ profoundly in historic traditions, mental and moral make-up and above all temperament.⁴⁰

A factory owner interviewed by Margery Whiter in September 1944 also "considered the broadcasting of talks on democracy plain proof of Britain's intent to meddle in Portuguese affairs".⁴¹ He "did not think Britain would go so far as to walk into Portugal with a democratic government, but he did feel that Britain was trying to weaken Portugal by dividing the people into two opposing camps".⁴² This listener also expressed his conviction that the Portuguese strikes that had taken place in May and July were engineered by British agents to embarrass the Portuguese Government.

37 "Monday Chronicle", 8 May 1944.

38 Cf. "BBC Survey of European Audiences – Portugal", 1 August 1944.

39 "BBC Survey of European Audiences – Portugal", 15 December 1944.

40 Ibidem.

41 Ibidem.

42 Ibidem.

Besides not being well received by the ruling classes, Pedro's regular talks on democracy, broadcast on Monday evenings during the summer 1944, also led to a reaction from the more conservative newspapers. *A Voz* published an article on 1 October about the talk entitled "After Unconditional Surrender", which had been broadcast on 18 September. Pedro had quoted a statement by the former president of the French Senate: "Corporativism is always the mask behind which dictatorships conceal themselves".⁴³ The newspaper considered the talk to be hugely offensive to the Portuguese Government and said so on its front page:

A few days ago, a Portuguese national (just think of it!) speaking from London on the subject of the re-establishment of the French Republic by General de Gaulle . . . said the same thing should be done everywhere and that corporative systems were a form of Fascism which it was becoming necessary to sweep out of the world. This, said in Portuguese, by a Portuguese who betook himself to the microphone of the BBC, manifestly constitutes an attack on Portugal and on the Portuguese Corporative State. However much the BBC may try to convince us to the contrary, it is an inadmissible intrusion into Portuguese politics. We do not believe that matters at all to England, to her security and prestige, whether there is corporativism in Portugal or not. . . . We know already that the BBC will tell us that all it did was to deal with the subject in a general way; that there was no intention of attacking Portugal and that the Portuguese can have the sort of government they like, etc. We already know that. But the fact is that when the BBC gives a talk on the corporative system in Portuguese, it is in order that the Portuguese should hear it and understand it. . . . Regarding the announcer's personal character . . . when he was in Portugal, he used to go about preaching the very opposite of that which he now proclaims from the BBC. ("Ecos & Notícias – A Campanha da B.B.C.")

These talks were of even more irksome for the regime's elite due to the fact that they were advertised in a leaflet widely distributed throughout the country. Entitled *A Voz do Povo* the leaflet was of uncertain origin, but some considered it a communist publication. Others, namely Margery Whiter and members of Emissora Nacional, considered it to be a piece of German propaganda, intended to highlight and spread the idea that the Allies were getting ready to encourage a revolution in Portugal.⁴⁴

On the other hand, and as could be expected, all these talks were very well received by the liberal and pro-British camps. Several listeners wrote to the BBC congratulating the station on finally having included political talks in its broadcasts⁴⁵ and also asking that the talks be published in print:

43 "Monday Chronicle", 18 September 1944.

44 Cf. "BBC Survey of European Audiences – Portugal", 15 December 1944.

45 Cf. *Ibidem*.

If the admirable lesson on Democracy which you gave in this talk could be published and distributed in Portugal, it would be of the greatest benefit to all.⁴⁶

Pedro's chronicles on democracy, together with several other features broadcast by the BBC after the liberation of Paris, reinforced in many listeners the belief that the Allies would impose democracy in Portugal. For those that expected a British intervention against the Estado Novo, these talks were primarily seen as a first step by the British authorities to expose Portugal's authoritarian regime. Nevertheless, Salazar's survival instinct was stronger and led him to give in to the Allies demands in time to be able to negotiate his continuation in power after the conflict had finished.

“Monday Chronicles” become Inconvenient

Comments of this kind, as discussed below, became less well received within the BBC itself since towards the end of the war, the British government chose to maintain good relations with Salazar and support his continued hold on power. As the end of the war approached Pedro's work at the BBC became less relevant since the number of features that represented a threat to Salazar's regime dropped. As a consequence, in March 1945 Pedro suggested his contract be terminated. Instead he would work as a freelancer producing the “Monday Chronicle” and “one other non-political reportage or feature on English institutions”.⁴⁷ This proposal was based on the fact that Pedro himself “felt that the “Monday Chronicle” . . . was his only worthwhile contribution of the week and that the rest of the work he was asked to do in the Section he looked upon as useless.”⁴⁸ In conversation with Gordon Yates, Pedro confessed that he “felt frustrated and disappointed”⁴⁹ with his work and with the results it was producing in Portugal.

Despite this confession that was also a veiled criticism of the editorial line that the BBC had then adopted in its broadcasts to Portugal, the Corporation was not yet ready to lose Pedro since his broadcasts were popular.⁵⁰ Therefore, he was asked by the Portuguese Editor to withdraw his resignation. Willmore promised that with the end of the war changes in the broadcasts' setup would take place,⁵¹ which in fact did not happen, at least not in the way Pedro would have expected. In fact, some of his 1945 chronicles were censored, especially when he introduced the theme of democracy or criticism of the Iberian dictatorships. For example, on 18 June several passages from a chronicle were

46 Cf. “BBC Survey of European Audiences – Portugal”, 1 August 1944.

47 Letter from Pedro to Willmore, 28 March 1945, in BBC Written Archives, L1/112.

48 Minute of interview between Yates and Pedro, 5 April 1945, in BBC Written Archives, L1/112.

49 Ibidem.

50 Cf. Memo from Director of European Organisation to Portuguese Editor, 10 April 1945, in BBC Written Archives, L1/112.

51 Letter from Willmore to Yates, 3 May 1945, in BBC Written Archives, L1/112.

cut. References to an interview by Franco in which he mentioned that “neither he nor the Spanish Government ever aligned themselves with the Axis Powers”⁵² were not allowed. Neither was the following comment on British foreign policy:

Whichever party wins the election, (and it is not easy to foresee who will), Britain’s foreign policy will be a call to all European countries to lead a worthy political life, based on democratic principles and understanding with America and with Russia.⁵³

Although these restrictions caused discomfort to Pedro, he continued to work at the BBC until the end of the war and many of his chronicles did continue to criticize Salazar. From May to July, many texts were dedicated to the British elections won by the Labour Party. Moreover, despite a decrease in the number of references to “democracy” compared to the previous year, the concept continued to be discussed in some chronicles alongside issues like freedom of the press and freedom of speech. Furthermore, even after Germany’s defeat, along with detailed descriptions of the concentrations camps and of the atrocities committed by the Nazis, he indicated that not all the dictators had disappeared.⁵⁴ He suggested that only the countries with democratic governments would be respected in the new international order:

Só terá direito a ser respeitado no mundo como nação civilizada quem mereça esse respeito – e só o merece o governo que representar de facto a vontade do seu povo. Não é fácil iludir essa vontade com habilidades de expediente, parlamentos de nomeação ou eleições para inglês ver... que, desta vez, calmamente como é seu costume, mas determinadamente, o “inglês” não está disposto a ver apenas o que lhe querem mostrar...⁵⁵

After the war ended, Pedro’s presence at the microphone became inconvenient for the Corporation since the British government supported the continuation of the Estado Novo.⁵⁶ In October 1945, the BBC decided that it should not continue to air commentaries by Portuguese nationals, a decision taken in order to put an end to the “Monday Chronicle”, which was then the only political feature produced by a Portuguese citizen:

52 “Monday Chronicle”, 18 June 1945, in BBC Written Archives, L1/112.

53 Ibidem.

54 Cf. “Monday Chronicle”, 2 July 1945.

55 “Monday Chronicle”, 27 August 1945 (underlining in the original).

56 Along with the United States, Britain would sponsor Portugal’s application to become a member of the United Nations in 1946. This was clear proof that Salazar had succeeded in his efforts to continue in power after the end of a war that symbolized the victory of democracy over authoritarianism.

We have come to the conclusion that our political comment in the Portuguese Service must be limited to a survey of political events and opinions given in a wholly objective manner and that we should not by way of addition draw any moral for the Portuguese unless we were specifically asked to do so by the Foreign Office. We had felt, in considering the above Foreign Office dispatches, that commentaries of a political nature by Portuguese nationals would be bound to give an impression in Portugal that the British radio was entering into domestic Portuguese matters. The texts of commentaries by Pedro that I had examined recently certainly by specific reference were calculated to give this impression to the Portuguese.⁵⁷

Pedro was told that it was now a matter of policy that the BBC “should not make broadcasts of a kind that would be thought by the Portuguese listeners to constitute an interference in their own affairs”,⁵⁸ even when it was clear that a large section of the audience would applaud such interference. The Acting Controller of European Services, Harman Grisewood, who spoke with Pedro on 10 October, made it clear that this was a non-negotiable matter since it was creating an embarrassing situation for the British government:

I said that the reputation of these broadcasts had now produced a situation of some embarrassment to the British Government since the BBC was taken by the Portuguese audience as an official instrument of publicity. The British were therefore in the situation of having a Mission in Portugal friendly to the Portuguese Government and engaging in friendly negotiations with it, and at the same time of maintaining a radio service in London which poured forth a stream of comment critical of the Portuguese Government. I added that, in the view of experts competent to judge this matter, the effect of these broadcasts, so far from weakening the authority of the Portuguese Government, tended to make it take even more oppressive measures against the population, such as the restriction on listening to foreign broadcasts.⁵⁹

The possibility of continuing with the chronicles with no reference at all to the Portuguese political situation was rejected by Pedro. He “did not see that he could make any sort of political commentary of an effective kind if he were to leave out the references to Portugal, since these were the very essence of the commentaries and they would be a failure without them.”⁶⁰ As a consequence,

⁵⁷ Memo of a conversation between Grisewood and Pedro, 10 October 1945, in BBC Written Archives, L1/112.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*.

Pedro tendered his resignation on 22 October.⁶¹ Although he initially considered the possibility of continuing at the station presenting other kinds of features, namely commentaries on a tour that he would do in Britain, he decided to leave the BBC since he could no longer fulfil the expectations that listeners in Portugal had for his chronicles. As noted by Grisewood, “Portugal seemed to him to be entering a phase of political transition that might develop into tension or crisis. This being so, it would be even more embarrassing for him to refrain from comment on Portuguese affairs.”⁶²

Although considered by the BBC as “a brilliant writer and efficient broadcaster”⁶³ the Corporation felt relieved by his departure since, as written in the internal “Leaving Note”, “his political obsessions made him difficult to handle”.⁶⁴ Following this departure, listeners in Portugal reacted to his absence from the microphones. In letters addressed to the BBC, many expressed their gratitude for Pedro’s courage during the war time. A lower middle-class listener who belonged to the Corporation’s panel wrote:

I was sorry I was unable to listen to António Pedro’s talk on Monday. We owe him a great deal, as the “first steps” which are now being taken are due to his efforts.⁶⁵

Other listeners complained about the fact that without the “Monday Chronicle” the broadcasts from London had lost their appeal among regular listeners due to the absence of comments on the political situation in Portugal:

The standard of the BBC talks appears to be in decline. They are mostly sterile and do not contribute in any way to the good of mankind. They seem to be merely stopgaps to fill up time. They also appear to reveal an absolute indifference to Peninsular problems. Why?⁶⁶

Pedro’s departure from London was, of course, bad news for all those who believed that the Estado Novo would be replaced by a democratic regime. Many clearly understood that the end of the “Monday Chronicle” was a sign that the British would not intervene in Portuguese internal matters, even if it meant the continuation in power of a dictatorship that had to some extent been inspired by the defeated regimes:

61 Letter from Pedro to European Establishment Officer, 22 October 1945, in BBC Written Archives, L1/112.

62 Letter from Grisewood to Dunkerley, 23 October 1945, in BBC Written Archives, L1/112.

63 “Leaving Note”, 31 October 1945, in BBC Written Archives, L1/112.

64 Ibidem.

65 Letter from a lower middle-class panel listener, October 1945, BBC internal document, in BBC Written Archives, L1/112.

66 Ibidem.

You must be aware that for years the BBC was regarded by the Portuguese people as the “voice” of a friend, bringing them hope and encouragement. Part of these hopes have been fulfilled with your victory over Nazism, but the remaining ones, I am afraid, are gradually fading away into nothingness. . . . It looks, in fact, as if Pedro has been sent on a “holiday” to avoid saying anything which might be regarded as “disrespectful” in certain quarters... Is there no possibility of your changing your policy in this matter or are your requests for listeners’ comments and suggestions just a little bit of eye-wash on your part?⁶⁷

Encouraged by some listeners who during his stay at the BBC had asked for his chronicles to be put in print, even before leaving the Corporation Pedro was determined to publish in Portugal a digest of his “Monday Chronicles”. It would be one more contribution to spreading democratic values in his home country. He wrote to the Portuguese programme organizer. Subsequently, having been refused authorization from the BBC who owned the copyright of the texts, he would write once more, this time to Gordon Yates.⁶⁸ In the following months the BBC delayed giving a definitive answer since it was afraid of the consequences that the publication would have on diplomatic relations with Salazar. All 120 texts were analysed by the Corporation and several passages were considered too dangerous to be published in Portugal.⁶⁹ On January 1946 the BBC wrote to Pedro informing him that there was no objection “to the publication of verbatim from talks”⁷⁰ as long as any kind of additional information to be included in the book, i.e. a preface or introduction or any other material, would be sent to the Corporation for scrutiny. Information on the selected publisher ought also to be sent to the BBC. In the end, despite the fact that Pedro had prepared his chronicles for publication, they never saw the light of day.

Conclusion

For many listeners, António Pedro was the “voice of democracy” on the BBC broadcasts to Portugal. His political views associated with his literary and presentation skills at the microphone transformed the “Monday Chronicle” into the main political feature of the Portuguese Service during the years of 1944 and 1945. In fact, when Pedro entered the BBC his main aim was to serve the cause of the Allies by spreading democratic principles while exposing Salazar’s dictatorship which he opposed.

Pedro put all his talent to work in every single chronicle. Not only did he produce high quality texts in his unique literary style, but he also ensured that a strong political message reached those who

⁶⁷ Letter from a Lisbon listener, 22 October 1945, BBC internal document, in BBC Written Archives, L1/112.

⁶⁸ Letter from Pedro to Yates, 29 December 1945, in BBC Written Archives, L1/112.

⁶⁹ Memo from Johnson to Dunkerley, 18 December 1945, in BBC Written Archives, L1/112.

⁷⁰ Letter from Dunkerley to Pedro, 10 January 1946, in BBC Written Archives, L1/112.

listened to his broadcasts. Hence, in almost each talk he managed to criticize Salazar or his regime in an indirect way – otherwise it would be cut by the BBC – and also acquaint his listeners with the concept of “democracy” and with several pieces of news that did not reach the Portuguese newspapers and radio stations due to censorship. If it is true that Pedro joined the Portuguese Service at a perfect time – when broadcasts were airing features that were not agreeable to Salazar – it is also true that if it hadn’t been for his presence at the BBC, most likely the output of the broadcasts would have been less critical of the regime and would not have had such an impact on listeners.

Although he did not achieve the goal of transforming the Voice of London into a success among upper class listeners, which was the main reason for him being hired, this was something that his presence and work at the BBC could never solve. Achieving a high level of success among the elites meant pleasing those who supported the Estado Novo. This was not compatible with the Corporation’s need to criticize the neutral countries who exported tungsten to Germany.

Pedro was admired by his colleagues and superiors at the BBC. This, however, did not prevent some of his talks from being censored by the Portuguese Editor who was responsible for maintaining the editorial line of the Service on track, i.e. following the directives of the Ministry of Information. Nevertheless, this did not mean that Pedro did not maintain good relations with the management of the station. As he himself would confess after his return to Portugal, although censorship was part of the daily routine of the BBC, it was understandable to him that the output of the station had to be controlled due to the war, in which information functioned as a strategic weapon.⁷¹

Even though he understood the balance that the BBC had to achieve on a daily basis, reporting news and defending British views, Pedro never gave up fighting for the implementation of a new regime in Portugal. This determination and ideological commitment to democratic values led him to become a problem for the Corporation in the last months of the war when the BBC had to adapt to British foreign policy that was then committed to keeping good relations with Salazar. When Pedro returned to Lisbon, he was arrested by the political police, only to be released shortly afterwards due to British intervention (França 1: 232). Defamation would follow.⁷²

Despite the fact that António Pedro was never given the recognition he deserved after the war for his important role while in London, he was the person primarily responsible for the discussion of concepts like “freedom of speech” and “political repression”, which otherwise would probably not have reached the BBC’s airwaves targeted at Portugal. The “Monday Chronicle” represented, for many

71 Pedro’s statement for the newspaper *República*. 1947. in Portuguese National Library. Esp E5/366-366A.

72 A mostly unknown paper, entitled *Victoria*, which was distributed in Lisbon and other cities, accused him of a lack of character and of being the “Portuguese Lord Haw-Haw” (Letter from Pedro to Lisbon Judicial Court, January 1946, in BBC Written Archives, L1/112).

of those who listened, the hope of a political change in Lisbon and, although this would not become fact, during the war it helped to keep alive the hopes of many of those who opposed the Estado Novo.

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