

# THE ROLE OF SÁ CARNEIRO IN THE BUILDING OF THE PORTUGUESE DEMOCRACY: MEMORY(IES) OF THE AGENTS OF CHANGE THROUGH THE PRESS<sup>1</sup>

El papel de Sá Carneiro en la democratización portuguesa: memoria(s) de los agentes de cambio a través de la prensa

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## **Abstract**

This article aims to analyse how the press has depicted Francisco Sá Carneiro, founder of the Social Democratic Party, regarding his role in the construction of Portuguese democracy. Debates on the Portuguese transition to democracy focus almost invariably on its revolutionary phase and on the relative importance of its actors and agents of change. Nonetheless, little attention has been paid to the role of civilian leaders during or after the 74-75 Revolution. In addition, the impact of the

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media on the historical memory of the Portuguese transition remains an underexplored research topic. Considering the importance of the media in shaping public opinion and in the process of building the historical memory, we will undertake a qualitative analysis of piece of news published on Sá Carneiro and his role in Portuguese democratization. Our research will focus on Portuguese and Spanish largest newspapers in order to perceive if Sá Carneiro's memory also changed abroad. This article argues that the press hasn't paid much attention to Sá Carneiro's role in the democratisation process, echoing mythologized visions of the centrist leader.

### **Keywords**

Francisco Sá Carneiro; history of Iberian transitions; party leaders; image abroad; memory of the Portuguese transition.

### **Resumen**

Este artículo tiene como objetivo identificar cómo la prensa ha retratado Francisco Sá Carneiro, fundador del Partido Socialdemócrata, en lo que respecta a su papel en la construcción de la democracia portuguesa. Los debates sobre la transición portuguesa a la democracia se centran casi invariablemente en su fase revolucionaria y en la importancia relativa de sus actores y agentes de cambio. Sin embargo, se ha prestado poca atención al papel de los líderes civiles durante o después de la revolución del 74-75. Además, el impacto de los medios de comunicación en la memoria histórica de la transición portuguesa sigue siendo un área de investigación poco explorada. Considerando la importancia de los medios de comunicación en la formación de la opinión pública y en el proceso de construcción de la memoria histórica, realizaremos un análisis cualitativo de los principales artículos publicados sobre Sá Carneiro y sobre su papel en la democratización portuguesa. Nuestra investigación se centra en los periódicos de mayor circulación en Portugal y España para percibir si la memoria de Sá Carneiro también evolucionó en el extranjero. Este artículo sostiene que la prensa ha dedicado poca atención al papel de Sá Carneiro en la construcción de la democracia portuguesa, haciéndose eco de visiones mitificadas del líder centrista.

### **Palabras clave**

Francisco Sá Carneiro; historia de las transiciones ibéricas; líderes partidarios; imagen exterior; memoria de la transición portuguesa.

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## I. INTRODUCTION: THE CONSTRUCTION OF A MYTH

4 December 1980: the small Cessna in which the Prime Minister of Portugal, Francisco Sá Carneiro, was travelling crashed shortly after taking off from Lisbon Airport, causing the instant death of all its occupants. The following day, the Portuguese press extensively covered the events echoing the widespread public grief and the deep consternation of a country then living the final moments of a fierce presidential election campaign. On the other side of the border, Spanish reporters also devoted ample attention to the affair putting it into context:

Faced with the re-election claims of President Ramalho Eanes, circumstantially turned into the candidate of the Portuguese socialist and communist left and in favour of maintaining some of the bases of the socializing Constitution of 1976, the forces gathered around the governing coalition have been orphaned of a true leader and one of the most effective and insightful politicians in Western Europe.

Hated, but respected, by his political opponents and admired, but feared, among his own supporters, the Portuguese right would probably not have dreamed in the days following the April 1974 military coup of finding a better lawyer than this man, who, even as a social democrat, has brought her to the gates of power only six years after losing it to a handful of inexperienced captains<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> “La expectativa frustrada de la derecha democrática”, *El País*, 4-12-1980. This article was written by Eduardo San Martín who served as a correspondent for the EFE agency in Portugal and Morocco in the 70's.

The perception of Sá Carneiro as the founder of the Portuguese Right and as a key builder of the Portuguese democracy was highlighted either by progressive newspapers as *El País* or the conservative one as *La Vanguardia*. The latter went further in its assessments stating that Sá Carneiro's main virtue consisted in freeing Portugal from the "communist threat"<sup>3</sup>. On both sides of the border, the words of Spanish President Adolfo Suárez echoed, craving that the Portuguese people would pursue "the path of democratic consolidation, despite the death of one of the men who have contributed the most in forging a democratic and free Portugal"<sup>4</sup>.

The examples presented allow us to glimpse how the early and tragic disappearance of the scene of Sá Carneiro (1934-1980) quickly gave birth to an almost mythical hero, presented as an outstanding political leader and, above all, as one of the "founders" of the Portuguese democratic regime.

According to Zuquete (2011): 304, "a true 'cult of Sá Carneiro' has been established in the Social Democratic Party", a phenomenon that is still to be studied.

With this paper, we do not aspire to analyse the political profile or performance of Francisco Sá Carneiro —the historical leader of the Popular Democratic Party (PPD, Partido Popular Democrático) and founder of the center-right coalition Democratic Alliance (AD)—, his legacy, or even the role that has been ascribed to him by history<sup>5</sup>. Our purpose is more modest: to confirm what narrative and image of Sá Carneiro was built by the press in what concerns his role in Portuguese democratisation. Aware that this is a modest contribution, we have in mind a future broader study on the role of media in the construction of historical memory of Portuguese democratic transition as suggested by the seminal research of Santana-Pereira (2016).

Aiming to evaluate how Sá Carneiro has been depicted in the press, we will take the following question as a starting point: What narrative did the press construct on the centrist leader in what concerns his role in Portuguese transition to democracy? Our starting hypothesis is the idea that after his tragic death, the press devoted little attention analysing his political performance, echoing mythologized visions of the centrist leader.

A broad survey of the articles produced in the last 40 years (1980-2020) was conducted, with particular emphasis on key dates such as the anniversaries

<sup>3</sup> Assia, "Carta abierta al director. Desaparece un político decidido y valiente", *La Vanguardia*, 6-12-1980.

<sup>4</sup> "La muerte del primer ministro portugués", *El País*, 4-12-1980.

<sup>5</sup> See for instance, Telo (2008); Castaño (2018); Manalvo (2000); Pinto (2020), and Zúquete (2011).

of his death (4 December 1980), but also covering other significant moments. Press sources selection obeyed to quality criterion but also took into consideration the necessary plurality of political-ideological orientations.

Although our study focused on national broadsheets (prioritising press titles such as *Diário de Notícias*, *Expresso*, *Público*), the field of analysis was expanded through a review of articles published in three Spanish newspapers—*La Vanguardia*, *El País* and *ABC*— in order to perceive how Sá Carneiro's image and memory evolved abroad, taking Spain as a case study.

In spite of the large differences in the Iberian transitions to democracy and the substantially diverse role played by Centrism in both processes<sup>6</sup>, this incursion into the Spanish press was first suggested by Adolfo Suárez' statements on the death of the Portuguese Prime Minister, stressing that their “political conceptions had a multitude of similarities and points in common”<sup>7</sup> and that they shared “dreams and projects”<sup>8</sup>.

Portugal and Spain have been fertile objects of study, namely in a comparative perspective, due to their political, cultural, and even historical similarities<sup>9</sup>. The transnational perspective has been less frequent, and even after decades of growth of studies on the Iberian states, not much research has been done on the mutual influence of Adolfo Suárez Alianza Democrática and Sá Carneiro's Aliança Democrática. And yet, transnational perspective seems particularly relevant, considering the strong ties and historical proximity between the two countries.

With a common past of long dictatorships, Portugal and Spain made their transition to democracy in parallel. Fairly close in temporal and spatial terms, as well as in outcome, Iberian transitions have significant differences both on the way they started and how they evolved. If the role played by Centrism in Spanish transition seem relatively accepted, and, in recent years, Adolfo Suárez has become one of the founding myths of Spanish democracy, the same cannot be said in relation to AD and Sá Carneiro. Zúquete's 2011 article, exploring the impact of the leadership of Francisco Sá Carneiro, is one of the rare exceptions in this panorama<sup>10</sup>. One main argument stands among the multiple reasons we can present to justify this reality: the importance of

<sup>6</sup> There is abundant literature on the topic. See for example, Pollack y Taylor (1983); Pridham (2017); Jiménez (2019), and Fishman (2019).

<sup>7</sup> “La muerte del primer ministro portugués”, *El País*, 4-12-1980.

<sup>8</sup> *O Dia*, 5-12-1980.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Torre Gómez (1988) or Jiménez (2019).

<sup>10</sup> Zúquete (2011). See also, with regard to academic production on the topic, Stock (1989).

Suárez and Sá Carneiro in the democratization processes of their countries was, in fact, substantially different although it is impossible to deny Sá Carneiro a place in the construction of Portuguese democracy. This allegation looks upon his role as founder of one of the structuring political parties of Portuguese democracy, but also to his battle over the end of the military presence in the political arena. Therefore, it seems relevant to examine the political image of Sá Carneiro constructed by the press, as there are good reasons to believe “there may be something about the way Portugal’s democratic transition is treated in the media today that leads the latter to continue to play an important role in fostering knowledge about the players and events of the period”<sup>11</sup>.

The article proceeds as follows. The next two sections provide some contextual and conceptual data. Firstly, shortly presenting media coverage of the celebrations of the 25<sup>th</sup> of April in the last four decades and some key literature on Media-History-Memory relations in order to framework the importance of studying how Sá Carneiro was been disputed by the press. Secondly, we focus on the political career of Sá Carneiro, with particular emphasis on the 1974-1975 revolution and on democratic consolidation. Sections four and five are devoted to our case study, presenting the press analysis work carried out. The final section summarises the results and discusses its possible implications on a broader debate on media narrative and its role in the construction of public memory.

## II. HISTORY, MEDIA AND MEMORY: PORTUGUESE DEMOCRATISATION IN THE MEDIA

Historical events are not usually celebrated with particular enthusiasm in Portugal, but the 25 April Revolution is an exception. Year in year out, newspapers, radio and television stations, and, more recently, digital media, devote it extensive attention, either through investigative reports, interviews, opinion columns or through the news coverage of the official and popular ceremonies that celebrate the date. In addition to the articles produced by journalists, the use of historians and political scientists is also common. Similarly, it is common that press organs invest in special initiatives as specialized supplements, books, music or CD/DVD’s collections.

A previous research, focused on four national newspapers (*Público*, *Diário de Notícias*, *Correio da Manhã* e *Expresso*) and on key dates of the

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<sup>11</sup> Lobo *et al.* (2016): 175.

Carnation Revolution (10<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> anniversaries)<sup>12</sup>, lead us to some conclusions regarding the press coverage of this historical event.

Firstly, it is worth highlighting the fact that, despite the different political, economic, and social background in which the celebrations took place, the date was always signed with particular intensity, with special emphasis on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary (April 2004) which enormously mobilized the media.

Secondly, the inquiry carried out, examining 1067 press articles, revealed that little attention was paid to the revolutionary period (1974-1975). Media coverage tends to focus strictly on 25th April events (the military operation that led to the overthrow of the dictatorship), the achievements of the democratic regime (pieces highlighting the economic, social and cultural changes and accomplishments) and, especially in what concerns the 2014 celebrations, that took place in a context of severe economic crisis, in establishing parallels between the 25 April and the present political moment. Another specificity of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dictatorship downfall was the public emergence of critical voices, led by right-wing columnists, denouncing the “irresponsible hazards of the Revolution”, its “excess” and the communist threat that overshadowed the Portuguese transition to democracy<sup>13</sup>.

Anyhow, it should be noted the silence about political parties as CDS ou PPD, and their leaders. Alongside the collective protagonist (the Portuguese people), it was above all the military players (individual and collective) that earned media attention.

In what concerns the civilian actors, the leading role is invariably attributed to the Socialist Party and Mário Soares, while the Communist Party and its historical leader (Álvaro Cunhal) are sometimes considered responsible for the less positive aspects of the revolution years. It is almost impossible to find references to Sá Carneiro or about the importance of PPD in the construction of Portuguese democracy, a surprising fact given it was the second most voted party in the first free elections held in Portugal (25 April 1975).

Although the evocative pieces on the 25 April 1974 are, as expected, much scarcer in Spain, the panorama is similar regarding press coverage on the role played by political parties in Portuguese transition, even though an evocative piece of the 25th of April celebrations of 1994 by *La Vanguardia*,

<sup>12</sup> The outcomes of that research were given at ECREA 7th European Communication Conference, Lugano, 1 November 2018 and at IAMCR 2019 Conference, Madrid, 9 July 2019.

<sup>13</sup> See, for instance, “Virtudes e defeitos de Abril (1)”, *Público*, 24-4-2014 (article by João Miguel Tavares) or “O passado não tinha açúcar”, *Diário de Notícias*, 25-4-2014 (by Maria João Avillez).

highlighted that “at the age of twenty”, the political role of the military had “vanished”<sup>14</sup>. Once again, the great exception is Mário Soares, frequently mentioned in the Spanish press coverage of the 25th of April celebrations.

On his seminal study on “The impact of Television and Newspaper Consumption on Knowledge of the Democratic Transition in Portugal”, José Santana-Pereira (2016): 228, draws our attention to the fact that “being knowledgeable of the political past is a necessary condition for the stability and meaningfulness of attitudes towards that past”<sup>15</sup>. Skillfully using political science literature and methodologies, the author explores the impact of media in the cognizance of the past and the interaction between media use, education, and political interest, concluding that “After four decades of democracy, some of the protagonists of the Carnation revolution and the transition period that followed are not easily recognised by some segments of the Portuguese population”<sup>16</sup>. This study makes an important contribution to those who, in the field of history, modestly propose to analyze media narrative on the political actors of the Portuguese transition, namely with regard to civil actors as Sá Carneiro.

There is abundant literature on the life, thought, career and political path of Francisco Sá Carneiro. Since the 80’s, when Freire Antunes published Sá Carneiro’s first biography and Miguel Júdece presented *The political thought of Sá Carneiro and other studies*<sup>17</sup>, the road was long, attracting mainly journalists, politicians and admirers of the historic leader of the PPD/PSD<sup>18</sup>. The picture is poorer in academic terms, despite the importance of Zuquete’s aforementioned study or the most recent of Ana Catarina Pinto<sup>19</sup>. The latter is, in fact, one of the few authors that reflects on the construction of Sá Carneiro’s memory through the analysis of public testimonies published in tribute books or broadcasted by television in the last decades. However, regarding Sá Carneiro’s political image, the crossroad in which history, memory and media representation/discourse meet remains almost uncharted. This is, in our view, a serious shortcoming given the importance of the media in the construction of public opinion and historical memory<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> “Los portugueses miran sin pasión la revolución de los claveles”, *La Vanguardia*, 25-4-1994.

<sup>15</sup> Santana-Pereira (2016): 228.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*: 238.

<sup>17</sup> Antunes (1982) and Júdece (1982).

<sup>18</sup> See final reference list.

<sup>19</sup> Pinto (2020).

<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, Neiger *et al.* (2011).



As Stepan Berger notes, “History writing has never been the sole guardian of national narratives, and today histories and historians play only a limited role in the process of continuous reinterpretation of national past”<sup>21</sup>. This place was increasingly taken by the media that have become “important education enterprises at national level”, as privileged vehicles of transmission of “the doctrinal account of culture”<sup>22</sup>.

We have abundant studies on the role of communication as a social mediator, but the focus upon media’s relation with history is fairly recent<sup>23</sup>. Although, over the last decades, *Memory Studies* have emerged powerfully in academic agenda, it is not common to discuss how history, memory and media have encountered. Only recently the consistent study “of collective pasts that are narrated by the media, through the use of the media, and about the media” gave way to a new field of study: Media Memory studies<sup>24</sup>.

It is now an acquired fact that mass media are an essential “part of the social phenomena that brand social memories and contemporary historical narratives, by assuming a prominent role in the creation of codes that constitute political cultures”<sup>25</sup>. As masters of memory and forgetfulness, media have an outstanding place in the production of a public memory and a sense of history, acting as social discursive instances in defining memorable events. By mobilizing interpretations of the past and by concurring to the consecration of certain agents and/or social sectors, the relationships between the media, memory and history have become very close, enabling, for instance, that visions and readings of the past are used to understand the present but also to make projections for the future. Legitimized as one of the main semantic instances of actions and transformations of reality, the media have an important role in dictating what should be remembered or forgotten and how things should be recalled, inducing J. B.Thompson to coin the concept of “mediated historicity”<sup>26</sup>.

Baring these ideas in mind, it is our believe that the analysis of the mainstream press discourse on the Portuguese transition to democracy may allow us to ascertain their contribution to the construction of the dominant memorial discourses in the public space. Likewise this analysis allows us to observe the shape of memory, its battles and the way the homogenisation of the

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<sup>21</sup> Berger (2011): 7.

<sup>22</sup> Certeau (1991):12.

<sup>23</sup> See, for instance, Zelizer (1998); Zelizer and Allan (2002), and Cannadine (2004).

<sup>24</sup> Neiger *et al.* (2011).

<sup>25</sup> Arend (2014): 11.

<sup>26</sup> Thompson (1995).

interpretation of the past take place. Reinvesting or denying historical relevance to facts, events or actors, the media not only seek to explain and attribute meaning to reality from a broader frame but also have impact on the symbolic constructions of the past. Living in times memory policies have been the target of great controversies, the analysis of historical memory produced by journalistic discourse stands as essential.

One should mention that, despite (or due to) the endless debates about the “model transition” and the “forgetting pact”, in the last decade Spain witnessed the emergence of a strong movement for the recovery of historical memory. Assuming different statements and dimensions—in academia, in the political arena or in civil society—, this movement was accompanied by a revitalization of historiography, not only regarding the Franco dictatorship but also to the democratic transition. In this process, as Rafael Quirosa-Cheyrouze emphasized, the media have played an essential role<sup>27</sup>.

A similar movement has no parallel in Portugal, whether on the academic, political or media debate. Even though the dawn of the Portuguese transition to democracy was marked by instability and uncertainty, the celebrations of the Carnation Revolution (usually presented as a bloodless military coup d'état that overthrew the dictatorship that ruled the country for almost half a century) apparently managed to convey the image of a country reconciled with its past<sup>28</sup>.

As referred by Costa Pinto, numerous factors determine how the Portuguese perceive their democratic transition, highlighting the rupture nature of the transition (inaugurated with the 74-75 revolution) and its duration (presenting Portugal as an example of “democracy after war”, in which the military played a determinant role in the downfall of the dictatorship, opening a swift and important state crisis during the initial phase of the transition)<sup>29</sup>. At the same time, we can also not neglect the influence of the historical ignorance of some segments of the Portuguese population, as revealed by Santana-Pereira<sup>30</sup>, as well as the impact of the widespread perception that the end of the revolution represented the immediate democratic consolidation. The historiography of the transition is not exempt from responsibilities in this domain. Among other aspects, it should be noted that, as referred, the interpretative readings of the Portuguese transition focus on its revolutionary stage

<sup>27</sup> Quirosa-Cheyrouze (2009): 13-25.

<sup>28</sup> Lobo *et al.* (2016). See also *Barometer of the Quality of Democracy (2014) Forty years of the 25 April*.

<sup>29</sup> Pinto (2008).

<sup>30</sup> Santana-Pereira (2016).

(1974-1975), which is undoubtedly the most important and decisive but not the only one.

### III. SÁ CARNEIRO AND THE PORTUGUESE ROAD TO DEMOCRACY

Having served as prime minister for a very brief period (3 January-4 December 1980), Francisco Manuel Lumbrales de Sá Carneiro (1934-1980), enrolled in politics during the dictatorship when he accepted to join, as an independent, the lists of the regime's party—the National Union—in 1969 elections. Along with other young reformists (as José Pinto Leite, Francisco Pinto Balsemão, Magalhães Mota or Miller Guerra), he gave life to an informal group within the National Assembly known as the “Liberal Wing”<sup>31</sup>. Committed in exposing the weaknesses of the Portuguese dictatorship and in promoting reforms from within the regime, Sá Carneiro and other “Liberal Wing” MPs resigned after the rejection of some of their proposals, namely in the constitutional revision of 1971 or during the revision of the Press Law<sup>32</sup>. The foundation of the weekly newspaper *Expresso*, in January 1973, allowed that pro-democracy sector to continue its intervention. A lawyer by profession, Sá Carneiro maintained a regular collaboration with *Expresso*, namely through the opinion column “Visto” which was closely watched by the regime's censors. Nonetheless, it will be the overthrow of the dictatorship that will toss him to the front row of the political arena

On 25 April 1974, the Portuguese political landscape was comprised of a handful of parties and organizations that had managed to survive the harsh conditions of the underground. In fact, only one—the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP)—had gone through the entire dictatorship (1926-1974), surviving to the harsh conditions of clandestinity and repression. The captains' coup opened exciting opportunities, as evidenced by the first public demonstrations and the immediate return of political exiles.

It was in this context that, on 6 May 1974, Sá Carneiro and other former MPs of the “Liberal Wing” (as Magalhães Mota and Pinto Balsemão) founded the Popular Democratic Party (PPD). The announcement, two days before the foundation of the PPD, of the newly formed Social-Democratic Christian Party (PCSD, Partido Cristão Social-Democrata) rendered it impractical to choose the name Social Democratic Party, but it did not make it impossible to adopt the motto “Social Democracy for Portugal”. The Portuguese President

<sup>31</sup> For further information see Fernandes (2003).

<sup>32</sup> About Sá Carneiro's addresses in these domains, see, for example, Carneiro (2010).

António de Spínola, who was interested in promoting political organizations at the right of the Socialist Party (PS, Partido Socialista), was a keen supporter of this project self-portrayed as a centre-left party.

In the early days of the Revolution, the PPD did not have an easy life. The party integrated the first provisional government via Sá Carneiro (adjunct minister to the prime minister) and Magalhães Mota (minister of Home Affairs) but saw its presence in the second provisional government reduced to a single minister. In light of the criticism voiced by Sá Carneiro in the wake of the Palma Carlos-Spínola crisis, the seat was taken by Magalhães Mota (minister without portfolio). The PPD was also represented in the third, fourth and sixth provisional governments.

As a newly formed party, with no experience or tradition, its founding moment was its first convention, held in Lisbon (23-24 November 1974), where Sá Carneiro was confirmed as president. Following its congress, the PPD went through a phase of euphoria, brought about by its seeming unity and mobilisation capacity. It had its own newspaper (*Povo Livre*, 13 August 1974)<sup>33</sup> and the support of the reputable weekly *Expresso*, whose editor-in-chief was Pinto Balsemão. The party was growing rapidly, albeit with considerable asymmetries: its remarkable implantation in the rural Northern and Central regions of the country, as well as in the islands (Madeira and the Azores), was in strike contrast with its more difficult penetration in urban areas.

In the 1975 elections for the Constituent Assembly, the PPD emerged as the second strongest party (26.4% share of vote). For health reasons, Sá Carneiro was replaced by Emídio Guerreiro at the leadership of the party (May 1975), only returning to direct political intervention months later. It was again under his superintendency that the party regained second place in the 1976 legislative elections. Despite Sá Carneiro's original claims to be leading a left-of-centre party, PPD drifted to the right, becoming actually the country's main centre-right force, while paradoxically being renamed as Social Democratic Party (PSD, *Partido Social Democrata*).

The post-revolutionary period will not be easy for PSD and especially for Sá Carneiro<sup>34</sup>. Elected MP in 25 April 1976, he assumed the head of PSD parliamentary bench, claiming his intention to "exercise the role of opposition that did not antagonize, but that intended to see the democratic institutions and pluralism work"<sup>35</sup>. Still, in late 1977, Sá Carneiro resigned to the party's

<sup>33</sup> Sousa (2000): 157-159.

<sup>34</sup> Frain (1998): 97-127.

<sup>35</sup> Almeida (2011): 20.

leadership as he considered its orientation to be too conciliatory with the PS and with the President of the Republic Ramalho Eanes<sup>36</sup>. The following year, Carneiro renewed his call for a more direct opposition to the government and to Eanes (January 1978), returning to leadership at PSD's VI National Congress (1-2 July 1978). Among the battles he fought in this period stands out his opposition to the government of Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, which he identified with the Communist Party and accused of devaluing the Parliament and political parties<sup>37</sup>. Another of his banners was the constitutional revision through referendum, aiming to extinguish the Council of the Revolution. His crowning achievement was, however, the creation of the Democratic Alliance (AD), a coalition of his Social Democratic Party, the right-wing Democratic and Social Centre Party (CDS) and the People's Monarchist Party (PPM), with the support of socialist dissidents<sup>38</sup>.

Inspired by Adolfo Suárez's Union of the Democratic Center (UCD, Unión de Centro Democrático), this centre-right conservative political alliance earned its first victory in the general election of late 1979, polling 45.2% of the popular vote and securing 128 out of the 250 members of Parliament. Coming to office on 3 January 1980, leading Portugal's first majority government since the Carnation Revolution of 1974, Sá Carneiro succeeded in winning the general elections held in October 1980 in which AD received 47.2% of popular vote. This triumph seemed to augur well for the presidential election two months later, despite the obvious advantage of Gen. Eanes' re-candidacy over Gen. Soares Carneiro, proposed by Sá Carneiro and sponsored by AD<sup>39</sup>. In these elections, Sá Carneiro sought to expand his power in order to promote a constitutional reform that would eradicate military presence in political life and the socializing provisions inherited from the Carnation Revolution. The motto adopted by Sá Carneiro within the scope of the coalition government of Democratic Alliance (AD, Aliança Democrática) was clear in this regard: "a majority, a government, a president".

As noticed by San Martín, in *El País*, with Sá Carneiro's death, the Portuguese presidential elections lost one of its main protagonists, "just three days after the first round of these momentous rallies". San Martín's article constituted one of the first sources of information for the Spanish public, presenting Sá Carneiro's life story in detail and broaching the Democratic Alliance as his

<sup>36</sup> See Miguel Pinheiro (2010): 482-495; Martins (1994): 142, and Manalvo (2001): 74.

<sup>37</sup> Almeida (2011): 22.

<sup>38</sup> Pinheiro (2010): 531-536.

<sup>39</sup> For more details on Eanes-Carneiro relationship see Castaño (2018).

personal creation. Without him, the project's chances of survival are seen as low since the forces of the government coalition were deprived "of a true leader", and "the real binder" of the political forces using Soares Carneiro's candidacy as a means "to definitively institutionalize a normalization process that began five years ago now"<sup>40</sup>.

The debates on the Portuguese transition to democracy have a tendency to focus on the Revolutionary Process (1974-1975) pondering on the relative importance of its actors and agents of change. Were the military the driving force of the Revolution? What role did political parties play? What weight did masses mobilisation have in the Revolution? The controversy, very much alive among those that played a key role in the events, has been with us since the first academic essays on the topic and has led to three main historiographic tendencies launched in the 1980s by scholars like Medeiros Ferreira, António Reis and Boaventura de Sousa Santos<sup>41</sup> that, with a few nuances, continue to exist nowadays. In that debate the role of Sá Carneiro is practically ignored as well as little attention is paid to the importance of the constitution of the party system<sup>42</sup> that, for decades, will dominate Portuguese political life.

From the strictest political-institutional point of view, the transition to democracy ended in 1976. In fact, the road to democratic normalization was opened in the first semester of 1976 with the new Constitution (April 2), the general elections (April 25) and the presidential elections (June 27). But the institutionalization of democracy did not, in fact, mean the end of the process and a decade more will be needed to conclude its consolidation. In this context, the hypothesis suggested by scholars as Costa Pinto is of particular interest: considering the revolutionary period of 1974-76 as "the most complex phase" of the Portuguese transition, Pinto takes the subsequent period (1976-1982) as part of democratic transition concluding that only from 1982 "the democratic consolidation has proceed apace"<sup>43</sup>. According to this author, that process was possible "due to the rise of the more moderate parties, which favoured the establishment of a 'European' style constitutional democracy"<sup>44</sup>. Pinto and other authors also recall that the Council of the Revolution was only dissolved in 1982, and in this

<sup>40</sup> "La expectativa frustrada de la derecha democrática", *El País*, 4-12-1980.

<sup>41</sup> On this topic, see Rezola (2006): 40-44.

<sup>42</sup> Freire (2006).

<sup>43</sup> Pinto (2001): 67. Pinto's position follows that of democratization scholars, namely Linz and Stepan (1996) and O'Donnell *et al.* (1986).

<sup>44</sup> Pinto (2001): 66.

context the concept of tutored consolidation or “democracy under tutelage” is required when studying Portuguese democratization<sup>45</sup>.

Faced with a vision still dominant that democracy was “irreversibly conquered on April 1974” (a fact to which the role played by the media in shaping the memory of the transition is not alien), and downplays the importance of the 1976-1982 period in consolidating a true western-style democracy, the almost complete silence on the role of Sá Carneiro or of the political center in the democratizing process is not surprising.

#### IV. A CONSENSUS PERSONALITY/ CHARACTER? SÁ CARNEIRO IN PRESS THE 80'S AND 90'S

The efforts of the PSD to commemorate the tenth anniversary (1990) of the disappearance of its founder and historical leader were notorious. All the party's structures engaged actively in promoting a series of initiatives involving its main leaders and even the Prime Minister Aníbal Cavaco Silva. It was the latter, in fact, that had the prominence in activities such as the conference cycle “The political thought of Sá Carneiro. Dialogue for a modern Portugal”, the inauguration of a monument to Sá Carneiro in Oporto (by Gustavo Bastos) or the renaming of Pedras Rubras Airport (Oporto) as Francisco Sá Carneiro's Airport, granting them an unprecedented mediatic projection. Finally, another initiative also stands in this context: the supplement “Remembering Sá Carneiro”<sup>46</sup> published by the party's press organ.

The tone of the pieces published in *Povo Livre* was, as expected, highly laudatory, praising the deeds and qualities of the deceased leader. However, we do not find notable differences when analysing the non-partisan press. Large circulation newspapers, such as the *Diário de Notícias*, assigned several pages to the celebrations promoted by the PSD on the tenth anniversary of Sá Carneiro's death as well as to articles allusive to his figure and action<sup>47</sup>. The laudatory evocations were also noticeable in the media coverage of *Expresso*, which revealed lesser-known aspects of his life such as, for instance, his strong religiosity. In this weekly broadsheet, it was also highlighted an extensive testimony of Mário Soares, under the title “He deserved to have lived this decade”. According to the historical socialist leader, then serving as President

<sup>45</sup> Castaño and Rezola (2021).

<sup>46</sup> *Povo Livre*, 31-10-1990.

<sup>47</sup> *Diário de Notícias*, 4-12-1990.

of Portugal, Sá Carneiro was “a brave and combative man, who did not ignore the risk”, and should be remembered as a “charismatic leader” who “left no one indifferent”<sup>48</sup>. These statements had a wide impact as Soares’ disagreements with the ill-fated social democrat leader were well known.

Although less notorious, a similar commendable tone was used by *Diário de Lisboa*, in articles in which Sá Carneiro was presented as “the man to whom the Portuguese Right owes the rise to power” and as a leader that, despite having died “too young”, was able to “create loyalties, experience victories, defeats and always tried to be equal to himself”, that is to say, to be “congruent”<sup>49</sup>.

The *pièce de résistance* of that year press coverage, in which the impact of Portugal being under a PSD government is notorious, belongs however to the historian Vasco Pulido Valente. Seeking to reconstruct Carneiro’s political career, Pulido Valente emphasized his role as the founder of Aliança Democrática, observing that “by setting AD, Sá Carneiro shaped the democratic Right”. In his opinion, that political spectrum “lived self-consciously” until then, not daring “to say its name and even less to claim the political power, without the support and goodwill of the Left”<sup>50</sup>. According to this conservative historian, Sá Carneiro “brought the Right to the streets” and “proclaimed its right” to be in government. In his perspective, it was AD’s victory that “completed the construction of democracy in Portugal. Without it, many years would have been lost, in the best of cases, with hybrid and ambiguous governments”. Thanks to Sá Carneiro, the regime had “become adult and strong”, he concluded<sup>51</sup>.

This understanding of the role of Sá Carneiro in the construction of Portuguese democracy was not the only aspect that made Pulido Valente’s article relevant. In fact, never having hidden his proximity to the leader of the PSD (who he served as Undersecretary of State and Culture in the AD government, coalition which he had helped to forge), Pulido Valente elevated Sá Carneiro to the category of hero:

Only in Sá Carneiro did the classic qualities of the hero come together: the tenacity that seemed blind and was lucid; the obscurity of the path that announced an unfathomable plan; voluntary exile; the sudden triumph; the

<sup>48</sup> “Ele merecia ter vivido esta década”, *Expresso Revista*, 1-12-1990.

<sup>49</sup> “Eleitos e bem amados. Sá Carneiro, a perpétua possibilidade”, *Diário de Lisboa*, 6-6-1990.

<sup>50</sup> “Sá Carneiro, os últimos anos”, *Público Magazine*, 11-3-1990.

<sup>51</sup> Id.



latent death wish; the unspeakable end with which the gods often punish those who challenge them. Just him, beyond the effective importance of what he did or did not do, revealed himself to us with the dark form of the superhuman and, therefore, lived (and lives) much more in the imagination than in reality<sup>52</sup>.

Still in the context of the tenth anniversary of Sá Carneiro's death, the same reference newspaper —*Público*— published two large pieces by the journalist Maria João Avillez, collecting the testimony of State figures such as Cavaco Silva, Mário Soares, Ramalho Eanes and from politicians and public figures such as Magalhães Mota, Barbosa de Melo, José Miguel Júdice and Pinto Balsemão<sup>53</sup>. Barring Mário Soares and Ramalho Eanes, the remaining deponents were clearly from the PSD's political area. Once again, the overall tone of this special report was highly laudatory and the choice of the testimonies to be published was not innocent, making it clear the sense of the memory that was intended to be perpetuated. Avillez never hid her political-ideological positions, clearly aligned with the center-right. Nevertheless, although one can question the lack of plurality and the tuned tone presented, these articles unveil, in our opinion, one of the functions that the Portuguese press has played in favour of historical memory —the collection and preservation of testimonies that would otherwise be lost.

Ten years later, the twentieth celebrations of Sá Carneiro death gave way to new mobilizations lead by the PSD, which called for tributes that sought to go beyond the party's political borders. Once again, the Portuguese President Mário Soares<sup>54</sup> gave his testimony. In any case, the then recent electoral victory of the Socialists, which had allowed António Guterres a second term (1999-2002), may explain a less favourable terrain for the Social Democrats in the press.

In comparative terms, the 2000 Sá Carneiro's evocations are fewer in number and meaning. Furthermore, many of the initiatives carried out in that context were overshadowed by a controversy that monopolized the public's attention. During the lecture conference cycle "Opposition Nights" (organized by Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa and Leonor Beleza, two heavyweights of

<sup>52</sup> Id.

<sup>53</sup> "As nossas memórias de Sá Carneiro", *Publico Magazine*, 2-12-1990; "De Balsemão a José Miguel Júdice. Recordações da Casa Social-Democrata", *Publico Magazine*, 2-12-1990.

<sup>54</sup> "Homenagem conta com Mário Soares e Freitas do Amaral. Sá Carneiro, património de todos", *Público*, 18-11-2000.

the PPD leading elite), Ricardo Sá Fernandes claimed that a “complicity silence of the justice apparatus” prevailed upon the 1980 Camarate disaster<sup>55</sup>. According to the lawyer for the relatives of the victims of the air crash, then serving as secretary of state for tax affairs, the fall of the aircraft carrying Sá Carneiro and his entourage was a crime and not an accident. Brought to light soon after the events, the theory that Camarate was not an accident rekindled.

Widely explored by the Portuguese press, the air crash topic had largely attracted the attention of the Spanish press in the two previous decades. At first, the accident thesis was dominant<sup>56</sup>. Then, progressively, suspicions thickened. Was the plane crash caused by pilot negligence?<sup>57</sup> Was it an accident or a sabotage?<sup>58</sup> In fact, the search for the truth about what actually happened was what most captured the attention of the Spanish press in the 80's and 90's.

The tone used is not very different from that adopted by the Portuguese press in that context, revealing details on the new autopsies carried out as demanded by the families of the deceased<sup>59</sup>; on the request to open new investigations after the report of the foreign experts investigating the case revealed “new evidence”<sup>60</sup>; on the establishment of successive parliamentary inquiry committees and on their activities<sup>61</sup>; and, along with other details, on the political impact of the hole process. A special mention was made to the quarrel opposing António Costa (Minister of Justice) and Sá Fernandes (secretary of state for tax affairs) in which Prime Minister António Guterres opted to accept the resignation of the later (who endorsed the attack thesis), and not the resignation of Costa (who felt accused by Sá Fernandes of lack of political

<sup>55</sup> “Atentado, dizem eles”, *Expresso*, 8-12-2000.

<sup>56</sup> See, for instance, “La parada de un motor causó el accidente mortal de Sa Carneiro”, *El País*, 13-12-1980. or “No hubo sabotaje en el accidente de Sa Carneiro”, *La Vanguardia*, 2-2-1983.

<sup>57</sup> “Hubo negligencia del piloto en el accidente aéreo de Sa Carneiro”, *El País*, 10-4-1981.

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, *La Vanguardia*, 2-2-1981.

<sup>59</sup> “El cadáver de Sa Carneiro sufrirá una nueva autopsia”, *El País*, 30-8-1982.

<sup>60</sup> “Soares cree que Sa Carneiro fue víctima de un atentado”, *El País*, 12-11-1982.

<sup>61</sup> See, for instance, N. Guardiola, “Francisco Sa Carneiro fue víctima de un bárbaro crimen político”, *El País*, 24-11-1982; AFP, “El incierto asesinato de Sá Carneiro”, *El País*, 17-4-1995; “El fiscal general de Portugal reabre el proceso sobre la muerte de Sá Carneiro”, *El País*, 28-4-1995; “El Parlamento portugués concluye que Sa Carneiro fue víctima de un atentado”, *El País*, 2-6-1995; EFE, “Archivada la investigación del ‘caso Sa Carneiro’” *El País*, 11-11-1995.

will in solving the case)<sup>62</sup>. 20 years after the events, Sá Carneiro's death had not been clarified, as noted by Javier Garcia on *El País*<sup>63</sup>

Indisputably abundant, the pieces of news about Camarate accident almost always disregard Sá Carneiro's political role. These references emerged, however, in other articles as the one signed in the heat of the events by Alberto Míguez, a prominent correspondent for *La Vanguardia*, in the 1970s and 1980s. In a particularly emotional piece of news, in which the journalist did not hide his proximity for the victims the plane crash, Sá Carneiro is described as "a vehement fighter, a professional politician, but above all a statesman, with a coherent project for Portugal". According to Míguez, "He was a man of the Right, an European politician representing that liberal and universal civilization that is perhaps his most serious contribution to the history of the world"<sup>64</sup>.

The tone adopted by *El País* was quite different. Although not free from emotionality, the record presented by this broadsheet correspondent focused on the deep crisis atmosphere experienced in Portugal following the death of the prime minister. According to Nicole Guardiola, "reasons for concern, disenchantment and uncertainty about the future" prevailed. AD's disorientation was also highlighted as, even one year after its leader's death, his successor (Pinto Balsemão) faced "an extremely serious internal situation in the country" and "the thankless task of confronting a ghost": Sá Carneiro<sup>65</sup>. A year later, pessimism gave way to different record, and *El País* stressed the fact that Sá Carneiro was "one of the most outstanding political personalities of the young Portuguese democracy", who "disappeared from the political scene in full youth and full activity"<sup>66</sup>. According to *El País* correspondent, Pinto Balsemão was finally managing to deal with his adversary and rival, in his own party: "Sá Carneiro, forever present, unforgettable, haloed with tragic grandeur, eternally triumphant and infallible"<sup>67</sup>.

<sup>62</sup> "Las dudas sobre la muerte de Sá Carneiro causan una crisis política en Portugal", *El País*, 4-12-2000.

<sup>63</sup> "Portugal sigue sin esclarecer la muerte del primer ministro Sá Carneiro 20 años después", *El País*, 4-12-2000.

<sup>64</sup> "El primer ministro conectaba con el pueblo mejor que con los políticos", *La Vanguardia*, 6-12-1980.

<sup>65</sup> "Sa Carneiro es homenajeado en Portugal al cumplirse el primer aniversario de su muerte", *El País*, 4-12-1981.

<sup>66</sup> "Dos años después de la muerte de Sa Carneiro se sigue dudando si fue accidente o atentado", *El País*, 4-12-1982.

<sup>67</sup> Id.

In fact, the fight with Sá Carneiro's shadow was not over and gradually, the Spanish reader was introduced to a question also raised by the Portuguese press: the legacy of Sá Carneiro<sup>68</sup>. At a time when the Right, "with moderate socialists on the Portuguese and Spanish horizon", was planning "a change in its previous hegemony", Sá Carneiro was portrayed as the father of the Portuguese right-wing coalition AD and as the mentor and "engine" of "a front of the centrist right, rigorously anti-leftist" that progressively threatened to collapse. As noted in *El País*, Portuguese Social Democrats continued to look for a leader capable of replacing Sá Carneiro<sup>69</sup>. The idea that a myth was being built upon Sá Carneiro reaches the Spanish public, as the search for a leader "tall enough" to replace the party's founder continued within the PSD. According to Nicole Guardiola, Sá Carneiro's memory has been so mythologized and manipulated that everyone seemed to forget his difficulties in retaining the leadership of "the most heterogeneous and undisciplined" Portuguese political party. Because, as the journalist recalls, "Despite his charisma and undeniable political talent, Sa Carneiro had to leave the PSD leadership twice in less than five years to regain control of the party, but since his death the candidates have been required to resolve, as if by magic, the internal contradictions, the tendencies' struggles and the rivalries of barons that convulsed the second Portuguese party since its foundation"<sup>70</sup>.

The analysis of the press in the two decades that followed the death of Sá Carneiro thus leads us to two central conclusions. Firstly, that these are times of consensus, in which Sá Carneiro is little criticized and his political importance and legacy are emphasized. It is also in this context that what could be termed the construction of a myth around Sá Carneiro began within the country and abroad.

Pulido Valente was a key element in this process. However, for the media construction of this consensual image and with hints of myth, many other interventions contributed. As an example, see the extensive photographic report published in *Expresso Revista*, in December 1995, by Carlos Magno and Rui Ochoa<sup>71</sup>. Under the title "pieces of time", the report relies mainly on the abundant and carefully selected pictures of Ochoa (one of the most

<sup>68</sup> See, for instance, Sousa Tavares' reflections on a scandal involving a social-democratic: "A morte de Sá Carneiro", *A Capital*, 1-2-1989.

<sup>69</sup> "Los socialdemócratas portugueses, a la búsqueda todavía de un líder capaz de sustituir Sa Carneiro", *El País*, 22-3-1984.

<sup>70</sup> Id.

<sup>71</sup> Carlos Magno and Rui Ochoa, "Pedaços do tempo", *Expresso revista*, 8-12-1995.

respected Portuguese photo reporters), reviewing Sá Carneiro's childhood and personal and political journey.

## V. FORGETFULNESS OR DEBATE? THE END OF CONSENSUS (2001-2020)

At the turn of the new millennium, Spanish media coverage refocuses on the Camarate accident. The theme is retrieved by *El País* correspondent Javier Garcia on the 21st anniversary of Sá Carneiro's death. At stake, the request to reopen the judicial process presented by Sá Fernandes and his speech in the presentation of the book *O crime de Camarate* (Camarate crime). At a time when others claimed the process reopening (as former president Soares and former prime minister Cavaco Silva), Fernandes endorsed the attack theory once again and "accused the political and judicial authorities of obstructing the investigations". Choosing as the preferred target the Attorney General of the Republic Cunha Rodrigues, whom he blamed of obstructing unveiling the truth, Fernandes vindicated that "the fear of a civil war" and the delicate moment that the Portuguese transition was going through explained why the case had been buried for years, and "then it was very difficult to reopen it"<sup>72</sup>.

Three years later (2004), *ABC* and *El País* returned to the topic. The fact that the last of eight commissions of inquiry set up to investigate the facts had ended its work, concluding that the plane crash had been caused by sabotage, provided a story widely explored. *ABC* correspondent Belén Rodriguo reveals in detail the results of the aforementioned commission of inquiry to which she adds statements from the victims' relatives: "We are still in time for our children to not read a lie in the History manuals and to know that, for reasons not fully ascertained, Sa Carneiro and Amaro da Costa were murdered"<sup>73</sup>. In *EL País*, Margarita Pintos de Cea-Naharro uncovers more details, setting forth the work carried out by the eight parliamentary commissions until the conclusion was reached: the plane was sabotaged and the then Defense Minister Amaro da Costa was the target<sup>74</sup>.

The unravel of Camarate "accident" seems to have cast a blanket of disinterest on Sá Carneiro in Spain. There was then a long silence on the

<sup>72</sup> "Un abogado pide la reapertura del caso por la muerte de Sá Carneiro", *El País*, 5-12-2001.

<sup>73</sup> "Los análisis prueban en Portugal que Sa Carneiro murió en un atentado", *ABC*, 7-12-2004.

<sup>74</sup> "El enigma Sá Carneiro", *El País* 13-12-2004.

subject, although occasionally broken, as in early 2014, on the occasion of the death of Soares Carneiro “the unsuccessful presidential candidate of Sá Carneiro”. In Soares Carneiro’s obituary, the fact that he is remembered mainly as the “Sá Carneiro’s candidate” stands out, in addition to the impact of the latter’s death during the campaign, drastically changing “the history of the Portuguese Right”. In the same piece, Sá Carneiro is referred as the centrist leader who, after his death, was transformed into the “secular saint of the Portuguese conservators”<sup>75</sup>.

The progressive lack of interest in the topic is not an exclusively Spanish reality. In fact, especially during the first decade of the millennium, allusions to Sá Carneiro are relatively scarce and even the celebrations of the 25th anniversary of his death do not seem to attract much attention from the press. Apart from the references to the celebration of the traditional mass at the Basilica da Estrela<sup>76</sup>, in Lisbon, nothing particularly relevant is highlighted.

*Diário de Notícias* article in the 75th anniversary of the birth of Sá Carneiro (July 2009), is an exception to this trend. Under the title “Sá Carneiro: the country owes him pluralism and stability”<sup>77</sup>, the report takes on a markedly laudatory tone. According to Manuel Meirinho (a well-known Portuguese political scientist), quoted in the article, “the idea of stability” was one of the main legacies of Sá Carneiro and “the crossbar of the regime’s consolidation”. Another political scientist, Adelino Maltez, is more audacious in his evaluation, ascribing to Sá Carneiro the birth of pluralist democracy. In his opinion, without AD’s victory “we would have had a Mexicanization of the regime around the Socialist Party”<sup>78</sup>.

The above views were further explored by the historian Luciano Amaral, in the article “A history of Portuguese democracy”, published in *Diário de Notícias* in December 2007. According to Amaral, the thirty years that had elapsed since 25 April had made clear the inconsistencies of the Socialist Party (PS) and the harmful effects of its action. By asserting itself as “the only legitimate interpreter of the necessary changes”, the PS limited the PSD “to the role of a Greek chorus, in opposition, or as a mere manager of the reality created by the PS, in power”. The only exception to this reality, according to Amaral, had been the birth of “Sá Carneiro’s Democratic Alliance”, as only

<sup>75</sup> “Obituários. El general de la derecha. António Soares Carneiro (1928-2014). Militar português”, *La Vanguardia*, 29-1-2014.

<sup>76</sup> “Memória de Sá Carneiro junta adversários”, *Diário de Notícias*, 5-12-2005.

<sup>77</sup> “Sá Carneiro: país deve-lhe o ‘pluralismo’ e ‘estabilidade’”, *Diário de Notícias*, 19-7-2009.

<sup>78</sup> Id.

then was the “PSD an autonomous and straightforward engine” of a political project of “rupture with the socialist tutelage” of the regime<sup>79</sup>.

The news slump of this first decade was however broken in 2010, in the celebrations of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sá Carneiro’s death. References to the Mass at the Basilica da Estrela reappear. But it was, above all, the release of two books that served as a motto for the renewal of the press’ interest in PPD’s founder.

Strictly in the news area, it was up to *Público* to disseminate the books and, on that basis, to promote a debate on Sá Carneiro’s profile<sup>80</sup>. Firstly, the publication of a biography of more than 700 pages, written by Miguel Pinheiro. Having started his journalistic career in the controversial right-wing newspaper *O Diabo*, and having worked with other conservative periodicals —such as *O Independente* or *Sábado* magazine— the title chosen for the article about his book is catchy: “Sá Carneiro: he wasn’t the peacemaker figure they’re trying to turn him into”<sup>81</sup>. Giving particular emphasis to the parts of the book concerning the Revolution (1974-1975), the article disclosed the personal and political difficulties of PPD’s founder in that period, which, thanks to the meticulous investigation of Miguel Pinheiro, were revealed to the general public. The sections of the book that, in a way, intended to deconstruct the myths surrounding Sá Carneiro also stand out in *Público*’s report: “He was not the unifying and peacemaker figure that they are trying to make him today. Nowadays, just by say his name everyone clap their hands. But it has never been like that, since the beginning, even before the creation of the party’, he [Miguel Pinheiro] says, recalling that the first internal dissent happened even before the formal constitution of the party, in 74, with the removal of Miller Guerra”<sup>82</sup>.

As highlighted by *Público*, leading the PSD or removed from its leadership, Sá Carneiro “has always had many enemies, has always provoked ruptures and hatred, has always had an ambiguous relationship with the party”.

It was also in the context of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sá Carneiro’s death that the biography of Avillez, *Sá Carneiro, Solidão e Poder* (Sá Carneiro, solitude and power), was reprinted. Written less than a year after Camarate

<sup>79</sup> “A história da democracia portuguesa”, *Diário de Notícias*, 15-2-2007.

<sup>80</sup> “Sá Carneiro: Não foi a figura pacificadora em que o tentam transformar”, *Público*, 06-11-2010; “Sá Carneiro O primeiro retrato”, *Público*, 15-11-2010; “Três olhares sobre Sá Carneiro”, *Público*, 4-12-2010.

<sup>81</sup> “Não foi a figura pacificadora em que o tentam transformar”, *Público*, 6-11-2010.

<sup>82</sup> Id.

crash (1981), the book was presented in the pages of *Público* as an unavoidable reference “for the history of PSD, of Sá Carneiro (it was one of the key books used by Miguel Pinheiro, author of the brand new biography Sá Carneiro) and of the political country itself, in the years between 1974 and 1980”<sup>83</sup>.

The articles published in *Público* have a point in common easy to identify: to challenge the image of a consensual leader. In fact, as printed in *Público*, Avillez also disputed Sá Carneiro’s image by saying he “was a person who was permanently being questioned, who at the beginning of the party was under siege”, a “difficult” and “contradictory person”<sup>84</sup>. According to Avillez, the hagiography surrounding Sá Carneiro was provoked by longing, by memory and by the discredit of the Portuguese political elite, transforming the PPD’s leader in a kind of tragic myth. It is interesting to observe how, contrary to what happened in the article about Pinheiro’s publication, in the news coverage of Avillez’s book the role played by Sá Carneiro in the foundation of AD (a coalition that “turned the country upside down from the revolution”<sup>85</sup>), is highlighted. Nevertheless, it will be the articles by two renowned conservative historians —Pulido Valente and Rui Ramos— that truly marked the media coverage that year.

Pulido Valente discusses “The invention of Sá Carneiro” and seeks to identify the two goals of the centrist leader: “First, to bring the Right (PPD and CDS) to power and, second, to end the military tutelage to which Portugal was subjected to”. Because, Valente argues, “it is useless to explain that if power remained indefinitely in the hands of the Left, which had opposed the dictatorship, [...] it would not be long before it was accepted that the PSD and CDS had no legitimacy to govern”<sup>86</sup>.

Embracing an idea about which he had already written, Valente asserts that it was Sá Carneiro who politically legitimized the Right and secured the democratic consolidation. The same thesis is reaffirmed in the writings of Miguel Gaspar, *Público*’s deputy director, by noting that Sá Carneiro was the leader who “emancipated” the Portuguese Right by giving it the “right to the city” in the regime arising from the 25 of April revolution<sup>87</sup>.

As for Rui Ramos, a confessed admirer of Niall Ferguson, he bestows several pages in *Expresso Magazine* to a virtual exercise under the title: “Sá

<sup>83</sup> “Sá Carneiro O primeiro retrato”, *Público*, 15-11-2010.

<sup>84</sup> Id.

<sup>85</sup> Id.

<sup>86</sup> “A invenção de Sá Carneiro”, *Público*, 3-12-2010.

<sup>87</sup> “Sá Carneiro: O homem que viveu depressa de mais”, *P2*, 4-12-2010.



Carneiro. What if he hadn't died?"<sup>88</sup>. His laudatory speech was unmistakable, granting the founder of the PPD an extraordinary divinatory or premonitory capacity. According to Ramos, thanks to his "strategy of bipolarization", Sá Carneiro made Portuguese democracy possible.

In December of that same year, other pieces about Sá Carneiro were printed. The one signed by Tiago Mesquita —"From Sebastianism to 'Sá Carneirismo' through collective hysteria"—was of particular interest, remembering how much Portugal loves to live in "the eternal and melancholy wait" of "the perfect prince who will save us from the darkness we are immersed in"<sup>89</sup>. Despite recalling Sá Carneiro as "a true statesman", "a great man, an ideologue and a politician of rupture, integrity and coherent", Mesquita observes that "he will not return to São Bento on horseback on a foggy night, saving Portugal from the IMF or José Sócrates". His rhetorical question is unequivocal: "Could it be that in 30 years of political life this country has not been able to create leaders who make it forget, ease nostalgia or prevent us from spending our lives remembering a leader who was only one for 11 months?" In his opinion, it was useless to turn to a politician who had died decades ago to "find a glimmer of hope and comfort in times of uncertainty"<sup>90</sup>.

Pinto Balsemão, the founder of *Expresso* and road companion of Sá Carneiro since they sat side by side on the bench of the National Assembly, tried to lift the veil on Sá Carneiro's myth in an interview with *Diário de Notícias* that same year: "He was a very charismatic person, almost unique. It was enough to show up at a rally to see how the atmosphere changed immediately". According to Balsemão, "after Sá Carneiro, no one else was able to achieve this charisma in the PSD"<sup>91</sup>.

The strongest rebuke on the "use and abuse" of Sá Carneiro's memory would be published in that same newspaper by João Céu e Silva. Reacting against the mainstream scenario, this journalist denounces the mythologization and political use of the image of Sá Carneiro, accusing the conservative Right of intending to exhume "the political corpse" of Sá Carneiro:

The re-exhumation of Sá Carneiro's political corpse in recent days, with the excuse of 30 years since his death, suggests that it will again be used as an

<sup>88</sup> "Sá Carneiro: E se ele não tivesse morrido?", *Expresso Revista*, 27-11-2010.

<sup>89</sup> "Do Sebastianismo ao 'Sá Carneirismo' passando pela histeria colectiva", *Expresso*, 7-12-2010.

<sup>90</sup> Id.

<sup>91</sup> "Ficava furioso com os cortes nos artigos", *Diário de Notícias*, 4-12-2010.

inspiration for the PSD/CDS political area in the near future. Because the movement that the party leaders and the President of the Republic will carry out on the political and economic chessboard that is being played in Portugal requires a hero and a strategy that worked in its time<sup>92</sup>

In his view, with the “roar of his death”, Sá Carneiro “entered the pages of history” but also created “a political vacuum”. His party, the PSD, “was left with a myth to remember”, without questioning his adaptation to current times. Nonetheless, according to Céu e Silva, as “an impetuous leader like him would no longer pass through the sieve of public opinion as happened at that time of immaturity and harshness in Portuguese politics”<sup>93</sup>.

## VI. THE IMAGE OF SÁ CARNEIRO AND THE CONFLICTS OF MEMORY AND HISTORY

In his message on the occasion of the Camarate accident, Adolfo Suárez considered Sá Carneiro as “one of the men who fought the most to forge a democratic and free Portugal”<sup>94</sup>. The image of a fearless leader, rallying the forces of the Right, and a key player in Portuguese democratization, was widely reproduced in the press on the occasion of his death, both in Portugal and in Spain. Bearing in mind the emotion surrounding the premature and unexpected death of Sá Carneiro, we tried to probe if this image was perpetuated or, on the contrary, whether or not other visions and narratives were constructed about the centrist leader either in Portugal or in Spain.

The analysis of the pieces of news published by the press of these two countries, in the four decades that followed Sá Carneiro’s death, led us to the following conclusions. Firstly that the junctures in which the Portuguese and Spanish press recall the figure of Sá Carneiro do not match with the commemorative moments of the 1974-1975 revolution. Likewise, little attention is paid to the constitution of the PPD, one of the founding parties of the Portuguese party system that for a decade dominated the national political scene, as well as to AD, coalition that played an important role in the democratic consolidation and probably one of Carneiro’s biggest political achievements. The idea that the democratization process closes with the end of the 1974-1975 revolution is dominant in media discourses representations of the past.

<sup>92</sup> “Sá Carneiro: O cadáver político mais exumado”, *Diário de Notícias*, 4-12-2010.

<sup>93</sup> Id.

<sup>94</sup> “Reacções internacionais não se fizeram esperar”, *A Tarde*, 5-12-1980.

Almost invariably the memory of Sá Carneiro is only evoked by the press on the date of his death and, occasionally, on others, such as his birthday. This reality has multiple consequences and obvious reflexes in the way Sá Carneiro is portrayed by the press. As one of Sá Carneiro's biographers wrote, "the ephemeris are treacherous: they tend to blur conflicts —instead of assuming them—, they are the ambiguous place where everything fits and almost everyone wants to be the port of forced confluences"<sup>95</sup>.

With regard to the Portuguese press, it is possible to notice the influence of the national political context in the invocations and image conveyed about Sá Carneiro. When PPD is in office (AD government, 1980-1983; Central Bloc, 1983-1985; and Cavaco Silva's social-democratic government, 1985-1995), the number of articles on Sá Carneiro is considerable, clearly decreasing in political contexts that are less favorable to the party. For instance, the emphasis given by the press to the tenth anniversary of Sá Carneiro's death cannot be dissociated from the then ruling majority government of Cavaco Silva. According to Rui Ramos, it is possible to find "several Sá Carneiros, depending on the context of the commemoration"<sup>96</sup>.

Regarding Spanish press, as times goes by, the decline in interest in Sá Carneiro is evident, only punctually broken by the engrossing investigations of Camarate accident, which have little to do with his political role in Portuguese democratization. It is, however, due to the Spanish press one of the most accurate analyzes of the construction of the image of Sá Carneiro, pointing out how after his death he was erected as the secular saint of the Portuguese Right.

According to the articles analysed, it is possible to distinguish two phases in the construction of the image of Sá Carneiro through the press.

In the 80's and 90's, in a political context favorable to the Right, Sá Carneiro emerges as an almost consensual figure, but above all as a the man who legitimized the Right and brought it to power, allowing the construction of Portuguese democracy to be completed. The almost mythical image that was conveyed by some newspapers was only overshadowed by the succession difficulties faced by the AD first, and the PPD, later. Highlighted by the Spanish correspondents, this fact is almost absent in the Portuguese press.

The new millennium opened the path to a new phase in which, despite less media attention, there is a maturing of the myth of Sá Carneiro. The image of Sá Carneiro as the leader who shaped the Portuguese Right, who

<sup>95</sup> "De Balsemão a José Miguel Júdice. Recordações da Casa Social-Democrata", *Público Magazine*, 02-12-1990.

<sup>96</sup> "Sá Carneiro: E se ele não tivesse morrido?", *Expresso Revista*, 27-11-2010.

brought it to power and, by breaking the leftist political monopoly, enabled the democratic consolidation gains new dimension. The writings by Pulido Valente and Rui Ramos, but also by other columnists and regular contributors to the Portuguese press, contribute to this scenario in which the debate on Sá Carneiro's myth is not avoided. It is then that a voice not aligned with the mainstream discourse echoes, denouncing the use and abuse of the centrist leader.

The 40th anniversary of Sá Carneiro's death took place during the pandemic crisis of 2020. Seeking to adjust to that context, the PSD sought new political communication strategies, which the Portuguese press followed closely. One of the most outstanding was the initiative endorsed by Instituto Sá Carneiro which resulted in a street poster campaign with the most "outstanding" political quotes from the party founder<sup>97</sup>. *Público* gave considerable space to the initiatives promoted in this scope, but also to colonists such as Paulo Rangel, one of PSD members of the European Parliament<sup>98</sup>. Meanwhile, on 4 December 2020 *Diário de Notícias* devoted its cover to the ephemeris, publishing a huge photograph of Sá Carneiro and several cover calls for articles on that topic, including one from the then PSD's President Rui Rio<sup>99</sup>. However, this revitalization of Sá Carneiro's memory and image was mainly due to the *Observador*.

Founded in May 2014, this online newspaper does not hide its political right wing orientation. Between mid-November and early December 2020, *Observador* published more than seven articles and opinion columns in which Sá Carneiro was the main topic. For the articles we can mention the quote from the opinion article by Maria João Avillez, "The inheritances"<sup>100</sup> in which Avillez exhorts: "We must inherit him". Perhaps more significant was the tribute paid by the President of the Republic to Sá Carneiro as "one of the civil fathers of democracy"<sup>101</sup>. By elevating Sá Carneiro to the pantheon of the Founding Fathers of Portuguese democracy, Rebelo de Sousa opened a new stage in the construction of Sá Carneiro's public memory.

<sup>97</sup> "Instituto Sá Carneiro recorda fundador do PSD em outdoors", *Público*, 23-11-2020.

<sup>98</sup> "Sá Carneiro: antes e durante (memórias pueris)", *Público*, 1-12-2020.

<sup>99</sup> "Sá Carneiro nunca quis satisfazer interesses privados ou eleitoralistas", *Diário de Notícias*, 4-12-2020.

<sup>100</sup> "As heranças", *O Observador*, 25-11-2020.

<sup>101</sup> "Marcelo lembra Sá Carneiro como 'um dos pais civis da democracia'", *O Observador*, 4-12-2020.

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