
FEAR AND DESIRE OF CONTAINMENT. ARMED GROUPS AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN SPAIN AND PORTUGAL (1867-1914)

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Introduction: Armed groups and political violence *before* the First World War

My thesis is a study of the social composition, practices and political cultures of some armed groups that performed public order tasks outside state police institutions in Spain and Portugal before the WWI. The aim is to analyse practises of violence performed by the civilian element, but tolerated and sometimes even promoted by the institutions, to oppose those that were perceived as attacks against the social and political order. The chronology includes: for Spain, the period between the so-called *Sexenio Democrático* (1868-1873) and the years of Bourbon Restoration from 1874 to 1914; for Portugal, the last forty years of the Monarchy and the first years of the Republic (proclaimed in 1910). With the purpose of analysing in detail some representative realities of both countries, I decided to study three areas of the Spanish and Portuguese rural periphery surrounding three provincial cities of medium size.

This study is an integral part of the ERC research project *The Dark Side of the Belle Époque. Political Violence and Armed Associations in Europe before the WWI* (PREWArAs). Discussing the common thesis that understands political and paramilitary violence essentially as a product of the WWI, the objective of the PREWArAs group is precisely to address the spread of this type of organized violence and to examine the role played by militias, paramilitary movements, armed associations, and vigilante groups in the decades leading up to the Great War. The comparative character of the study makes it possible to demonstrate to what extent this phenomenon permeated the European societies of the time and represented a mass experience in the Europe of the so-called Belle Époque.

State of the art

This work aims to contribute to filling some relevant gaps in the field of historiography. In this sense, it is worth highlighting the leading work of Matteo Millan, who has emphasized the little

importance given to the organised violence and armed groups before the WWI.¹ As far as case studies are concerned, there is only one book on civilian guards in Spain, written by Eduardo González Calleja and Fernando del Rey.² However, the authors give much less importance to the pre-1917 period, particularly regarding the political dimension of this kind of violence. Actually, this deficiency is also shared by the most recent studies on political violence.³ On the other hand, while studies devoted to violence coming from the revolutionary field are numerous, very little attention has been paid to violence that came from or aimed to reinforce the establishment. As a matter of fact, works on counter-revolutionary ideological currents often disregard their links with violent practices and groups, which is more widely associated with the inter-war period.⁴ At the same time, the work done on law and order management in both countries for this period is a good starting point.⁵ However, it is necessary to broaden the scope of the studies on public order devoted to the peripheries of the State and, in particular, to the interaction between the public and the private spheres. Finally, as far as the comparative dimension of the study is concerned, the available literature is rich in political and economic terms, but addressing the place of violence and the role of armed groups in both societies for this period can undoubtedly add relevant nuances to the analysis.⁶

Methodology and sources

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The study is based on a long-term perspective, comprising the period from 1867 to 1914. On the one hand, this is due to transnational elements of analysis, such as the echo of the events of the Commune, the consequences of the industrial and commercial expansion of these years, and the effects of the long economic depression from the mid-1870s until the turn of the century. On the other hand, it is also due to specific events and dynamics of each of the national contexts under study, strongly conditioned by two events that took place at the beginning of this period: the attempt of a huge administrative reform and the first social movement of national scope in Portugal (1867), and the first attempt of democratisation in Spain (1868). Moreover, this broad view of the analysis

¹ See MILLAN, M. (2014) «Milizie civiche prima della Grande guerra: violenza politica e crisi dello Stato in Italia e Spagna (1900-15)»; (2016) «In Defence of Freedom? The Practices of Armed Movements in Pre-1914 Europe: Italy, Spain and France»

² GONZÁLEZ CALLEJA, E. y DEL REY REGUILLO, F. (1995), *La defensa armada contra la Revolución: una historia de las guardias cívicas en la España del siglo XX*

³ See for example GONZÁLEZ CALLEJA, E., «La violencia política en la España del siglo XX: un balance historiográfico», RODRIGO, J. (2002) «Violencia política y España contemporánea. Últimas aportaciones a la historia del violento siglo XX español».

⁴ See for example GONZÁLEZ CUEVAS, P. C. (2001) «Los conservadores españoles en el siglo XX»; COSTA PINTO, A. (2017), «The Appeal of Fascism: Reactionary Cosmopolitanism in Early 20th-Century Portugal»

⁵ GONZÁLEZ CALLEJA, E. (2008) «La política de orden público en la Restauración»; PALACIOS CEREZALES, E. (2008) *Estado, régimen y orden público en el Portugal contemporáneo* [Thesis]; ROCHA GONÇALVES, G. (2015), «O aparelho policial e a construção do Estado em Portugal, c. 1870-1900»

⁶ Hipólito DE LA TORRE GÓMEZ, (2000) «Unidad y dualismo peninsular: el papel del factor externo»

makes it possible to address more clearly both the continuities and the changes in the implementation of the so-called legal monopoly of force.

Secondly, the thesis adopts a micro perspective in order to carry out in-depth case study analysis and a focus that moves from the local reality to address the broader context. The aim is to study the degree of spread and penetration of violence in both countries on the basis of the analysis of less studied cases, physically and symbolically distant from the decision-making centres. In that sense, the areas under scrutiny are: Barbastro, 7.033 inhabitants in 1900, in Huesca (Aragon), and Olivenza, 9.066 inhabitants in 1900, in Badajoz (Extremadura), for the Spanish case; Reguengos de Monsaraz, 10.240 inhabitants in 1900, in Évora (Central Alentejo), for the Portuguese case. The thesis will be organized into two thematic sections; in each section, various policing models will be investigated in various chapters. The first section will be devoted to a first chapter addressing the armed citizen and the political militia (whose existence dates back to the mid-19th century and survives until the first decade of the 20th); and a second chapter addressing the pre-military education, including national shooting leagues and private instruction (from the last decade of the 19th to 1914). The second section, which is also the central part of the work, will be divided in: a third chapter addressing the management of private security and the privatization of public order in the rural periphery throughout the period; and a fourth chapter addressing the management of public order in the face of the rise of collective challenges from the last decade of the 19th century onwards.

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With regard to the sources used, to date I have consulted the funds of eighteen Spanish and Portuguese institutions, including national and military archives; provincial and local archives; and archives of other institutions, as owners' associations. Secondly, I have also taken into account the legislation and the parliamentary debates that could condition the existence and organisation of these groups, as well as their links with the state and its institutions. Finally, and as far as the private dimension is concerned, it is worth highlighting the existing of some personal collections, biographical notes and the few memoirs that are available.

Main lines and achieved results

0. A brief introductory note on the model of public order in Spain and Portugal

In spite of the notable differences in the political evolution of both countries, their public order models during this period present some similarities. The main one is that in both cases the army was the principal police force. Actually, in both Spain and Portugal there were repeated failures in the

attempts to extend the creation of a professional police force beyond the main capitals.⁷ Finally, in both cases, and as a result of a similar socio-political structure, the role played by clientelistic networks in the appointment of public positions (including public order charges) was very relevant, particularly at the local level.

However, there were also big differences. Since the mid-19th century (1844), Spain had a national military police force, the *Guardia Civil* (GC). On the contrary, in Portugal the first gendarmerie, the *Guardia Nacional Republicana* (GNR), was not created until 1911 with the beginning of the Republic. The levels of militarisation of public order were also very different: they were higher in Spain, where also the political costs of the repression during the Restoration regime seemed to be lower than in the Portuguese liberal system. However, the analysis of the relevant presence of private security forces for the sustainment of public order both in Spain and Portugal, particularly in the rural areas, promises to soften this contrast.

1. The armed citizen and the political militia: the defence of order as “local defence”

Both in Spain and Portugal the dynastic conflict and the civil war strongly contributed to the forging of a liberal mobilizing myth: the civic defence of freedom.⁸ This led to the creation of numerous groups of volunteers and political militias dedicated to local defence in a particularly convulsed moment of power atomization. However, the subsequent evolution of these groups remains very understudied. In that respect, it is worth underlining two eminently practical dimensions of the activity of these groups: the local defence, particularly in the rural peripheries, and the defence of the social and political order. It is significant that most of the contemporary mentions on these militias are related to the lack of other security forces, especially in the case of medium-sized rural cities. In some cases, these volunteer forces are the only force available, as occurs in Barbastro with a group of Volunteers of the Republic in 1873. A year later, and despite the general disarmament decree, the city authorities still asked to arm two new militia units.⁹ From the political point of view, militias’ rhetoric of defence of freedom moved increasingly towards a defence of the social and political order. The intentional confusion between the figures of the bandit and the revolutionary against whom the “honest citizens” had to fight went beyond the absolutist parties. Both in Barbastro and Olivenza the first measures of the 1868 local governments were against the “thief and the incendiary” [*ladrones e incendiarios*]. The overlapping of ordinary and political criminality allowed the exclusion of political opponents under the label of criminals,

⁷ In Portugal, the civilian police (*Polícia Civil*) began to be implemented gradually in district capitals, such as Évora, from 1875-6

⁸ First, Second and Third Carlist War in Spain, 1833-1876; Portuguese Civil War, 1828-1834

⁹ Archivo Municipal de Barbastro (AMB), A468-01; Estantería B, 66; Estantería B, 65

whether they were absolutist guerrillas or federal republican groups. The latter were very active in the areas of Badajoz and Barbastro, where in 1869 they starred in a mutiny together with a large group of members of the popular classes.¹⁰ In Portugal, too, the parties that eventually appeared at this very moment, fought by civilian forces called by the ringing of the bell [*toque de sino*], were given the dual character of anarchists and bandits [*anarchistas e malfeitores*].¹¹

1.1 *The militia and the state: disarmament, absorption and use of the militia*

As the central authorities regained power they attempted to use these groups for their own benefit as auxiliary forces for the maintenance of law and order. This had two advantages: having a large contingent dedicated to these tasks, and controlling the demobilization process of these groups. Both in Spain and Portugal, the pacification strategies regarding the militias implied the absorption of militiamen by the authorities as law enforcement agents. The disarmament process was neither complete nor unidirectional, since the measures were reversed to arm selected civilians to perform law and order tasks.¹² Significantly, the measures included, apart from the militiamen, also those who had supported public order on the occasion of disturbances and riots.¹³

1.2 *The long aftermath of the militia: the later symbolical and practical resurgence*

The mid-19th century militias were reactivated and had a new life at the beginning of the 20th century. The old names of the militias helped to legitimize these new groups, such as the *Veteranos de la Libertad* in 1903, or the *Veteranos Milicianos de Madrid* in 1910. The aim of these groups was the defence of “the homeland and the social order”, or helping the army in military campaigns as the one of Melilla War in 1910.¹⁴ But the political militia most fully identified with the regime and most involved in its political viability was that of the Portuguese Republican volunteers. The civic mobilisation that preceded and followed the revolution of 5 October 1910 had a major impact on the whole territory. The convergence of *Carbonária* members with the creation of *Batalhões de voluntários*, such as those announced in the district of Évora, implied a civic mobilization whose extension could greatly benefit the new regime and the maintenance of public order together with the recently created GNR.¹⁵

¹⁰ *Boletín de la Junta Revolucionaria de Barbastro*, 1868; the uprising in AMB, Arm 5-5/31; Archivo Municipal Olivenza (AMO), Leg. 14, C. 4

¹¹ Arquivo do Ministério do Reino - Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo (AMR-ANTT), 3^a rep L20 Mç. 2734

¹² Archivo General Militar de Segovia (AGMSg), 2^a-11^a-52

¹³ *Gaceta de Madrid*, 25-9-1874 and 2-3-1876; Op. cit. PALACIOS CEREZALES, D. (2008)

¹⁴ AGMSg, 2^a-12^a-147

¹⁵ *Noticias d'Évora* (Évora), 28-8-1911

2. The pre-military education and the patriotic initiatives

In both countries, the rhetoric of the «nation in arms» previously held by the political militia found its reflection in the formation of the turn-of-the-century patriotic shooting groups. *Tiro Civil* (TC) was created in Portugal in 1893. Seven years later, in 1900, the first national shooting club, *Tiro Nacional* (TN), was also created in Spain. In both cases, they were established immediately after colonial setbacks and losses (1898 and 1890). In both cases, the rhetoric linked to the recovery of the lost or outraged imperial glory,¹⁶ was accompanied by a more practical purpose. As stated by TN: “the great nations can pay large armies [...] [the small ones] have to dedicate themselves to putting their citizens in defence”.¹⁷

2.1 Military training, military arms

It was clear that the two societies were under the protection, the promotion and the accurate control of the central power.¹⁸ Shooting was promoted by the government to assemble the so-called loyal classes, nurturing their patriotic (and pro-governmental) values while at the same time organizing them in arms. There was, however, once again an eagerness to control a bottom-up initiative. It was just a few months after the emergence of an association entirely made up of civilians, the *Grupo Pátria* that the Portuguese government promoted in 1893 the creation of a national society under its control, the *Associação dos Atiradores Civis Portuguezes*.¹⁹

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Even if shooting increasingly acquired the feature of a recreational activity under the common name of «gymnastic exercise», the ultimate purpose was not actually hidden. As written in 1901 in the TN official bulletin: with those exercises, including public contests particularly addressed to popular classes, “a large and trained mass of shooters will be possible”.²⁰ This effort in educating the masses in the exercise of shooting was clear in some initiatives as the formation of the so-called children’s battalions, the sending of arms to orphanages, as well as the setting up of private military schools.²¹ On the other hand, it is also interesting to note the weapons used in these training exercises. They were granted directly by the Ministry of War in Spain, and also in Portugal the weapons intended for this service would be “weapons of war” given for free by the state.²²

¹⁶ Archivo de la Real Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País de Badajoz (ARSEAPBd), Caja 4, 1B.1.6 (1903); *O Tiro Civil*, leaflet number (1895)

¹⁷ *Conferencias populares. El Tiro Nacional como elemento indispensable de educación del ciudadano*, 1900

¹⁸ Apart from in their media, this can be appreciated, for example, in the correspondence between the TN and the Spanish Ministry of War, including request for armament, in AGMSg, 2^a-8^a-551

¹⁹ The decree allowing the creation of civil shooting societies in May 1890, *Tiro Civil*, 7-3-1895; the AACCP statutes in *Tiro Civil*, 4/11-4-1895; the foundation of the *Grupo Pátria* in their current website (Sociedade de Tiro N^o 2 de Lisboa)

²⁰ *La Nación Militar*, 1-12-1901

²¹ AGMSg, 2^a-1^a-85. One children’s battalion was created in Barbastro in 1904, in AMB, A468-01 [*Libro de actas*]

²² *Tiro Civil*, 21-3-1895

2.2 *The shooting leagues as an instrument for the defence of public order*

There are two particularly interesting elements in the nature of these groups with regard to their possible functionality in tasks of public order: their territorial extension, particularly trying to reach the peripheries, and their local rise coinciding with specific conflicts. Significantly, in the TN statutes they mention directly the need to reach the periphery. This was especially true in Badajoz, the largest province in Spain, where the delegation of the TN was especially active in 1902.²³ This was a particularly turbulent year in the province, with the proclamation of a massive general strike by rural workers. It is also remarkable the urgency of the men of the Reguengos municipal chamber in September 1911 to build a firing range and adhere to the so-called *Cruzada Tiro Nacional*, an initiative of the *Ginásio Clube de Lisboa* that gradually gained territorial extension. This occurred only three months after a massive rural workers' strike that had affected the entire district.²⁴

3. Public order in the rural areas: blurred lines between the public and the private

The historiography on social conflict has often overlooked very relevant variables in relation to processes of violent political radicalisation in rural areas. Significantly, crime figures on aggressions, homicides, thefts, break-ins and extortions are remarkably high in the three cases under study.²⁵ Historians and contemporaries share the same reasons for such underestimation: they both considered such forms of violence as private, almost "domestic" violence closely linked to the specific dynamics of the rural environment. The lack of works on strategies of public order in such spaces particularly prevents us from being able to go further in the study of the political dimension of both these forms of criminality and of the forms of repression used against them. However, this seems relevant if we consider that the latter were increasingly conceived as practices of owners' self-defence.

3.1 *Private violence in defence of property*

Rural police legislation progressed hesitantly and discontinuously in both Spain and Portugal.²⁶ This is particularly striking if we take into account that this was a need felt by an influential

²³ AGMSg, 2^a-8^a-193

²⁴ Arquivo Municipal de Reguengos de Monsaraz (AMRM), B-A/001/0044 [*Actas das sessões da Câmara*]

²⁵ *Revista de España* (1870): Olivenza among the municipalities with the highest concentration of crime in Spain; for Évora see PACHECO PEREIRA, J. (1980) «As lutas sociais dos trabalhadores alentejanos: do banditismo a grève»; the criminal judgments of the Archivo Histórico Provincial de Huesca (AHPH) are equally illustrative for the case of Barbastro: J 2546 - J 2576

²⁶ In Spain, after the fleeting creation of a specific rural police force in 1868, this task was definitively assigned to the Guardia Civil: *Disposiciones relativas al nuevo servicio encomendado a la Guardia Civil*, Madrid, 1877. In Portugal, the great administrative reform of 1867 included the creation of a Rural Police, but the use of *Guardas campestres* seems to have been scarce. On the other hand, there were another much more extended ad hoc solutions, such as the use of the *Guardia Fiscal* as a rural police force: ARM-ANTT, 3^a Rep, Mç 5416 [1908]

segment of the population, as regularly lamented by landowners in their meetings and their media, particularly from the 1880s on.²⁷ Behind this difficulties there were economic issues, particularly true in the case of Portugal, where owners often opposed the payment of higher taxes. However, a second reason could be that the management of public order was frequently framed in a private self-managed domain.²⁸ Actually, the legislation allowing for the appointment of private guards was enacted very early, from 1849 in Spain (so, only five years after the creation of the GC).²⁹ Many owners took advantage of this, and some of them created real parallel forces, with their own regulations, both in Spain and Portugal.³⁰

The increasingly multiplicity of figures in this grey area can be gauged by the multiple names given to these guards in the sources, particularly in the licensing of weapons: *criado*, *criado armado*, *guardia privado*, *guardián de las eras*, *guarda d'herdades*, *zelador de propiedades*, among others. Ideally, their task was to hand over the offenders to the authorities, but they actually applied a type of extra-legal and sometimes especially feared violence.³¹ Despite the fact that these figures were tolerated and their role was considered useful, the central authorities were punctually concerned about the resulting dispersion of power. As the sources in both countries point out, this became particularly delicate at the end of the first decade of the 20th century in relation to the spread of weapons.³²

3.2 *The private use and the privatization of the public force*

What is particularly interesting to note is that the same preventions about the dispersion of power and weapons included frequently the local public forces, as happened with the Portuguese *cabos*, presumably because it could not be assured that these men had always been defenders of public

²⁷ See for example *Documentos relativos ao Primeiro Congresso Agrícola celebrado em Lisboa*, 1888; Another interesting source is the media of the *Real Associação Central de Agricultura Portuguesa* (RACAP), *Gazeta dos Lavradores*

²⁸ An example of the little continuity in the debate about the creation of a rural district police force in Évora in *Actas do Conselho Distrital da Agricultura* (1893-1909), in the Arquivo Distrital de Évora (ADE), H/F Policia e criminalidade, CX-198

²⁹ *Gaceta de Madrid*, 10-11-1849

³⁰ Example of the forces created by Jacobo Fitz-James Stuart Falcó, Duke of Berwick and of Alba and Count of Montijo, in the province of Badajoz: *Reglamento para el uso, régimen y gobierno de los Guardas Jurados de la Casa del Excmo. Sr. Duque de Berwick*, Badajoz, Gaspar Hermanos, 1891. In Portugal, the Rosado Fernandes family had night guards and their own fire-fighting agents, in (ARFR), Arquivo da Família Rosado Fernandes, B-A/02

³¹ An interesting source about the existence of these figures in ADE, H/C Licenciamentos, Concessão de licenças para uso e porte de armas CX-7; some contemporary testimonies on the harshness of the methods used by these guards in the Alentejo, in DA SILVA PICÃO, J. (1904) *Através dos campos*; and in Extremadura, in COSTA MARTÍNEZ, T. (1913) *Formas típicas de guardería rural*. The manuscript [1910], slightly different, in AHPH, Archivo Costa, 29, 50.2

³² For example, as complained by forces of the Spanish GC, under the pretext of the figure of the armed servant, a large group of men could be armed even if only one of them was licensed, in Archivo Histórico Nacional (AHN), Serie A, Leg. 39, Exp. 2

security.³³ The bad reputation of the *cabos* came from the fact that, as in Spain, they were not remunerated and had not professional positions. The clientelistic networks in the designation of these men often turned them into the armed wing of local political factions.³⁴ In the novel *Jarrapellejos* (1914), based in 1902 Extremadura, Felipe Trigo wrote about a “truncheon gang” [*partida de la porra*], composed by local law enforcement officers among others, which acted as the local cacique's armed wing during elections in a village of Badajoz. In 1903, some reports of the GC referred to large groups “carrying sticks” in the zone of Barbastro, among other groups of former sheriffs and municipal guards, uniformed officers or men at the service of a public works contracting officer in different villages of Badajoz and Huesca.³⁵

At the same time, this private use of public forces had also traditionally included the GC and, as in Portugal, the army. When private and local forces were not sufficient, propertied classes asked for the intervention of the public force. In both countries the central authorities pointed out the abuses that were committed with the systematic recourse to these forces on the part of municipalities and individuals (Spain, 1901, 1902; Portugal, 1887).³⁶ However, another significant practice was the punctual privatisation of the public force. This was actually a possibility contemplated in the Portuguese legislation. In 1908, in the district of Évora, coinciding with an acute social unrest due to the concentration of numerous groups of workers protesting against unemployment, some “citizens' commissions” offered themselves to pay the salary of civilian police and use them as private night guards in different villages, as happened in Reguengos.³⁷

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3.3 *The state aims to take control: hybrid models and delegated violence*

This last feature of the Portuguese legislation meant in fact a delegation of the use of public force. The central authorities of both countries realised that this was advantageous for the preservation of public order in the provinces, at least as long as they trusted these owners who managed public order by public force or by the own guards. The benefits of an eventual hybrid system were increasingly studied as social mobilization advanced in the rural periphery. In Spain, a Rural Police Law enacted in 1898 allowed the owners' defence associations to establish themselves as Farmer Communities (*Comunidades de labradores*) or Rural Police Unions. By virtue of this law, the powers of public order previously granted to the municipality passed into the hands of local

³³ ARM-ANTT, Mç. 2746, 21-9-1871

³⁴ In 1902 for example one of the city councilmen of Olivenza is said to resemble “a Captain General” because two night watchmen always escorted him. In AMO, Leg. 19, C. 33, (17-2-1902)

³⁵ AHN, Serie A, Leg. 21, Exp. 5; Leg. 19, Exp. 10. TRIGO, F. (1914) *Jarrapellejos*

³⁶ AHN, Serie A, Leg. 39, Exp. 1; ADE, H/F Policia e criminalidade, CX-265

³⁷ ADE, H/F Policia e criminalidade, Guarda Nocturna e Policia Rural, CX. 144

landowners. Not for nothing, the vast province of Badajoz would become the leading one for numbers of established *Comunidades*.³⁸

4. Suffocating the protest and containing the mass

The continuity of structural problems in the countryside and its insertion into broader political and associative dynamics led to more structured and collective conflicts and mobilizations. This became even more evident with the definitive implementation of the capitalist production model also in the countryside. As it happened in the urban areas, we can find here the fear of an ever-imminent overflow, particularly during the last decade of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. However, the pattern of those conflicts is more punctual (rather than isolated) than an in crescendo. While it is true that the intensity and frequency of conflicts would generally increase over time (according inter alia to the rise and stability of mobilization platforms), the idea of the latent overflow and, consequently, of the need for containment, is more linked to the demand for more security forces than to the real dynamics of these conflicts. Consequently, the management of the public order continued to involve an interaction between the immediate private and local sphere and the action of larger and more prestigious state forces.

4.1 The tensing of the public order model

Actually, both the Spanish and the Portuguese models of public order had previously been reinforced and adapted to new needs. However, there were some elements that, as I defend, strained the respective existing models of public order, namely: the increasing supra-local nature of the conflicts, their simultaneity, and their real or potential territorial extension. Of course these characteristics were not completely new. However, the interaction of these elements with a more politicized context significantly changed the perception and the experience of them. All of these elements –supra-locality, simultaneity and territorial extension– can be observed in specific conflicts that took place in the three spaces and towns under study during the last years of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth. The intensity of the repression in dispersed areas shows on the other hand the necessary capillarity of these strategies, something that should not only be done quickly, but must be maintained. This in turn entailed an active participation of the private sphere in the tasks.

Firstly, in the eastern part of Huesca there were two cycles of protests that were related to the construction of irrigation and hydropower infrastructures (1897-1905/1913-1914); secondly, in

³⁸ This can be seen in the different regulations and ordinances of the *Comunidades*. For example those of the Community of Olivenza, 1908. In AMO, 37 D and 37 E

1901 and particularly in 1902 a general strike of rural workers took place in the province of Badajoz; and thirdly, the strikes of rural workers in Alentejo during the first years of the Portuguese Republic (1911-13), which provoked an important movement of solidarity and the final extension of the conflict to the main capitals of the country. In all three cases, the concentration of a large number of workers from many parts of the surrounding or more remote provinces was a factor of concern for the authorities and for the landowners. This was particularly alarming in the turn-of-the-century years and during the wave of widespread protest that followed the first decade of the twentieth century, marked by the rise of workers' unionism. In fact, the first organizational milestones of the workers' movement in all three cases are directly related to strike episodes, especially in the cases of Badajoz/Olivenza and Alentejo/Reguengos with the creation of the first workers' organizations in 1902 and 1911, respectively.

The concentration of a large number of workers led to the frequent concentration of forces and the imposition of intermittent states of semi-exception, because of fear of an imminent outbreak of a conflict or because it had already taken place.³⁹ Actually, these circumstances gave rise to a combined action of military forces, the gendarmerie (not for nothing the first place outside Lisbon and Porto where the GNR was deployed at this very moment was the Alentejo), local forces and private/voluntary forces. However, the nature of the conflicts involved major problems for law enforcement, particularly the insufficiency of forces, the immediate transfers, the impossibility of covering all the spaces or the displacement of forces that had already been concentrated.⁴⁰ However, one of the most important problems was the timely movement of forces in a situation of widespread and multi-nuclear conflict. This meant that once again local and private mechanisms of action were the first forces to confront the threat. The owners not only played the role of "interlocutors" together with the local authorities, but also subsidized forces for the safeguarding of their property, and continued to resort to their particular defence strategies.⁴¹ However, an interesting final aspect is that of the action of groups that transcended the scope of the particular to acquire a larger dimension as a form of extra-institutional vigilantism. This seems to be particularly related to the extent of the conflict, socially and territorially. In the Alentejo there are evidences of the participation of battalions of republican volunteers, members of the *Carbonária* and elements linked to non-institutional forces (although closely linked to the control of the civil governor, as would be the case

³⁹ *Diario Oficial de Avisos de Madrid*, 12-2-1897 [Aragon and Catalonia canal]

⁴⁰ Archivo General Militar de Madrid (AGMM), 5855.11; 5852.23; 5852.15; 5913.3 (Huesca and Badajoz)

⁴¹ AGMM, 5855.16

of the group called "*a formiga branca*" from 1913 on) in the suffocation of strikes, particularly when the conflict acquired supra-territorial proportions.⁴²

4.2 *The forging of new political cultures*

In both countries, authoritarian and corporatist solutions were subsequently imposed. The coups d'état of Sidónio Pais and Miguel Primo de Rivera, in 1917 and 1923, were presented as radical solutions to regenerate the Portuguese republican and Spanish Restoration regimes, both immersed in a deep political fragmentation and afflicted by an acute social unrest. It is significant to see what role people who had previously been committed to the "safeguarding of order" played in those circumstances. In the media of the taxpayers' league of the area of Barbastro, for example, one of the most celebrated measures of the Primo de Rivera's regime was the extension of the civic guard of the Catalan *Somatén* to the entire State. After proudly declare themselves as "its first volunteers", they added that "the Spain that works, produces and pays [...] wants selection and sanitation [*selección y saneamiento*]"⁴³ Also others considered that, in the face of the attack on property and order, the categorical solution was outside of certain guarantees, but in the logic of a strong state. This was the case of Tomás Costa (head of Provincial Development in Toledo and brother of the famous jurist, writer and politician Joaquín Costa), who in 1910 had written an essay on rural police in which he claimed strong hand with less constitutional guarantees and the granting of greater powers to the state-linked *Comunidades de Labradores*.⁴⁴ T. Costa would become one of the strong men of the Primo de Rivera's *Unión Patriótica* in Huesca. This was also the case of Nicolás Santos de Otto, lawyer and mayor of Barbastro in 1914, member of the Agricultural Chamber (President from 1916), and one of the founders of the *Somatén* of Barbastro. Former member of the Maurist group, Santos de Otto had previously been also involved with the *Partido Social Popular* (1922), led by José María Gil Robles and Antonio Goicoechea, and would participate in the future in the foundation of *Acción Nacional* (1931).⁴⁵ In Olivenza, the corporal of the local *Somatén* [*cabo de somatenes*] would be Manuel Gómez González, forensic doctor and great owner, one of the men of the *Comunidad de Labradores*, who was also the founding member of the local *Unión Patriótica* in

⁴² Arquivo do Ministério do Interior – Arquivo Nacional do Torre to Tombo (AMI-ANTT), 3ª Rep, Mç 38; also on the participation of *Batalhoes de Voluntários* in PULIDO VALENTE, V (1974), *O poder e o povo: a revolução de 1910; O Carbonário* (Évora), 27-11-1910, 4-12-1910; subsequent laudatory references to these groups in *A Formiga* (Évora), 23-05-1915, 25-04-1915; on the subsequent presence of the *Formiga Branca* in the south of the Alentejo against striking mining workers in 1915 in GUIMARÃES, P. (2001), *Indústria e conflito no meio rural. Os mineiros alentejanos (1858-1938)*

⁴³ *El Ribagorzano* (Graus, Huesca), 22-10-1923

⁴⁴ Op. Cit. COSTA MARTÍNEZ, T. (1913)

⁴⁵ Whose constitution was owed, in the words of his men, by the fact that "an anti-communist political action was urgently needed". In TOMASONI, M. (2014), *Onésimo Redondo Ortega. Vida, obra y pensamiento de un sindicalista nacional (1905-1936)* [Thesis]; Archivo General de la Administración (AGA) 21/20361 [*Expediente personal*]

1923. During the Spanish Civil War and until his death in 1938, “the new awakening of Spain” in his words, he finally joined *Falange Española*.⁴⁶

In the case of Portugal, which is qualitatively different from that of Spain, the following step of the work will be to delve deeper into this later connections. There are several elements that need to be addressed, in particular: the fact that from the fragmentary space of Portuguese republicanism came a figure like Sidónio Pais; and that the associativism of agrarian employers evolved throughout the Portuguese Republic towards conservative political postures and became more and more integrated into the anti-liberal ideological current, which was especially true in the Alentejo case.⁴⁷ In fact, one of the pieces linked to the *Integralismo Lusitano*, the *Cartilha do Operário* (1920), edited by Alberto de Monsaraz, has a direct link with one of the great houses of Reguengos.⁴⁸

Brief preliminary conclusions

The preliminary conclusions of the work make it already possible to address some of the issues pointed out in the state of art. The first of them is the character of violence performed by these groups, which goes far beyond the mere reaction or the defence of property. Instead, violence they performed was part of a wider transition to anti-democratic forms within the processes of consolidation of modern capitalism. On the other hand, the process of ideologization will be also subjected to substantial changes at the beginning of the 20th century, coinciding with the greater structuring of the anti-parliamentary and anti-liberal nationalist currents. Therefore, the process of violent radicalization is not only rhetorical during these years, but has a direct and effective expression that transcends the private space to enter the logic of the social conflict.

Secondly, the study of the practices of these groups complicates the historiographical interpretations that link the socio-political and economic backwardness of southern Europe with forms of political and social violence. Actually, it is precisely within the framework of the process of strengthening the State and its greater repressive capacity that these groups acquire a greater presence in both cases. It is a complex and far-reaching process ranging from the rearmament of the ‘good citizen’ to the integration of the armed individual through the sanction of a private violence of a delegated and controlled nature.

Thirdly, the centre-periphery dialogue appears as a major component in this whole process. The hybrid public-private model of public order management and property protection plays a crucial

⁴⁶ AMO, Fondo Manuel Gómez González, C-1-60

⁴⁷ BERNARDO, M. A. (2002), «O associativismo agrícola português no Liberalismo e na 1ª República: os sentidos de um percurso»

⁴⁸ BARREIRA, C. (1981), «Sindicalismo e integralismo: o jornal “A Revolução (1922-23)»

role in the expansion and rooting of the administrative apparatus of the State. However, it is also important to consider that despite the mutual benefits for individuals and state institutions, the hybrid nature of these groups did not eliminate competition between public and private authorities, especially in the face of attempts by the state to gradually broaden the range of social and political rights. The convergence of this disparity of interests and the rise and reinforcement of new political cultures, together with the growing autonomy of certain institutions also linked to the state, such as the army, could eventually contribute to threaten the political stability of both regimes.