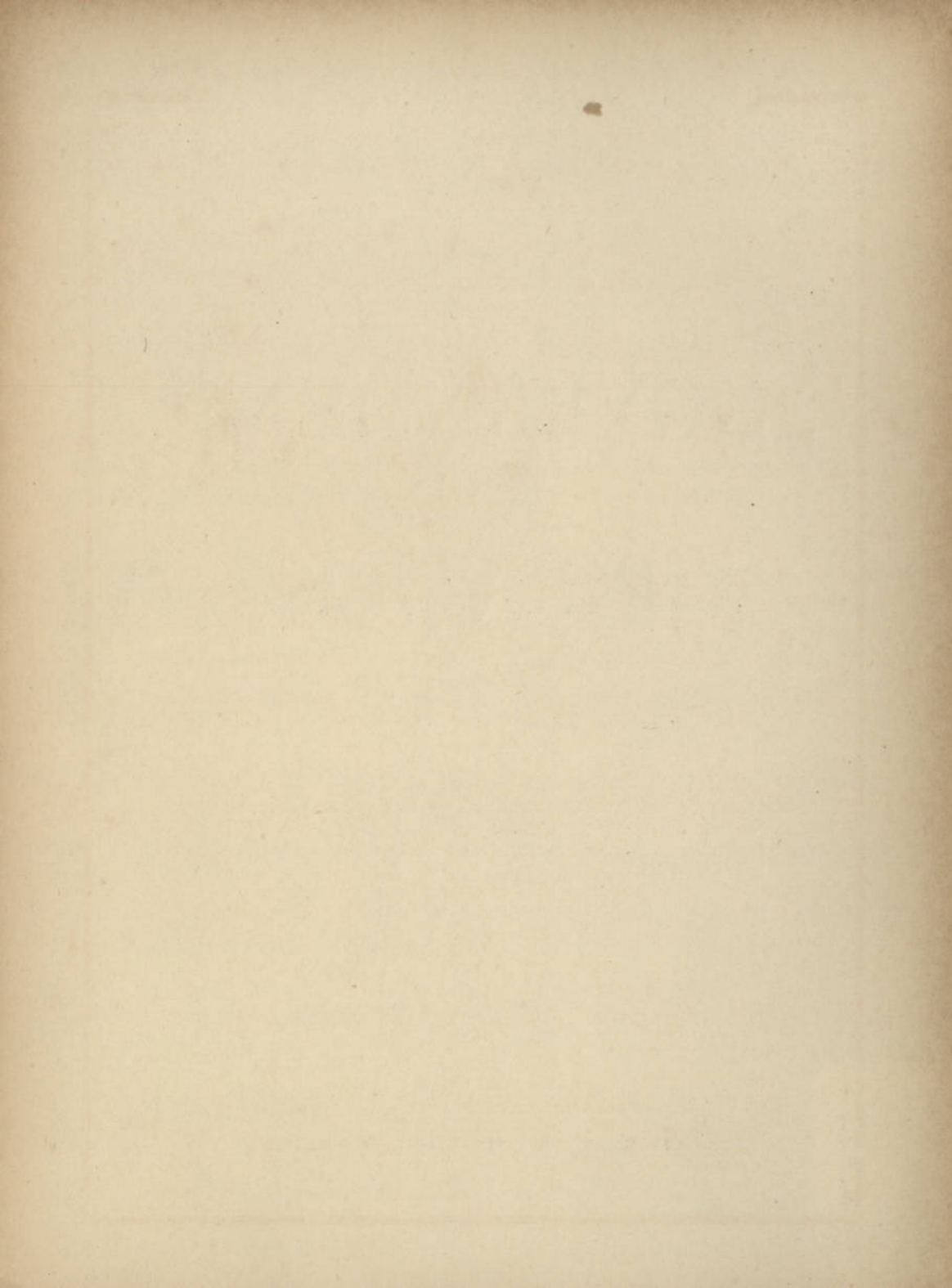


S A L A Z A R   S A Y S

# GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

*ADDRESS OF THE PRIME MINISTER, DR. OLIVEIRA SALAZAR, AT THE  
INVESTITURE OF THE CHAIRMEN OF THE DISTRICT COMMISSIONS  
AND OTHER HIGHER OFFICIALS OF THE NATIONAL UNION, ON THE  
19th OF JANUARY, 1956.*

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GOVERNMENT  
AND  
POLITICS

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I have been asked to give the investiture to the chairmen of the district commissions and to other higher officials of the National Union, and I do so with pleasure. The appointments and elections of the past six months have served the purpose, provided for in the Statutes, of renewing the controlling bodies of the Union and facilitating the access of new men to political activity.

My first duty is to convey to one and all my sincere thanks—to the ones for their work and sacrifices during their terms of office, and to the others for their readiness to serve as they rise to these posts and take their share of responsibility for the management of public affairs. All round, I see, there has been understanding and a healthy rivalry; and it has been possible to avoid the whole range of after-effects — from disappointments to hurt feelings — which usually accompany competitions of this kind. Let us rejoice.

My second duty is to explain my presence here and my avowed pleasure in coming to assist at what is unmistakably a meeting of politicians in a political organization — I who am so prejudiced against politics and have such a cordial dislike for them. This apparent contradiction demands a few words of explanation. It will be nothing elaborate; if you allow me I shall talk as though this were a family gathering.

## I

The careful observer will note that what goes by the name of political activity in the world of today is to a great extent nothing but excitement and that this excitement is fed by primitive feelings or foggy ideas. A certain number of words or slogans fly from continent to continent and carry in their simple and apparently clear formulae a world of doubtful if not entirely erroneous concepts. Take for instance the words liberty, democracy, dictatorship, or rights of the people: even before historians traced their development and philosophers defined their meaning they had succeeded in releasing torrents of emotion, unleashing revolutions and altering the course of events. And I am not thinking of communism, which can boast of creating confusion by inverting the usual political terminology, defying logic and reality with its «people's democracy», its «dictatorship of the proletariat», its «liberation of peoples» and so forth. Even outside the dominions of «the great lie» agreement on a sufficiently precise meaning of political terms turns out to be impossible. Occasionally words have greater value and prestige than the substance of institutions. In both the domestic and international fields, a smokescreen manages to hide the sun.

These facts contain lessons which we should always bear in mind, even though our code of ethics bars us from making use of the greater part, because we owe it to ourselves and to the people to speak the truth.

The activity of the regime which has presided over the country's life for the last thirty years has in my opinion been predominantly governmental and not sufficiently political — in other words, as a matter of principle it sacrifices politics to the conveniences and necessities of government. Here two questions are in order. What does sacrificing politics to government mean? How far can it be carried without peril?

Let us first be clear about the meaning of the words.

The word government means on the one hand the collection



of individuals who exercise governmental power and, on the other, the management of public affairs in the public interest. The need for government is self-evident — it is practically the same thing as the need for authority in every human society. Now the numerous problems of this society are solved along given lines of action, and it is the latter that define, in each special section of government, what is called financial, economic, religious, colonial, cultural or foreign policy, and so on. Each of these policies is the resultant of interest, existing facts and a doctrinal principle, that is to say the resultant of a definite goal, of the possibility of reaching it and of the moral or political principle which the responsible leaders believe should govern the solution. Save where exceptional circumstances have led to the formation of a government for the solution of a specific and limited problem, governing will normally consist of defining and implementing as many policies as there are fields of activity. And the absence of policy in any field would be just as inconceivable as that any one policy should be inconsistent with the rest. Accordingly, and even though we attribute to great doctrinal currents no more than the relative importance they usually have, it must be admitted that neither in theory nor practice is it possible, for instance, to solve the problem of property according to communist principles while trying to set up a liberal economy. In many cases there is not even the possibility of a compromise formula — problems are either solved or they are not.

It emerges from the foregoing that in governing, one is, after all, engaging in a political activity. And this first acceptance of the word politics is already sufficient to redeem it in my eyes.

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Even when individuals and social groups are not called upon to participate actively in the solution of a problem, as in the case of education and defence, reason and respect for the human

person, who is pre-eminently the subject of politics, make it highly advisable to secure popular consent for the provisions or orders of the authorities. As awareness of a common destiny or interest develops and takes root in the social body, it becomes all the more necessary for each individual to be informed, to understand and to give his intellectual adherence, so as to turn the government's activity into collective action and national life. Individuals and groups may intervene to a greater or lesser degree in the constitution of the civil power. Their direct intervention in working out solutions and implementing them may be extensive or limited. But there is no escaping one of the imperatives of our time, whose upshot is to enlarge the area directly benefited by the civil power and to increase interest in the exercise of this power.

Now the other meaning of politics which I would also like to rehabilitate is precisely politics understood as action tending to create a national awareness of the country's problems and to convince people of the rightness of the solutions adopted, so that the government may act in an enlightened and favourable atmosphere. Studying and discussing problems, informing public opinion of the facts which have given rise to them or affect them, suggesting possible or advisable solutions, defending the principles at issue, appraising obstacles — all this is political action, all this is *politics*. In this sense, in these terms and for this purpose politics has always been not only useful but necessary, and particularly so in the modern state, however constituted.

If it falls to governments to make themselves acquainted with problems, to analyze them, to discover solutions and to take steps to implement these, politics in the second sense of the word is the task mainly of political organizations. And when the latter fail in their task, either the government takes it over to the detriment of its own activity or public opinion may cease to be in a position to follow and support the government's action. When I said just now that politics had been sacrificed to government,



I had in mind precisely one of the horns of the distressing dilemma with which we have at times been faced: to slow up our pace or risk working amidst general incomprehension.

We now have a clear idea of the dualism founded on government and politics, and realize how perfect it would be if they completed each other without the latter being sacrificed to the former.

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The opposite sacrifice however — government to politics — is a heavier one from the social point of view, and this leads me to the third significance of the word politics, to the notion most commonly accepted and the most criticizable activity.

As everything in this world is corruptible, so politics, this most useful activity, can become corrupted. At home, politics will then be an activity aimed at the destruction of the government and the conquest of power. It will readily be understood that such an activity, which confines itself to destroying in order to climb or distributing favours in order to maintain positions, does damage that is greater or smaller depending on a country's divisions, its general level of morality, the failings of the collective conscience in face of the nation's life and interests, and above all on its political system. The greatest damage of all, in addition to the exaggerated criticism that paralyzes action and introduces worry and doubt in people's minds, seems to me to be the following: governments are driven to fight for their very existence, and entirely taken up by this they are led to neglect the activity that is properly theirs.

Now nothing lasting can be done against truth and against the nature of things; and so this sacrifice of government to politics produces an impression of the deficiency or inexistence of an organ essential to collective life and therefore, as a result of successive substitutions, to its instability.

We are forced to conclude, I believe, that if there is to be any sacrifice it should be of politics to government rather than vice-versa. But the right solution is as I have already indicated.

## II

My listeners, who have fortunately never doubted the usefulness of their efforts, may wonder what I am leading up to. My purpose is none other than formally to invite you to proceed to a very necessary intensification of your political activity, for the reasons already mentioned and a special one I shall now explain.

On the 28th of May another anniversary of the National Revolution will be coming round; the regime which has had the exclusive responsibility of government for the past three decades will be thirty years old. This monopoly may be considered a title of governmental and political capability, but it must also be seen as a source of heavy responsibilities which cannot be shared or even partially shifted on to other shoulders. The government's action was of course conditioned for considerable periods by wars abroad or by serious international crises, in addition to our own numerous collective shortcomings. But beyond these limitations, weighty and extensive as they were, in those other fields where the government was free to make decisions and take action, we must answer before the nation or history for what we did and what we failed to do that could or should have been done. Could we have gone further? Could we have done better? I am not afraid of the criticisms of my opponents when they are biased nor of the judgments of superficial observers who ignore actually existing circumstances and measure everything by an ideal standard: I am only interested in the verdict of men of intellectual integrity. If we faced difficulties and obstacles, on the other hand there were also



favourable political circumstances, although to the extent that the latter existed we are precisely the ones who must be given credit for them.

The occasion is sure to be festively celebrated and, when all is said and done, grounds for public satisfaction are not lacking. But in setting the fourth congress of the National Union for this year and about that date, the intention was to afford an opportunity for a broad review of the march of public affairs and for an appraisal of principles and methods, problems and solutions, efforts and results. The detailed chronicle of this period, which at any rate will not pass unnoticed in Portuguese history, is not to be expected from the Congress, nor would the undertaking be feasible. But once the starting-point and the means available to the governmental and administrative machinery have been clearly defined, an opinion can be formed about the distance travelled, the conditions of progress, the opportunities seized or lost and the rightness of the principles by which we have been guided. It will all boil down to ascertaining whether, under the influence of those principles, the country did in fact rise to a higher moral and material level, that is to say whether it progressed and improved itself.

People have been heard to say that thanks to some necessary limitations on press freedom this period has seen a dark phase of Portuguese thought and culture. The decadence could have taken place independently of political causes. But these criticisms gave rise to the idea of a cultural review also covering the last thirty years. If literature, science or the arts, and their various manifestations, whether state-promoted or not, turn out to be comparable to those of other good periods the accusation will fall to the ground and the country must have faith in its rejuvenated spirit. I personally would find it particularly painful to see that I had contributed even to a passing eclipse of Portuguese intelligence, be it in the defence of equally sacred interests.



### III

It will be very difficult — and the attempt is in any case not likely to be made — to avoid considering Portugal's political problems and their solutions in the light of world events and the lessons these contain.

Two conclusions or lessons may be drawn from the facts available to every observer. The first is that peoples and in particular their electorates are somewhat impatient with the agitation caused by over-violent, empty and ineffective political activities, which remain an end in themselves and divorced from national interests, even when the necessity of defending these is being repeatedly invoked. This problem, as I see it, is not one which can be solved by appealing in the name of prudence for a meeting of minds and a reconciliation of incompatible positions when the basis of a regime is itself an incitement to struggle and a leaven of passions. What is wrong is the psychological foundation, not its consequences. The various solutions resorted to in cases where the appeal to national unity comes up against deep divisions in public opinion cannot both maintain the principles inviolate and answer to the national interest: minority solutions are illogical; combinations and compromises have no practical efficiency.

At the same time that the violent struggles for the seizure of power seem to produce a sort of weariness or disgust in public opinion, we see — and that is the second lesson — a greater interest for public affairs in large sections of the population. Not only do social and political problems exert a strong attraction, but the élites who have risen from the masses thanks to the spread of culture long for a system of principles and solutions that will provide a satisfactory answer to their questionings and needs. A social and political ideal appears to be a necessity, and the great problem is who can supply it. Democracy? Communism?

When we make bold to say that democracy is a regime which may function well or badly but by definition cannot

provide, and now does not in fact provide that spiritual nourishment, we are accused of being anti-democratic and we risk compromising the sympathies we have won on other grounds. And so there is the danger that, apart from hopes which may be put in certain movements of a religious kind, one will be left forlorn with no alternative to communism.

In the field we are now dealing with, it is useless to argue that no one yet has ever managed to put communism into effect and that it will never be put into effect anywhere, that communism goes against nature and that both its premises and conclusions are false. Such arguments do not carry much weight so long as communism can go on posing as having the answer to the problems of the contemporary world. The superiority to which it lays claim, the uncompromising nature of its positions, even when it finds itself obliged to alter or reverse its line, the assurance of its contempt for everything that is not its philosophy, and the violence of its methods are unquestionably a force in the present-day world, a force which, although paralyzed in some countries, continues to be dangerous as a lure.

For my part I am certain that since the communist disease has not managed to fulfil itself in revolution, but only in cruelty, it will eventually run its course and disappear, leaving here and there, however, a few institutional experiments, vague social demands and an occasional solution. But nations have a vital interest in preventing the spread of this pandemic, for wherever a bold minority succeeds in setting up communism it almost invariably strikes at national independence, individual liberty and the gains of civilization.

That is the main reason for our position and concern in the matter; and if we do not want communism to make headway and subjugate us we must eliminate the conditions that favour it. When we dared to insert in the first Statutes of the National Union and subsequently in the opening part of the Constitution passages of substance defining our ideological position as regards the basic problems of man, society and the Portuguese nation,



our purpose was none other than to provide a concise statement of the ideals necessary for a Portuguese to-day and for the permanence of his national interests, to light the road ahead and define certain principles to which to be faithful and whose transcendent and perennial quality did not make them liable to constant revision. A modest contribution, but for us not without value.

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Passing from the national to the international level, we see two developments which some hold to be complementary, and others somewhat contradictory: on the one hand a nationalist trend, which has led to the formation of numerous states, and on the other lively manifestations of internationalism at times even going to the point of supranationalism; one would think that some countries are tired of existing as independent nations.

There is no doubt that concealed behind the self-determination trends there are other factors than the longing for freedom, but the upshot is in fact a multiplication of independent states in international society. The greatest problem it raises, aside from the liquidation of pre-existing situations, is whether the new states are able to govern themselves in real independence and whether they can fit without friction into the system of moral and legal coexistence of the remaining nations.

As to the second movement, the shrinking of distances has made the world smaller and permitted a progressive intensification of international dealings. A parallel development is that civilization seems to be heading toward uniformity, and it is not surprising therefore to find internationalism reinforced in law and in those institutions whose task it is to study the law and promote its application. There is no difficulty either about admitting that the creation of a bigger space by joining national spaces may facilitate the solution of a number of problems. Cooperation



between the sovereign powers jointly responsible for those problems and their adherence to common statutes may prove to be the most efficient way of solving them. There is nothing here to which we have any fundamental objection.

One aspect of the question, however, seems more serious, in spite of not being quite clear. I refer to the movement for European integration supported by many people in Europe and apparently encouraged by others outside it. Here and there this vague idea already begins to take on familiar juridical forms, like that of federation or confederation.

While I can see fairly clearly why some countries urge such forms of integration for western Europe, I have not yet managed to discover the reasons which lead others to accept, if not to hail, this sort of national liquidation. The heterogeneous composition and scattered configuration of some European states, the magnitude of their interests outside Europe, the diversity of their institutions, differences of political and moral climate — how all those aspects would be envisaged so as to safeguard that which is essential in some of these historical formations is something I have not yet succeeded in grasping.

I consider it a blessing of Providence that our geographic situation, territorial formation and political regime are such as to permit us to await in this corner of the Peninsula not only the doctrinal development of the question but also a beginning of practical application, if indeed things get to that point. The prudent position we have taken is to advocate and give the strongest support to an ever closer solidarity, without prejudice to national autonomies. These, so far as one can see on the political horizon, are still the simplest way of promoting the progress and defending the interests of the communities of peoples which they form. Our constructive and unaggressive nationalism, ready to collaborate with one and all, but rooted in heart and soil, may well continue to prove the best defence against bold experiments whose possible benefits would unfortunately only be felt after their real drawbacks had been suffered.

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I shall close.

I have spoken more than I wanted ; I hope I have not said more than I should.

Along with difficulties of every kind, the world is being swept by a wind of anxiety and uneasiness, which undermines peoples and seems to leave governments perplexed. The times have created not only the necessity but also the hope of profound changes in the social structure which economy and politics are the first to reflect. Many are of the opinion that these changes cannot be brought about except by a revolution. Our wish is that people everywhere may undertake that necessary revolution as we are carrying it out — in peace. Too slowly? A little too slowly perhaps, but I repeat and I insist — in peace.



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