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SALAZAR SAYS

# TO VOTE IS A GREAT DUTY

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EDITIONS OF THE S. N. I./LISBON 1945

N. I. 1433



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83-Rp

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S A L A Z A R S A Y S

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BOOKS

SNI

LISBON

1945

S.N.I.  
1433

INCORPORAÇÃO

GENTLEMEN:

To save you time, I have set myself the task of writing these words in which I have endeavoured to gather the essence of the question we have come here to examine. In this way I believe I shall be able to be both brief and clear. My purpose is, moreover, simply to explain the dissolution of the National Assembly, decreed yesterday, and the convening of the Electoral Colleges for the constitution of the new Chamber. We shall regard these acts in the light of our internal needs, without however overlooking the indications of the times in the international field.

I

The Political Constitution was revised during the last extraordinary session of the National Assembly in accordance with the decision previously taken to bring forward the date for the revision of the text of the Constitution. The composition of the Chamber having now been altered as regards the number of deputies — and, for the moment, it is not necessary to enquire into the import and sense of the other alterations — the Government have considered that the dissolution of the present Assembly has become necessary. This fact, which has

thus arisen in obedience to the exigencies of juridical logic, has however, taken on the character of a striking political act by reason of the need to consult the electorate which is being invited to select the new Deputies. The choice is to be made in accordance with the Electoral Law which had already been published and was in force at the time of the dissolution, and which incontestably sets up a more malleable system than the previous one.

The constitutional rule which provides for the meeting of the Assembly on November 25th for the passing of the Law relating to Revenue and Expenditure makes it necessary to fix the political elections for the 18th November at the latest, unless we preferred to convoke the dissolved Chamber for the purpose of putting that Law to the vote — a procedure which we regarded as constitutionally possible, that is, correct in pure Constitutional Law, though not very logical practically. Thus we are forced to content ourselves with an electoral period of forty days, which, moreover, conforms with the practice of many other States and appears adequate in the Portuguese case.

As a matter of fact, neither has the new Chamber constituent powers nor do there exist, in the field of national politics, any questions giving rise to deep cleavages or requiring clarification beyond the scope of the current facilities for discussion. I say this mindful of the healthy and beneficent political calm in which, thanks to the general acceptance of the fundamental principles of the constitutional and social organisation of the Portuguese Nation, we have managed to live, and not in any way because we would fear to put to the electorate any question, however transcendent, which could be submitted to it in regard to the form of the State. Our way of thinking in regard to the philosophical foundations of such acts is well known, but we recognise that there are occasions when it may be politically desirable to clarify the atmosphere through direct consultation of the Nation. In this we show a more resolute and liberal frame of mind than the majority of our democrats, concerning whom we may make so bold as to assert



that they are left far behind us in the matter of confidence in the ballot-box in so far as the definition of a fundamental political problem is concerned.

The Government, however, deem it essential to the dignity of their own position that there should exist, as of right as well as in fact, the conditions of seriousness, of security, and of freedom appropriate to the importance of these acts, in addition to that atmosphere of calm and of generous goodwill which it may be within their power to create. It is for this reason that not only do they propose to decree an amnesty sufficiently wide to cover all offences against the internal and external safety of the State, with the exception, of course, of the crimes of armed rebellion and of those which took the form of political terrorism, but also that they have endeavoured to go even further. A series of Decrees to be published forthwith brings to an end the exceptional régime in regard to the safety of the State and will ensure in an effective manner the freedom of citizens from the possibility of arbitrary imprisonment. To this end, these fundamental aspects of the juridical order are to be incorporated in the ordinary law. The Police for the Defence of the State is to be organised on the same lines as the ordinary judicial Police; a number of the institutions of penal procedure are to be modified and the ordinary Criminal Courts are to be reorganized in order that they may be the sure guardians of the juridical and social order without detriment to the legitimate rights of the citizens. To the same end, we may also decree the system of «Habeas Corpus», which was promised in the Constitution and is an aspiration of many who, more generous than well-informed, are apt to see therein facilities and guarantees which not even in the country of its origin it involves in reality. Be that as it may, and notwithstanding that it may be asserted that there have not been among us numerous or excessively grave cases of irregularity or of injustice, it is possible that one or other may have occurred as the result of human error or of the imperfection of the institutions themselves, and it is our duty so to correct and perfect them as to prevent the recurrence of such cases.

Finally I trust that there will be freedom of the Press sufficient to enable the actions of the Government to be appraised without restrictions and to render possible propaganda in favour of political ideas and of the candidates presenting themselves for election.

## II

I presume I have made it clear, by the mere recital of the facts, that the dissolution and the new elections both have their place in the logical development of our internal political life, which improves and progresses within the framework of the principles previously laid down, there being no question of any affinity, whether close or remote, with the electoral competition into which Europe has so avidly plunged. Owing to the need to regularize political life and to constitutionalize States whose structure, in more than one case, was destroyed by the war or for reasons connected with it, almost all European States, without distinction of victors or vanquished, find themselves in the throes of political agitation the scope of which goes from simple party competition to changes of régime and profound social reforms. It is clear, however, that the war, whilst I will not say that it provoked or created, since perhaps that would not be quite true, at any rate ended in a «social and political climate» derived from it and which it is necessary to take into consideration.

This «climate» is not yet discernible with precision either in the outlines of institutions which it may originate or in the depth of the reforms to which it may give rise. For the moment there is a kind of nebula, the outcome of vague aspirations, claims, forces without concrete directives, seeking blindly for ways to materialize or to gain supremacy.

From the social point of view, we must remember that the movement began long before the war and was unconnected with the contestants: but the so-called total war, by its constant appeal to all classes and forces in every Nation, by the wide scope of military and industrial mobilization, by the intensely

lived solidarity within the nations, and even within the international community in the face of perils, labours, and sufferings — served, through all these factors, to intensify the social climate. The worst of it is that many a reform or improvement which, in the prosperous conditions of peace, would have been practicable, is seeking immediate and integral realization in the midst of the rubble, ruin and misery caused by the war. In such circumstances, it is to be feared that, instead of a more equitable distribution of the wealth created, we are to witness, here and there, the mass transfer of the means of production, with the consequence that, practically, the problem will be left where it is, with different beneficiaries and other malcontents.

As regards the «political climate», it is only too clear that the flag of victory has been unfurled and is fluttering in the wind of democracy, but the idea, though sufficiently vague to be accepted as a motto, has shown itself to be too unprecise to provide the basis for political construction. And already voices are being raised from amongst the immense contradictions of the times to suggest that we should begin by defining the terms of the problem.

For my part, I believe that European political thought, in so far as it relates to the objective revision, in the light of reason and of experience, of the principles which must regulate the organization and Government of the Nations shows a regression, that is, a retrocession. But I do not say it out loud — it would be useless, possibly unprofitable, when the world is simmering with passions and drunk with words and vague sentiments, and the majority, fearful of being out of fashion, exhaust themselves reiterating tirades from speeches as old as they are worthless.

All this is imprinting on life such a lack of sincerity, of truth, of objectivity, that the men are indeed to be pitied on whom events have thrown the burden of setting new courses for the world. Although it is known that the clash of interests tends to intensify confusion in the practical field, men accustomed to reflexion cannot fail to sense the gravity of the con-

traditions and ambiguities in which Europe is floundering and becoming barren, and in which the continent is more and more diminishing in stature.

Let us hope that what is happening is a crisis of thought caused by the upsetting of the previously existing balance. Let us also hope that, when the wheat has been separated from the chaff, truth from error, that which is no longer valid from that which is hopeful and alive, it may be possible to find the new formulas, to arrive at a synthesis of the aspirations and values which our time and the high principles which have been proved by the experience of centuries are generating.

### III

For us, and at the present time, the problem of greatest interest — and on this I feel that we are, many of us, disquieted — is to know the extent to which that «social climate» and that «political climate» — the gusts of the war, let us say — can prove detrimental to our progress or clash with the fundamental interests of the Nation.

In the sphere of the external interests of the Portuguese Nation it is but pointing to facts available to all to say that our conceptions, political organization, methods of work, in no way affected alliances, understandings, friendships, or co-operation with those to whom we were bound by ancient obligations or in whom lay the guarantee of the best defence of our liberty and of our rights. I do not think it is necessary to go into details on this subject which, besides, is one with which I feel some diffidence in dealing — the country is to-day in a position to judge whether, and, if so, in what manner, its national and imperial interests were protected in the midst of the greatest convulsion which undoubtedly we have had to go through since the beginning of our existence as a nation. To those who have, as yet, been unable to do justice to our intentions or to our acts, I would offer the advice that they should at least rejoice in the results secured, leaving the final judgement to History. If before the latter, however, the evidence is

needed of one who intensely lived the whole drama, I may say, I am in conscience bound to say, that without internal order, without political calm, without national unity nor patriotic spirit, without finances and without credit, without economic organization and direction, without armaments and without an Army, without ships and without a Navy, without stable Government, without discipline and authority, that is to say, outside and aside from all that constitutes the work, the essence, and the spirit of the present political régime, I do not know how we should have distinguished our interest from the interest of others, how from the accidental and the transitory we should have separated the permanent course of our History and overcome with friends and enemies such great difficulties. I do not say that others endowed with exceptional skill and in the midst of the usual disorder would have been incapable of overcoming them; I merely say that I would not have known how to do it in any other way.

The social climate of the present time does not upset us nor can it worry us who, if from the very outset we took up positions against a number of doctrinaire systems in vogue, have always been in the ranks of those who were dissatisfied with the present social organization. The political crisis through which the world is passing, allied to the moral disequilibrium and the misery engendered by the war is, however, creating conditions which, though they may hasten a desirable evolution, may also set off catastrophic upheavals. Tactics are being developed to which eyes are being lightheartedly shut and towards which it would be prudent that all should keep their eyes open: to press for the setting up of weak institutions in order to gain a foothold, and later to insist on strong ones for the purpose of consolidation. In this way much will be subverted which until recently was considered safe for western civilisation.

I deem it useless and harmful to entertain illusions in this connexion and to think that we are not separated from other movements or revolutions by basic concepts of life and civilization. We, who are well conscious of what is possible, should be

lacking in seriousness were we shamelessly to begin promising the Moon; nor would it be safe to join the great chorus of adulation of the masses, as if it were necessary to revive, for their benefit, old privileges which in fact do not exist for other classes of the population.

Apart from these reservations, we continue true to our original way of thinking in regard to the workers. «With the same solicitude with which we have met other needs, and with the same tenacity of purpose with which have solved other problems until recently looked upon as insoluble — as I said in '32 — we shall look to their employment, their housing, their health, their incapacity, their wage, their education, their organization and protection, their social betterment, their dignity; we shall improve their lot — or rather — we shall transform their position in economic life and in the State». Our sole restriction to the widest possible reforms in the economic and social fields relate to «those which ignore the principle of the hierarchy of values and of interests and of the best interrelation of these within the national unity».

Long before many who have timidly made reference to it, we ventured to assert that the right to work, whatever might be the difficulties in its way prior to the introduction of profound changes in the economy of do-day, is likely to prove the outstanding conquest of the century and the most momentous instrument of emancipation for the worker. Long before others who even to-day press for the single school and the free school, we proclaimed the need for education not to be in fact the privilege of the well-to-do or of the middle classes but merely the open door to the most able, thus ensuring the most rational development of all the elements in society.

If to this we add that — as indeed is current among modern peoples — the various rungs in the social scale and in the political organization are accessible to all, we shall have the foundations required to provide us with the necessary security, due justice, and possible equality. Education for those who are fittest to receive it, places for the most competent,



work for all — this is the essential: all else, as in the Gospel, will come by accrual.

The need remains for a few words on the political climate in so far as it may relate to our electoral act.

The marked tendency of our Constitution is towards organic democracy which it is the role of the corporative organization, when extended to all forms of social activity, to realize. I continue to hold the conviction that, in the absence of more perfect formulas, as yet undiscovered, this one will be the most suited to the Portuguese people, if not to others, since it will give in the State the exact projection of the Nation. Under it, it may be said with all appropriateness that the State is the Nation socially organized.

On the other hand, with the prudence which an unstable world in turmoil rendered advisable, the political Constitution provided for compromise with other current ideas and institutions. There would not, in any case, be any cause, but above all I consider that it would be premature, to sacrifice probable solutions for the future to formulas of which it may boldly be said that they have not been ennobled but have rather spent themselves with time and use. There is no doubt, however, that there has been formed an international public opinion in regard to these manifestations of the popular will through the electoral process and it can only be to our advantage that the latter should again operate at the present moment. And since we are of the opinion that it is not possible to govern against the persistent will of a people, the latter will say whether the system is to be changed.

#### IV

I do not consider that the formula «for the Nation through the Party» has been or can be seriously applied in Portugal. Not only in times of national crisis, but also, whenever public conscience has clearly felt the need to place the interests of the Nation above barren party strife, it has been sought to escape from the party system and spirit so as to ensure the solution

of problems or the satisfaction of the community's needs on a higher plane than that of personal or groups rivalries.

Whether this result has been reached through understandings or parliamentary truces for neutralizing certain Ministerial posts, through non-party Governments, or through National Governments, is immaterial when it is a question of assessing the virtue or the harmfulness of the party spirit in the Government of the Nation.

Guided by this most clear lesson of experience, we have sought to raise ourselves on to the national plane not only in the consideration of the problems to be solved but also of the persons to be recruited and the methods to be applied. Like others, we may say: «All that is national is ours — all that is national by virtue of the end in view and of its spirit, that we adopt as our programme, as our aspiration, as our method». For this reason, and in a spirit of sincerity, we appeal to all men, independently of their origin and rank, of their religious creed, of their political preferences, of their former party affiliations, for a joint effort for the good of the Nation.

Of course, in the interests of the indispensable moral qualities which any one proposing to serve the public weal, must possess, adhesion must be required to a certain limited number of principles which are the very basis and condition for work in common. But surely this will surprise no one.

More than twenty years ago, I made so bold as to proclaim that every State — even the liberal State — obeys a philosophical conception and that Government is in itself a doctrine in action. If any lesson can be deduced clearly from this war it is that Liberalism was wrong in placing truth and error on the same footing: it has been found necessary to acknowledge — and many in doing so have to overcome stubborn tendencies of the mind — that, for the peoples and for the direction of their collective life, there are evil and good, truth and error, tenets of life and tenets of death. If not through reason, then by their fruits shall we know them.

In fidelity to this way of thinking, it was desired that the «União Nacional» should not constitute itself into a political



party. Not only is it kept open to all men of good will — indeed the organization is a kind of brotherhood of political volunteers — but it has no intervention in the public governance and does not aspire to the recruitment of the civil service or of the political personnel.

It is known that not even has it been necessary to belong to it to attain to the highest posts in the State, in the Government, in the Chambers, and in Public Administration. Notwithstanding that this may be the cause of some weakness in the political organization, and even in the State, we have always felt that the cure of partisanship required every sacrifice and well merited the expenditure of every effort.

In this way, there is nothing to prevent the «União Nacional» from including in the lists submitted to the electors names of independent persons who, by reason of their intellectual background or temperament, are not disposed to adhere to such and such of our principles but who are nevertheless capable of carrying out their duties with advantage as representatives of the people. Neither these nor any others are, or were, ever asked, in the name of discipline, to give their support to any measure or attitude. That which any party requires of its members, as an essential of life and work within the most liberal and democratic systems, we do not require. We content ourselves with the free votes of consciences elucidated by study of the problems and by love of country.

I do not know whether any whose position is one hostility will wish to fight the elections, to take part in them with their own opposition lists — let us call them so for the sake of simplicity. They can and are entitled to do so; and if those who are presented to the polls are superior to the candidates put forward by the «União Nacional» because they represent high intellectual and moral values or because they truly hold positions of social leadership which are so lamentably disappearing in our time and in our land, it will even be desirable that the Nation should prefer them.

I shall merely formulate one restriction and that is that they should discard their spirit of faction if they entertain it;

their party spirit if they retain it; their preconceived ideas, since none of this is of interest to the country, or rather, it is decisively in the country's interest that none of this should be revived.

None of us supposes that the programme and the acts of the Government receive at all times general approval, and that there are not therefore a greater or smaller number of individuals who, owing to their intellectual background, personal sentiments, or former engagements and connections, are unwilling to agree and much less to give us their support or applause. But because nothing can be built with negation alone, I have found it of interest to ascertain, through the available sources of information, what concrete ideas of Government they hold which might be profitable or of use to the country. And this is what I have found: the greater part of the mental activity for many enemies of the régime has been spent in personal insults of which the greatest percentage is — I will not say to my honour, but of right — addressed to me. I think, however, that, after the first week, it would be difficult, with such equipment, to govern or to solve the most insignificant national problem.

Besides this part which so characteristically defines the political methods of the past, there are, if I may so express myself, two chapters: one, replete with sonorous and empty phrases on those very same liberties which were liberally, and possibly in their own name, denied us in times gone by; another, setting out the summary of the permanent problems and the real needs of the Country, for which immediate satisfaction is insisted upon.

What I find most strange in this connection is that all this comes from the most complete and caliginous ignorance of governmental activity in recent years. And the worst of it is that, as long as, politically, the Country is Lisbon, the same thing is liable to recur; because there are things which are asked for and which have already been done, and there are others on which intense work is being carried out everywhere, for all to see. This Lisbon of ours seems not to be in the least aware of

the roads nor of the commercial or fishing ports, nor of the work done in the field of hydraulics, nor of the re-afforestation along the mountain chains and dunes, nor of the internal colonization, nor of the aerodromes, nor of the rural improvements, nor of the schools and of the housing of the public services, nor of the restoration of monuments, nor of the provision of houses for the people, nor of the urbanization of towns and villages — of nothing, in short. And the infinite continues to be clamoured for.

I would also make another comment: if a plan is to be developed over five or ten years because, under conditions in Portugal, it is impossible to carry it out in less, it is unfair that we should be required to complete it by the end of the first year. The sole matter open to discussion is whether or not the principles according to which such plan or programme is developed, the foundations on which it rests, the means it employs, ensure its integral execution.

The purpose of these considerations of mine was to say that I have not found, after arriving at the synthesis we have been able to formulate of the aspirations and needs of the Portuguese Nation, any great scope for establishing a basis of doctrine or for constituting a serious group of men who, in the manner current in other countries, might be looked upon as a political party. To this technical impossibility or impossibility of principle I would add the following observation:

Far be it from me to misinterpret the teachings of History, but if I have understood aright, beneath and behind misleading appearances the pure, the dry reality of Portuguese parliamentarism and party life would seem to be that we have never had more than one great party and one other or others which at best, and at intervals, provided the first with a rest from the fatigue of power. And when this was not the case, what used to happen was even worse — that is, there supervened the incapacity to govern through the splitting of party forces.

And all this leads us to the same conclusion — that, if possible, it is necessary to exploit to the full all the potential-

ties of a non-party and national situation which other peoples envy us — cut to shreds as they have been in their flesh and divided as they are in their souls — and which we — blind or unfortunate that we are! — do not at times know how to value.

## V

I have still to examine a delicate point, but concerning which it was necessary that one day something should be courageously said, and it may be said to-day.

The maintenance, beyond what, in view of our habitual instability, might be wished or foreseen, of a certain number of personalities in the exercise of the same function, may have created the impression that access has been indefinitely barred and that the desired changes, the utilization of new men, the satisfaction of legitimate ambitions are, in these circumstances, impossible. The régime — perhaps even I myself — may seem to be like a leafy tree in the thick shadow of which nothing can live and grow politically. Nothing could be more unjust or less in accordance with the facts.

In so far as the authorities as a whole, the heads of the Administration, the members of the Government, are concerned, they have no more stability than is found in any country which is in order and is well governed. As regards the Head of the State, I deem it to be the greatest boon of Providence that the Country should have realized the inestimable advantage of his continued occupation of the post and that it should have significantly called on him, in successive plebiscites, to remain in the exercise of his high functions. Concerning the Head of the Government, sensible men may conclude that the problem would be of interest only if a diarchy had been established in Portugal, «de jure» or «de facto». Providence, which, as the result of the prudence and moderation which has prevailed, has protected us from so many mistakes and dangers, has saved us from this also. It is one of the principles of the régime, to which I faithfully adhere and which I follow, that the Head of the State can never be in the wrong, and this means that

political problems have but one supreme arbiter, whose wise decision all must obey.

Nor could I, exchanging patriotism for vanity, ever give thought to whatever might be deduced from the present situation as flattering; rather have I always considered that the strength and interest of the country do not lie in presenting an example of governmental longevity but in its being able to count on many men well equipped for the high functions of the State. Besides, I have no ambitions nor any desire to govern (I say it because it is not a quality but a defect). I merely have the desire, and that sincere and deep, that a task to which many have dedicated, and for which so many have already sacrificed their lives, should not be exposed to the ignorant incomprehension, to the total incompetence, to the turmoil of such low mentalities and such base passions as would dishonour us as men and bring us shame and betrayal.

## VI

A word or two more for an appeal to the Country. Our people are averse to the vote — by reason of their temperament, of the evil recollection of bygone times in which it brought them unpleasant experiences and loss, of their easy-going habits, of their confidence in persons, and even — who knows? — of their innate suspicion of the process. But there are circumstances in which grave sacrifices may be asked of them. We have saved them from the sacrifice of having to shed their blood for the defence of the Nation's integrity, honour, and right; we cannot save them from that of the vote which shall express their will as clearly as possible.

We must live our lives without subjection to the systems, patterns, or tastes of others; but this self-same attitude of dignity and independence points to the advisability of asserting at the present moment, and without subterfuge, our political consciousness and our will to govern ourselves in accordance with our own preferences.

To vote is, thus, a great duty.

Composto e Impresso na  
EDITORIAL IMPERIO, Lda.,  
Rua do Salitre, 151 - 125  
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