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Slander, Ideological Differences, or Academic Debate?
The “Verão Quente” of 2012 and the State of Portuguese Historiography

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Over the course of the summer of 2012 the Portuguese historical profession suffered a major blow to its image and reputation. Due initially to the efforts of a single colleague, the gloves came off within the Portuguese academy, with old battles being fought anew, and with veterans and newcomers alike joining in what at times became an unseemly war of words. Week after week, in the pages of the daily newspaper Público, historians—some known to the general public, others less so—argued about the relative merits of one work in particular, the state of historical writing in Portugal in general, and the links between history, ideology, and the political commentary on current events that so many Portuguese academics, historians included, engage in. This should not have been a problem, and indeed some valid points were made along the way; but they were made in the context of a discussion initiated by slander, or something very close to slander, and which was shaped by political passions at a particularly difficult and sensitive time in recent Portuguese life, when the country is gripped by apprehension over the effects of prolonged austerity. As a result, the overall value of the incident as a whole was negligible, and it certainly did not amount to a badly needed debate over how differing visions of the past can coexist in present-day Portugal. This article attempts to chronicle the dispute, setting it into its wider context for the benefit of readers outside Portugal. In so doing, it will try to establish why the dispute was so bitter, a task related both to wider questions regarding the uneasy relationship between academic debate and mass media outlets, and to the fine line between historical argument and political disputes.

Before the article goes any further, however, I must make clear that one of the figures at the heart of this historiographical dispute, Manuel Loff, of the University of Oporto, wrote a very negative review of my biography of Salazar (Salazar: Biografia Política (Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 2010). Technically, in fact, he wrote three reviews—which might be seen by some as excessive—but they say essentially the same thing. These were published in the Portuguese edition of Le Monde Diplomatique (February 2011), in the

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