
Miscellaneous

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“No mission more sublime”. The press and Portuguese journalism in United States: a sociocultural overview (1920-1940)

Abstract

Following the *en masse* arrival of Portuguese immigrants to the United States between 1900 and 1929, the Portuguese press became an interesting professional niche for whoever had the training and the technical capabilities to publish a newspaper that could attract enough subscribers and advertisers to make it economically viable. Although the Portuguese diaspora in its majority originated from the Azores archipelago, with very particular personal profiles associated with a poor rural world, they managed to develop their own media ecosystem. The process of consolidation of this model of ethnic press and journalism developed with enormous limitations and some unique situations, not only in the way of producing content, but also in the type of advertising. Some of the sociocultural traits that characterized the Portuguese press within the USA are covered in this investigation of the period between 1920 and 1940, perhaps its most productive and significant historic period. This cycle, however, coincided with the arrival of the radio, competition with which caused a significant reduction in advertising, forcing the closure of some newspapers. Through a methodology that uses a documentary research, the work focuses mainly on analyzing the political economy of this type of phenomenon, some of its most representative sociocultural dynamics and its relationship with the Portuguese authorities.

Keywords

Press history, journalism history, United States, Portuguese immigration, communications media, cultural diplomacy

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1. Introduction

This article deals with the journalistic production of the immigrants who are part of the Portuguese diaspora in the United States during the period between 1920 and 1940. The study focuses on identifying the most relevant elements of their political economy and financial resources, as well as other representative aspects of their sociocultural role, paying special attention to the description and analysis of the main dynamics related to the reception of their diffusion among the audiences of the Luso-American community, as well as their relationship with the political authorities of Portugal.

The 1920s and 1930s are critical for the settlement, the development, and the visibility of the Lusophone community, composed in its majority of immigrants from the Azores archipelago and the island of Madeira, who arrived *en masse* in search of the American dream over the first three decades of the 20th century (Almeida, 2010; Baganha, 2009; Vicente, 1998). According to the *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics* (2012: 8), 192,487 Portuguese immigrants entered the United States between 1900 and 1929. Although the timeline of the Portuguese press in North America began in 1877, after the founding of the weekly *Jornal de Noticias* in Erie (Pennsylvania), the historic decades during which Portuguese journalism acquired greater significance were the 1920s and 30s, both because of the number of journals that were established and because of their circulation throughout various States on the Atlantic and Pacific coastlines, especially Massachusetts and California (Pap, 1987; Pena-Rodríguez, 2020).

As various authors have explained in relation with the development of the so-called “ethnic press” in the United States (Lazarte-Morales, 2008; Miller, 1987; Rhodes, 2010; Viswanath & Arora, 2009; Zubrzycki, 1958, among others), the reasoning that moved Portuguese immigrants to edit newspapers and to practice journalism was of a linguistic, emotional, cultural, political, economic and commercial ilk. The immigrants needed to read news in Portuguese to know what was happening in their place of origin in Portugal. It was also important for them to have information on the Portuguese community in the United States, especially after the creation and the expansion of activities within their own social fabric and commercial networks consisting of small businesses and fraternal cultural and political institutions that wished to publicize their events and to promote their existence (Pap, 1987: 297). In a certain sense, the newspapers edited by and for Lusophone immigrants were their main source of public education in their new American life, a sort of “school” (Mark, 1965: 139) that could help to combat the “curse of ignorance” (*A Revista Portuguesa*, 1915).

In fact, illiteracy rates constituted an important factor in relation to newspaper circulation rates and Portuguese journalism among the immigrants. The official American immigration reports studied by Pap (1981: 94-102) indicated that almost 70% of the Portuguese immigrants aged over 14 years old, who arrived between 1899 and 1910, admitted to knowing neither how to read nor to write. Among those immigrants was the Azorean Guilherme Machado Luiz, founder and first owner of *Alvorada* and afterwards the *Diario de Noticias* of New Bedford, which could be considered the most professional and successful newspaper in the history of the Portuguese community in the United States -reaching print circulation figures of over 20,000 in the 1930s (Pena-Rodríguez, 2020: 263).

The migratory records of the American government ranked the Portuguese in last place on the scale of literacy among immigrants of various nationalities, which faithfully reflected the situation of Portugal in the European context. It recorded the highest illiteracy rate at that time: 70% and 55% of all women and men, respectively (Proença, 1996: 144). After the fall of the monarchy and the inauguration of the Republic in 1910, the percentage of illiterate people fell by almost 50% between 1911 and 1917 (Pap, 1981: 97). With the imposition of a literacy

requirement for immigrants at the North-American borders and the improvement of the literacy rate in Portugal, the figures fell year by year. The Portuguese government itself went so far as to prohibit the emigration of illiterate citizens in 1929. Illiteracy, obviously, represented a problem for the immigrant press, which saw itself affected by the general tendency on the part of the offspring of immigrants to adopt the English language as a factor in their integration, professional development, and personal prestige. A problem that some newspapers blamed on an inferiority complex towards the local Anglo-Saxon culture (*Diario de Noticias*, 1940).

Although, on occasions, the cultural level of the immigrants was insufficient to interpret certain sorts of contents, the journalists could be a stimulus to raise literacy rates in the community in the first decades of its history, as publications in Portuguese were cultural references in each immigrant settlement. In response to the complaints of some diplomats, because of the lack of education within the Portuguese community, *A California Alegre* affirmed in 1937 that the Portuguese in California were “rude” because they were there to work. The argument was that the community was neither educated nor indeed instructed, but it was “patriotic” and had a “good heart” (*A California Alegre*, 1937).¹ A fact that was highlighted by other newspapers, such as the *Diario de Noticias*, which, despite recognizing the excellent working qualities of the Portuguese immigrant, noted his lack of culture due to Portugal's “scandalous” education policy (*Diario de Noticias*, 1959). So, those that had some sort of academic or intellectual preparation had the opportunity of turning themselves into owners, directors, journalists, and contributors of this sort of press, which meant that it could symbolically reach out to the “American dream” through the production of journalism in Portuguese.²

2. Theoretical framework, state of the question and historical context

The quantitative data of the press edited by all immigrant communities together in comparison with the Luso-American context must be observed to understand the specific features that defined the Portuguese press and Portuguese journalism in the United States, and its true historic meaning. The activity of the foreign press reached its highest peak at the stage of mass emigration from Europe, between 1890 and 1930, when over 22 million people arrived in the United States, above all through the ports of New York and San Francisco. In 1910, there were over 1,300 newspapers published in up to 30 different non-English languages (Park, 1922).

In total, adding up all these publications of ethnic origin, of which 150 were daily newspapers, their total circulation figures were around 2.6 million (Blanchard, 1998: 207). Despite the short-life of many, some of the Portuguese newspapers achieved positions of public relevance and influence, with circulation figures higher than 5,000 (Pena-Rodríguez, 2020: 269). Throughout their history, 167 newspapers were edited and printed in Portuguese in different states and cities. Most of them were ephemeral –43 lasted less than one year–, although the lives of five spanned half a century or more. In Table 1, a chronological and numerical comparison may be drawn between the Portuguese newspapers founded over the decades in various States up to 2020. It is worth noting that, no new Portuguese-language newspapers have been founded over the past decade, due to the progressive reduction in the entry of immigrants between 2010 and 2020, and acculturation within the American world, as well as the irruption and the rapid expansion of the Internet and digital platforms.

¹ All the literal quotations of Portuguese translated into English that appear in this paper were the work of the authors.

² On the idea of the “American dream”, see the work of J Cullen (2003) *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation*.

Table 1. Number of newspapers and magazines founded by decade and state (1870-2010)

Decade	Number	Num. – State
1870	1	1. – Pennsylvania
1880	8	2. – Massachusetts 4. – California 2. – Hawaii
1890	24	9. – Massachusetts 8. – California 7. – Hawaii
1900	16	9. – Massachusetts 5. – California 2. – Hawaii
1910	18	10. – Massachusetts 6. – California 1. – Hawaii 1. – New York
1920	34	23. – Massachusetts 5. – California 3. – New Jersey 2. – Rhode Island 1. – New York
1930	27	6. – Massachusetts 11. – California 5. – New York 4. – New Jersey 1. – Connecticut
1940	3	2. – Massachusetts 1. – New York
1950	2	2. – New York
1960	5	2. – New Jersey 2. – California 1. – Massachusetts
1970	15	6. – New Jersey 4. – Massachusetts 3. – Rhode Island 2. – California
1980	7	3. – California 2. – Rhode Island 1. – New York 1. – Massachusetts
1990	4	2. – California 1. – New Jersey 1. – Florida
2000	3	1. – California 1. – Massachusetts 1. – Virginia
2010	0	
Total	167	

Source: Authors' own work based upon archived data in Portugal and the United States.

According to the data examined in various US and Portuguese archives, Portuguese immigrants edited at least 34 newspapers in the States of Massachusetts, California, New Jersey, Rhode Island and New York in the 1920s. In the subsequent decade, 27 other newspapers were founded, one of them in Connecticut. The 1920s and the 1930s were in both quantitative and qualitative terms the most productive in the history of the immigrant press and journalism in the United States. After this fruitful and critical phase for Luso-American journalism, associated with the entry *en masse* of immigrants between 1900 and 1929, over the two following decades, between the 1940s and 1950s, only 5 new newspapers were established.

Within the timeframe of this study, the following are among the leading newspapers. In Massachusetts: *Alvorada* (New Bedford, 1919-1926), which would subsequently be rebaptized the *Diario de Noticias* (1927-1973), and the weekly newspapers *O Independente* (New Bedford, 1897-1945), *Novidades* (Fall River, 1907-1948), *O Popular* (New Bedford, 1914-1935) and *O Colonial* (Fairhaven, 1925-1945). And in California: the weekly papers *A União Portuguesa* (San Francisco, 1887-1942), *Jornal Português* (Oakland, 1932-1997), *A Liberdade* (Sacramento, 1900-1937), *A Colonia Portuguesa* (Oakland, 1924-1932) and *O Lavrador Portuguez* (Leemore, 1912-1927).

It is important to take into account that, altogether, the foreign language press has not been a marginal sector, with a low level of impact within North-American society.

There are numerous works that illustrate, through various approaches and methodologies, up to what point this sort of press was a relevant actor in different historical periods within the United States (Johnson, 2000; Joyce, 1976; Kowalick, 1978; Kessler, 1984; Rhodes, 2010; Wittke, 1957, among others). Within the list of generalist studies on this journalistic phenomenon, Miller's edition (1987) stands out, in which newspapers belonging to 27 minority groups can be found, among which Arab, Chinese, Croatian, Danish, Estonian, French, German, Greek, Irish, Japanese, Jewish, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Mexican, Philippine, Polish, Portuguese (the last mentioned studied by Pap.), and Russian communities.

In this framework, an examination of the Portuguese immigrant press and journalism in the United States is a line of research that up until now has not raised too much interest. From an interdisciplinary view, the pioneer was Pap, who published a brief chapter in the above-mentioned work of Miller that contributed a general diachronic view of the historic evolution of the Lusophone press. Likewise, Gomes (1995) approached the political role of that sort of newspaper in California between 1888 and 1928. And, more recently, the Portuguese communication media in the United States have been approached in other works, both from historical and contemporary perspectives. Among them, the article of Ponte (2014) may be highlighted on the history of the Cambridge seminary (Massachusetts) *Açôres-América* (1903), the analysis of La Pastina, Pavão and Sousa (2017) on contemporary Lusophone media on the East coast, the investigation of Correia (2021) on the political debate over the 1930s among the immigrants of New Bedford, the work of the Pena-Rodríguez y Sanz-Hernando (2023) on the female pioneers in the management of Luso-American newspapers, and the monograph (Pena-Rodríguez, 2020) which addresses in a general way this phenomenon and provides a useful historical repository of Luso-American newspapers and journals.

In relation to the temporal dimension, it is relevant to know the size of the Portuguese diaspora during the period under analysis. Citing official sources, *Alvorada* affirmed in 1922 that the number of Portuguese in the United States was around 250,000, of whom around 30,000 were living in New Bedford and 26,000 in the neighboring town of Fall River (both in Massachusetts). The highest numbers of citizens of Portuguese origin were recorded in both cities. According to the data—which might be incomplete—from the Embassy of Portugal in Washington (Embassy of Portugal, Box 18, Document 117 of the secretary, JD Ramos), the Luso-

American community was formed of 376,893 people in 1934, of whom around 150,000 were living in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, some 20,000 in New York or outlying areas, and around 100,000 in California.

Besides, immense legal, political, economic and social upheaval took place during the 1920s in sociological terms. The United States government started to impose restrictions on the arrival of immigrants. First, through the requirement for literacy, which only permitted the entry of people over 16 years old who knew how to read and to write; and afterwards, as from 1921, through restrictions on national quotas (Pap, 1981: 75-85). At that time, Portugal had not overcome its serious political and social crisis after the instauration of the Republic on October 5, 1910, with serious consequences for its economy. The country was at a time of great instability, with the formation of up to 46 different governments in the period between the inauguration of the new republican regime and the military coup of 28 May 1926. (Marques, 2010). In turn, the United States economy was starting to show signs of exhaustion and the whaling industry, once a source of employment for many Portuguese, had disappeared (Warrin, 2010). Fortunately, the end of whaling for the Portuguese colony in New England was followed at the start of the 20th century by a productive stage for the textile industry, but the great depression of 1929 ended any hopes of further growth. Many Portuguese immigrants who lived by the sea retrained as workers to enter various other sectors. One significant group emigrated to other States, above all to California, whereas others decided to return to Portugal (Barrow, 2002).

In the 1920s, the flowering of Luso-American journalism was a reflection of the dynamic process of economic, political and social change within the Portuguese immigrant community. It was a key moment, in which the narratives on the political controversies that divided Republicans and Monarchists, and liberalism and conservatism, had great repercussions among the immigrant readerships. The propaganda of one or another group formed part of a public debate that was communicated through printed publications, at the time the most effective medium for political influence. In addition, new political projects associated with ideologies such as Communism, Socialism, Fascism and Nazism emerged, which added even more agitation to a controversy that was to harden during the 1930s with the foundation of the dictatorship of the *Estado Novo* [New State] of Portugal (1933) and the tragic international dimension of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), in which thousands of Portuguese volunteers participated (Correia, 2021: 91-97).

Portugal's role in the United States was also becoming an issue of concern for the immigrant population. Political and religious indoctrination, intellectual experimentation, commercial exchange and leadership within the community were the most important motivations driving the new journalistic endeavors, some linked to the Portuguese monarchic movement, such as *A Restauração* and *O Talassa*. The latter, published fortnightly between 1923 and 1924, was the organ of the *Centro Monárquico Português* [Portuguese Monarchic Centre] of New Bedford,³ directed by captain Carlos Augusto de Noronha e Montanha, an exiled politician and supporter of Henrique Paiva Couceiro, leader of the monarchic incursions from the Spanish region of Galicia against the Portuguese Republic in 1911, 1912 and 1919.

In 1923 and 1924, the journal of Socialist ideas, *O Combate*, directed by the book seller Diamantino Teixeira was also published in Fall River. In addition, *A Luta* was also circulated in Fall River and New Bedford over those two years, periodic editions of a sort of broadsheet that

³ See the documents related with the *Centro Monárquico Português* of New Bedford in the personal archive of Afonso Gil Ferreira Mendes: Ferreira-Mendes Portuguese-American-Archives, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, MC 92.

was the mouthpiece of the Portuguese Athenaeum of Social Studies (*Diario de Noticias*, 1937). *A Luta* defended Anarchistic and anti-clerical stances censured by the North-American authorities. Three of its journalists, António da Costa, António Alves Pereira and Diamantino Teixeira himself, were detained in 1926 and deported to Portugal, accused of distributing revolutionary propaganda (*Alvorada*, 1926). Anticlericalism also had as a response in various publications of a religious nature, such as *A Era Nova*, founded in 1923 in Fall River by the priest João F Ferraz (Jardim, 1989: 31).

Within this cauldron of news and propaganda, one of the most important newspapers of the Portuguese community over that period was the weekly *O Popular*, edited by J Santos Oliveira, in whose staff various journalists were working of relevance to Portuguese journalism in North America, such as João Rodrigues Rocha and Vasco Jardim, who became the respective directors of *Diario de Noticias* and the *Luso-Americano* of Newark, still printed today without interruption since 1939. *O Popular*, which had press delegations based in Boston, Bristol, Fall River and Providence, was the first Luso-American journal to create special editions of a local character, with independent management, administration, and editorial guidance that paid the newspaper a percentage of the commercial revenue.

This business model, which succeeded in expanding circulation and increasing advertising incomes, was imitated by other newspapers, such as *Alvorada* (Carvalho, 1931: 112-113). With expansion as its ambition thanks to the waves of new immigrants, *Alvorada* inaugurated, in 1922, a more modern printing press with which up to 25,000 copies an hour could be printed. As with other contemporary Luso-American newspapers, it printed numerous news items related with the Portuguese community and its political reality. One of the most popular sections among its readers was also content of a more narrative nature such as literary columns, especially among the female readership, who read with great interest “Mysteries of Lisbon”, by Camilo Castelo, and “The Count of Montecristo”, by Alexander Dumas (*Alvorada*, 1919).

3. Hypothesis, objectives and methodology

The initial hypothesis of this paper is based on the idea that the Portuguese immigrant press in the United States consolidated itself and acquired a critical dimension with a particular significance between the 1920s and 1940s, both because of its territorial expansion into different States and because of the proliferation and broad diffusion of newspaper publications in Portuguese. It is thought that media of that sort was turned into an essential instrument for informing, integrating, socializing, representing and stimulating cultural, political and commercial activity within the Portuguese communities mainly established in the States of Massachusetts and California.

The work employs a methodology based on documentary research. And the approach could be qualified as interdisciplinary because in the analysis there is an intersection between history, journalism, immigration, economics and other aspects of a sociocultural and political nature. In the fieldwork, essentially qualitative techniques were used for the documentary collection and subsequent discourse analysis of a sample that included a hundred editorials and articles recovered from the incomplete collections of the following Luso-American newspapers: *Diario de Noticias*, *Jornal Português*, *A Liberdade*, *Alvorada*, *A California Alegre*, *A Colonia Portuguesa* and *Luso-Americano*. Three fundamental thematic categories were taken into account for their selection, related to the political economy and survival strategies of this type of journalistic enterprises, the characteristics of their relationship with immigrants and their interaction with the Portuguese political authorities in the diaspora.

Thus, this paper aims to approach the Portuguese journalistic phenomenon in the United States by analyzing some of its productive routines, its economic structure or its interactions with the community, which may be relevant to identify and understand the most paradigmatic sociocultural aspects that characterized the professional practice of the newspapers printed by Portuguese immigrants between 1920 and 1940, a time of perceptible growth in their production and quality.

To do so, it is proposed to identify the main newspapers of that time and to describe and to study in depth some of the most significant journalistic routines and narrative patterns or themes, in order to understand the essence of their idiosyncrasy and their sociocultural dynamics. Various characteristic aspects of Portuguese journalism in the USA are covered in this investigation. It is centered on three relevant themes related with the functioning, the circulation and the public influence of that journalism: its instructive and sociocultural role, advertising income and the emergent impact of the radio, and the political and professional relation between the journalists and the Portuguese diplomats who were working in the Embassy of Portugal or in its consulates, with headquarters in the cities of New Bedford, Boston, Fall River, Providence, San Francisco and New York.

The documentation held at the Historical-Diplomatic Archive of Lisbon was used as the primary sources of the investigation, alongside the collections of newspapers found at the different research centers of the United States, among which Ferreira-Mendes Portuguese-American Archives of the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, and the Freitas Library, belonging to the Portuguese Fraternal Society of America, both stand out. Likewise, other sources that keep copies of Portuguese newspapers were also consulted, such as the Library of Congress, Harvard College Library and the Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley.

4. Results

4.1. The dynamizing role of immigrant journalism and the feeling of abandonment among the journalists

Since the end of the 19th century, thanks to the appearance of Luso-American journalism, the Portuguese immigrants were able to satisfy their desire to learn about news on Portugal, including abundant information on the Azores archipelago and Madeira, the origin of the majority of immigrants. It was enough to have had a sufficient number of native Portuguese from a particular village residing in the United States for a newspaper to decide to lend them some media attention with the purpose of attracting new readers. In addition, through this type of journalism in a foreign language, immigrants learnt about various aspects of local US life. But, above all, it meant that they could be aware of what was happening within the Luso-American community and have the option of joining or participating in the activities of their cultural, political, educational and commercial entities, reports on which were regular in those sorts of newspapers. Their role went beyond a merely informative service: it contributed to stimulating a powerful feeling of belonging to the one and the same sociocultural grouping and helped the immigrants to develop a “feeling of dignity” and to maintain the link with their roots (Vaz, 1965: 139-140).

Thus, the Luso-American press contributed to reinforcing a spirit of sociocultural cohesion and to maintaining its idiosyncrasy by defending the use of the Portuguese language, and the regular celebration of cultural traditions and national patriotic commemorations, such as Independence Day. In fact, the Embassy of Portugal in Washington, João António Bianchi, in his visit on September 1935 to the Portuguese community in California, recognized the

enormous value of Portuguese newspapers for furthering the progress and the defense of the interests of Portugal in the United States (*A Liberdade*, 1935).

However, the extraordinary service lent by the Luso-American newspapers to the immigrants was not always welcomed. At times, the Portuguese editors felt obliged to demand greater respect for their work (*Luso-Americano*, 1939). The Oakland (California) weekly *A Colonia Portuguesa* claimed in 1925 that the disdain for Portuguese journalism among the immigrants was, above all, due to its lack of a journalistic culture. That failing was attributed to the incapacity to understand the fundamental role of the press as the creator and broadcaster of knowledge. According to that newspaper, there was “no mission more sublime”, as it helped to “nurture the spirit” of the immigrants:

The journalist’s profession is a very unthankful one, because our people have not yet understood its mission (...) There is no mission more sublime than to nurture the spirit of our people with healthy reading, which after it is digested leaves something worthwhile. The newspaper, with its different sections, should be a school in which people can drink of the pure water of human knowledge, gathered by men who have studied or acquired that knowledge (...) (*A Colonia Portuguesa*, 1925).

The Portuguese immigrants, accustomed to carrying out physical work, had difficulties recognizing the complexity and sacrifice entailed in regularly editing and printing a newspaper. To educate immigrants, the *Jornal Português* published an article in which it tried to explain to its audience the multiple professional tasks faced by journalists every day in order to prepare the contents of each new issue in a dignified manner so that the reader could enjoy reading it on time:

The subscriber who receives the newspaper and who, at the end of his working day, is comfortably seated in a chair to read the newspaper, neither conjectures, nor imagines, nor has the faintest idea of the effort, the hardship and the exhaustion of the poor Portuguese journalist in North America. The subscriber is unaware of how much suffering and struggle is represented in those pages that his eyes are scrutinizing. This, my dear patrons, from the collection of advertisements up to the completion of recordings, from the writing of articles, the reading of proofs, to the layout of the newspaper is an avalanche of willingness, a mountain of sacrifices, of “hard and strong” work, in the picturesque words of our people. And there are still people (oh! Holy ignorance!) who say that, if journalists wish to eat, they should get to work! (*Jornal Português*, 1946).

In general, the few advertisements that local businesses published were the only source of financing behind Portuguese immigrant journalism. The frequent economic poverty accentuated the feeling of abandonment by the government of Portugal. For that reason, on November 16, 1938, the *Diário de Notícias* published an extensive editorial in which it criticized the indifference and the contempt shown by the Portuguese State towards the Portuguese press in the United States, despite its important commitment towards the sociocultural and linguistic values of Portugal:

In an environment as immense as this one, where the dynamic vitality of the English language naturally spills out over everything, it is necessary to be born with indomitable courage and well proven patriotism, if discouragement is not to overpower oneself. [...] Up until today, the rulers of Portugal have absolutely depreciated the Portuguese press in America. With unpardonable ingratitude, they have abandoned this powerful source of propaganda and this indispensable link to keep patriotic love alive in Portuguese hearts. This press, despite its poverty, has in great measure contributed to the community continuing to

be united as a whole [...] What has Portugal done for the Portuguese who emigrated here?
Absolutely nothing (*Diário de Notícias*, 1938).

4.2. *The fight for survival. Advertising and competition from a new medium*

The newspapers published in Portuguese had frequently to resort to arguments loaded with patriotism to stimulate reader subscriptions, whose payments that could not always guarantee their financial sustainability were all-too-often delayed. In addition, the local English press, which had more professionalized newspapers of greater quality, with better contents and higher circulations, implied stiff competition. The chief columnist of the *Diário de Notícias*, António Cacella, bitterly regretted this serious disadvantage, calling for greater support for the immigrants, whose indifference and lack of commitment he reproached (*Diário de Notícias*, 1936). Due to that competitive disadvantage, the Luso-American press regularly conducted campaigns to attract new readership. Some newspapers, such as *Alvorada*, addressed readers and potential advertisers in a pedagogical tone, in order to instruct them about the advantages of placing advertisements for commercial success:

The advertisement is like a friend who frankly advises the public on how to invest their money with neither losses nor exploitation. The advertisement is like a crack that, when opened, fills a room with light that was in complete darkness. The advertisement is the commercial compass that that always points towards the economy and it is the easiest way of buying a product without prejudicing the consumer. The advertisement is an open letter to the public (*Alvorada*, 1922).

When observing the advertisements published by the Luso-American press between 1920 and 1940, it may be seen that there were dozens of small local businesses from various sectors managed by immigrants that contributed to the financing of Portuguese newspapers. Some were businesses related with the socioeconomic profile of immigrants, such as the sale of voyages by ship, airline tickets and banking offices for sending currency. Others were related with their professional skills or the businesses that they ran: funeral services, hairdressers, printers, bakers, haberdashers, small grocery shops, plumbing firms and every class of small commerce with names in Portuguese that sold traditional products from Portugal. In another category, the advertisements were for modest yet vigorous factories from specific business sectors with a preponderance of Portuguese employees, which was the case of the dairy industry in California and the Portuguese sausage (“linguiça”) factories in New England.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the most relevant sector of advertisements was perhaps the shipping industry, which had seen immigration become its principal source of income. In 1926, there was an Association of Portuguese Steam Ship Travel Agents, with its headquarters in Warren (Rhode Island) formed of professionals who operated at 14 localities: New Bedford, Fall River, Boston, Cambridge, Ludlow, Taunton, Lowell, Plymouth, Providence, Warren, Valley Falls, Pawtucket, Newport and Stonington (*Alvorada*, 1926). Among other channels, this association regularly published advertisements in the *Alvorada* newspaper, the property of Guilherme Machado Luiz, who had founded the newspaper to promote his own maritime and banking services.

Machado Luiz offered shipping passages in 1922 with the Fabre Line shipping company for the Azores-Lisbon route, with departures from Providence, Boston and New Bedford, on ships named “Asia”, “Providence”, “Braga”, “Patria” and “Madonna”, whose advertisements informed the readers that the maritime crossing would last 6 days to the islands and 9 to Lisbon (*Alvorada*, 1922). In March 1925, Machado Luiz organized a campaign to diversify his business and to promote his newspaper, offering an annual subscription with insurance against accident and illness for 10 dollars. Through statistical figures, the advertisement explained the utility of

contracting the insurance to its readers: “More than three million people fall ill every day, and it is very possible that you will be one of those millions someday. More than 500,000 people are injured every year by cars alone. Cars kill more than 50 people a day. So don’t delay, protect yourself today” (*Alvorada*, 1925).

While the Portuguese immigrant press consolidated its influence, the popularization of the radio among immigrants in the 1930s raised fresh doubts about the economic viability of some newspapers. Initially, it was an event that was celebrated in the printed media of the Portuguese communities, because they thought that it could contribute to the development of the community and the Lusophone culture in the United States. However, not everybody saw the expansion of the radio as a benefit that offered technological process. Some newspaper editors interpreted the emergence of the new medium as a threat to their survival.

The seduction of immigrants for radio programs made some print media fear a drastic fall in readership and a consequent loss of advertising revenue, their principal means of existence. Faced with the growing prestige, notoriety and the evident informative and persuasive efficacy of radio, together with its enormous advantages for promoting campaigns of all kinds, there were Portuguese newspapers that decided to make a virtue out of necessity. Some papers sponsored their own radio programs, to adapt to the unstoppable advance of radio and to try to maintain the loyalty of their readers. Such was the case of the weekly *Jornal Português*, which in 1940 inaugurated the “Hora de Arte Radiofónica” in Santa Rosa (California), broadcast through KSRO (*A California Alegre*, 1940).

However, the rapid penetration of radio broadcasts among the immigrant public meant that the experience of some newspapers was a loss of prestige and leadership, which provoked controversies and criticism of radio contents, which were accused of “mistreating” the Portuguese language. One of the tabloids that was most critical of radio broadcasts was the Sacramento newspaper *A California Alegre*, which savagely characterized the way of speaking in Portuguese of some radio presenters, with an “almost African” narrative style (*A California Alegre*, 1936).

When the fear of the radio was abating, some press journalists, noting the professional opportunities on offer for working in the innovative media, decided on a professional change of career to try their luck on air. One of them was the journalist of the *O Popular* newspaper, Afonso Gil Ferreira Mendes, who became one of the pioneers of Portuguese radio in the United States, achieving enormous popularity as a presenter of “A Voz de Portugal” [Portugal’s Voice], whose emission began in New Bedford in July 1933 (*Diário de Notícias*, 1933) and lasted for more than fifty years (Pena-Rodríguez, 2020). In addition, Ferreira Mendes was the founder and the director of *O Heraldo Portuguez* (Taunton, Massachusetts, 1925-1976), a six-monthly magazine dedicated to promoting the businesses of immigrants through thousands of advertisements and advertising reports, which altogether represented a faithful radiography of both the economic and the commercial activities of Luso-Americans living on the East coast with a history of over half a century.⁴

4.3. A “wicked influence”. The complex relation between journalists and diplomats.

The majority of immigrant journalists were aware that their profession required a vocation of service towards their compatriots, who needed as much as they did the spiritual breath that a newspaper in Portuguese provided to create a true feeling of community. However, the freedom with which they were able to exercise their profession, far removed from the

⁴ See the complete collection of *O Heraldo Portuguez* at the Portuguese-American Digital Newspaper Collections (University of Massachusetts Dartmouth). <https://lib.umassd.edu/archives/paa/digital-newspaper-collections/>

ensorship and directives forced upon them in Portugal during the military dictatorship and the regime of the New State (1926-1974), was not to the liking of some consular representatives of the Portuguese government. Such was the enmity of certain diplomats towards the free journalism that the immigrants practiced, that the consul in Boston conveyed to his government in 1934 that the Salazarist dictatorship should promote the foundation of a great newspaper to liberate the colony from the “wicked influence” of this sort of press, to which he attributed many of the evils from which the Luso-American community was suffering (Embassy of Portugal, box 36, Consul’s report in Boston, 1934).

The Portuguese consuls in Massachusetts and Rhode Island had already tried to put that idea into practice, acquiring the weekly newspaper edited in New Bedford in the 1920s, *O Independente*, but the project never met with the expected success (Jardim, 1989: 1). According to Vasco Jardim, who was the editor of the *Luso-Americano*, the plan had been designed by the consul in Boston at that time, Eduardo Carvalho, severely questioned by *O Popular*, for representing a sort of journalism that sought to control Luso-American public opinion, at the service of the dictatorship and its propaganda (*Luso-Americano*, 1989).

After his diplomatic mission in Boston, Eduardo Carvalho weighed up the situation of the Portuguese community in the United States though the edition of a series of articles published between 1926 and 1927 in *O Colonial* of Fairhaven (Massachusetts), compiled in a book with the title *Os Portugueses na Nova Inglaterra* [The Portuguese in New England], edited in 1931. In a certain way, the diplomat was settling an old score with the immigrant journalists, who had very often been critical of the Portuguese consulates in the United States, because of their lack of professionalism, as *Alvorada* had been, denying the legitimacy of the consul’s office while it was unable to be “just, impartial, tolerant, efficient and diligent” (*Alvorada*, 1921).

According to Carvalho, the complaints of the press had reached the point of requesting that the government delegate the election of the post of consul to the Portuguese community. These complaints defined it as “consular regionalism”, which it graphically described in this way: “But all well and good!—there are so many thousands of Azoreans and we have no Azorean consul? It is fair that each group in the community has its own representative! We are tired of being cheated and exploited” (Carvalho, 1931: 123). The Portuguese diplomat strongly questioned the way that the journalism was practiced, which he qualified as irresponsible, opportunist, hardly rigorous and that failed to respect the most elemental ethical principles: “In so far as a newspaper has been conceived to generate benefits and not to sow ideas, it has been easy, at any given point in time, to turn them into instigators or muck-rakers of scandals” (Carvalho, 1931: 120-121).

In fact, the lack of professional wisdom, personal style and the willingness to provoke or stir up controversy or scandals that increase audiences, provoked confrontation between the printed media and diplomats. Therefore, the Luso-American press was the object of various accusations of defamation. One of the judicial proceedings with the greatest media repercussions was initiated, in December 1929, by Abílio Oliveira Águas, the Portuguese consul in Providence (Rhode Island), who sued the *Diário de Notícias* for payment of 50,000 dollars in compensation (*Diário de Notícias*, 1929). Águas, who had been dismissed from his post for having publicly complained of the deplorable conditions in which the shipping company sponsored by the Salazarist regime had transported immigrants from Cabo Verde travelling to the United States, was subjected to a campaign against his person in the newspaper edited by João Rodrigues Rocha. The editor justified and applauded the decision of the government in Lisbon, at the same as accusing Abílio Águas of “bad faith and petulance” (*Diário de Notícias*, 1929). In a campaign of denigration *ad hominem*, the Massachusetts newspaper also accused

him of appropriating the role of “leader! of the Luso-American community, photographing himself “petulantly” in the port of Providence with 250 crates of aid supplies that the Portuguese of New England had amassed to send to the victims of the Faial earthquake, in the Azores (*Diario de Noticias*, 1929).

On some occasions, the differences on the view of political affairs or news events could turn into bitter confrontation between newspapers. On others, the rivalry had its origin in debates between members of fraternal institutions, between the faithful of religious congregations, between the natives of the nine islands of the Azores, or between immigrants from continental Portugal or its islands. At certain periods of history, especially between the 1920s and 1940s, many of the controversies had an ideological background. An eloquent contrast was established in them between the authoritarian national politics of Portugal and the American democracy.

However, the freedom of the press that the Luso-Americans enjoyed in the United States in their struggle to increase circulation, with neither journalistic rigor nor ethical norms, profoundly displeased Eduardo de Carvalho. He thought that the community was unprotected in the face of the “immoral” attitude of some newspaper editors, who attacked anonymous people, fraternal institutions and consular representatives without any sort of control on the part of local authorities, which because of their ignorance of Portuguese and because it was a matter of affairs related to foreigners, lent them little or no attention (Carvalho, 1931: 89-92). Nevertheless, these matters were not solely found in the Portuguese press but were historically a common feature in the ethnic communities of the United States, as Rhodes affirmed (2010: 125): “Business or not, the ethnic press transferred the home country rivalries and political disputes to the United States”.

Carvalho saw this style of journalistic “sadism” as intolerable, the consequence of a “indignant delirium”, faced with which the only solution that the victims of calumnious or defamatory texts had to defend their honor was to have them translated into English and deliver them to the courthouse. According to the Portuguese diplomat, freedom of expression could not be turned into a pretext for defamation; immigrants should also learn to enjoy freedom with respect (Carvalho, 1931: 122).

5. Conclusions

Between 1920 and 1940, Portuguese immigrant journalism in the United States underwent a critical phase of growth and consolidation, both at a qualitative and a quantitative level. Dozens of newspapers were published in Portuguese that contributed to expanding and professionalizing this sector of the media, driven by the increasingly vigorous commercial, political and sociocultural activity of the Luso-American community, integrated in its majority by immigrants of Azorean origin, who were scattered across various communities and concentrated above all in the States of Massachusetts and California. It was an activity that was consolidated thanks to the arrival *en masse* of immigrants at the start of the 20th century and their need to be informed in their own language, as the majority knew no English or had difficulties understanding it.

Two of the most important and influential newspapers in the history of Portuguese journalism in North America were founded in the period covered by this study: the New Bedford-based *Diario de Noticias*, published between 1927 and 1973, and the weekly *Jornal Português*, published in Oakland from 1932 to 1997.

The production of news at those sorts of newspapers gave a voice to the Portuguese immigrants in the United States and contributed to the projection of a feeling of cohesion and belonging to their community. A task that the immigrant journalists developed with a spirit of

service that was however, not sufficiently well recognized among their reader. Many of the journalists had little training and no knowledge of journalistic practice, so were unable to understand the complexity that was required for the design, the preparation of content, the printing and the distribution of each new newspaper issue.

Sometimes it was the community's own entrepreneurs who founded a newspaper to promote their businesses among immigrants. Machado Luiz's *Alvorada* was a paradigmatic case. And, on occasions, some editors stirred up controversy and debate, seeking their own survival, related to political topics and immigrants, institutions and Portuguese diplomats in the United States with the objective of increasing the readership of their newspapers and attracting new advertisers.

One of the frequently discussed matters in the opinion columns of this sort of press was the poor use of the Portuguese language among the immigrants and the generalized unwillingness to learn the language among their offspring. Portuguese for the Luso-American newspapers was a powerful instrument that they had to protect and promote among the immigrants, as they saw it as the most important capital of Lusophone culture to strengthen, to conserve and to defend their interest and traditions in United States. The survival of the newspapers themselves also depended on its regular usage, whose readership levels could fall notably when the flow of new immigrants fell.

Those features and sociocultural dynamics shaped its own news-based ecosystem in which particular exchanges took place such as the “consular regionalism”, which consisted in questioning the authority and the legitimacy of the consuls and revindicating the right of immigrants to name their own diplomatic representatives, in accordance with the American democratic model. Thus, this press and its peculiar character and informative style, in addition to contributing to sociocultural, economic and commercial development and to the political debate on the Portuguese diaspora, was a path for many immigrants, in unexpected and surprising ways, to reach out to the American dream, turning it into reality through the practice of journalism.

In short, each newspaper published by Portuguese immigrants not only represented an entrepreneurial project with important implications for community development but also generated socialization dynamics relevant to understanding their cultural evolution and their way of communicating in the context of the diaspora, a phenomenon that could be extrapolated to other immigrant groups. Hence, this contribution and its results can also be a source of inspiration for new research in the field of the history of allophone communication in different contexts, associated with migratory phenomena, political exile or other causes related to human mobility and the need to communicate.

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