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Post-war Societies (Portugal)

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High inflation, strikes, labour organization, war profiteering and “moral corruption” shaped post-war Portuguese society. As a class of nouveau riche emerged, the income of the middle classes eroded, and hunger spread across the country. Social and political violence became part of daily life. Syndicalism emerged as a major social force promoting new values and cultural practices. The perceived moral bankruptcy of the bourgeoisie followed pleasure- and entertainment-seeking habits across social classes. In major cities, modernism, the new values and social practices on the rise fuelled the reactionary politics of traditionalists, nationalists, and Catholics.

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Introduction

In the aftermath of the war, daily life in [Portugal](#) was dominated by high inflation, declining wages, pensions and rents, political and social unrest, industrial growth, and social

modernization.^[1] At the end of the 19th century, the nation had undergone a “sanitary revolution” and high rates of mortality had begun to decrease, however this trend was counteracted by the war and the pandemic of 1918-1919.^[2] Urban growth was centred in Lisbon and Oporto but also affected small towns such as Setúbal, Barreiro, Coimbra and Aveiro. The growth of the modern cotton textile industry and industrial regions in the north was followed by the creation, in the south, of major industrial groups producing **food** and beverages, as well as chemicals, which were linked to major banks and the daily **press**.^[3] The sector of the population active in industry, transport, and trade grew while that in agriculture and domestic services declined. Wage relations dominated in large capitalist farming states producing cereals, cork, meat, and wine. Export-oriented industries in mining, manufactured cork, and fish-canning stimulated local and regional economies, contributing to their diversification. Development and urbanization increased in the Portuguese colonies Angola and Mozambique under the rule of General **Norton de Matos (1867-1955)** and High Commissioner **Brito Camacho (1862-1934)** respectively. Moreover, the new republic, which succeeded the Portuguese monarchy after the republican revolution of 1910, promoted freedom of thought, secular and rational public education, and liberal family values allowing civil marriages and divorce. A prohibition of the public use of nobility titles reinforced the liberal society that republicans intended to shape.

Technical, business, and agricultural **schools** were reformed under the new regime following advanced European models. Night schools and “mobile free schools” provided education to illiterate workers. A vibrant civil society, often divided by class, thrived during this period, causing commentators to declare a “glorious epoch of free associations” in Portugal.^[4] Networks of clubs, such as **sports** clubs for football and cycling, and civic associations were established in towns and cities across the country. New sensibilities developed after the war, including critiques of bullfighting and ill-treatment of **animals** and **children**. The erosion of traditional social relationships and the upswing of class conflict in **urban**, industrial, and **rural** areas became a test of the political elites during this period of rapid social change.

After the congress of Covilhã in 1919, **labour unions** began to reorganize following anarchist principles, uniting urban and rural workers under the umbrella organization *Confederação Geral do Trabalho* (CGT). The confederation’s news organ, *A Batalha*, was one of the most read and prestigious daily newspapers in the country. The Communist Party was founded in 1921, creating a long-lasting schism between communists, syndicalists, and anarchists over the political autonomy of the labour unions. For a brief period, the idea of a social republic became a priority among labour militants. At the same time, however, reactionary nationalists, monarchists, and Catholics mobilized, wielding influence in the middle ranks of the army, high schools, and universities.

Despite this modernization trend, general indicators of advancement put Portugal in the