



**You are about to witness one of history's strangest farces about the nature of power.**

UMA PEDRA NO SAPATO  
PRESENTS



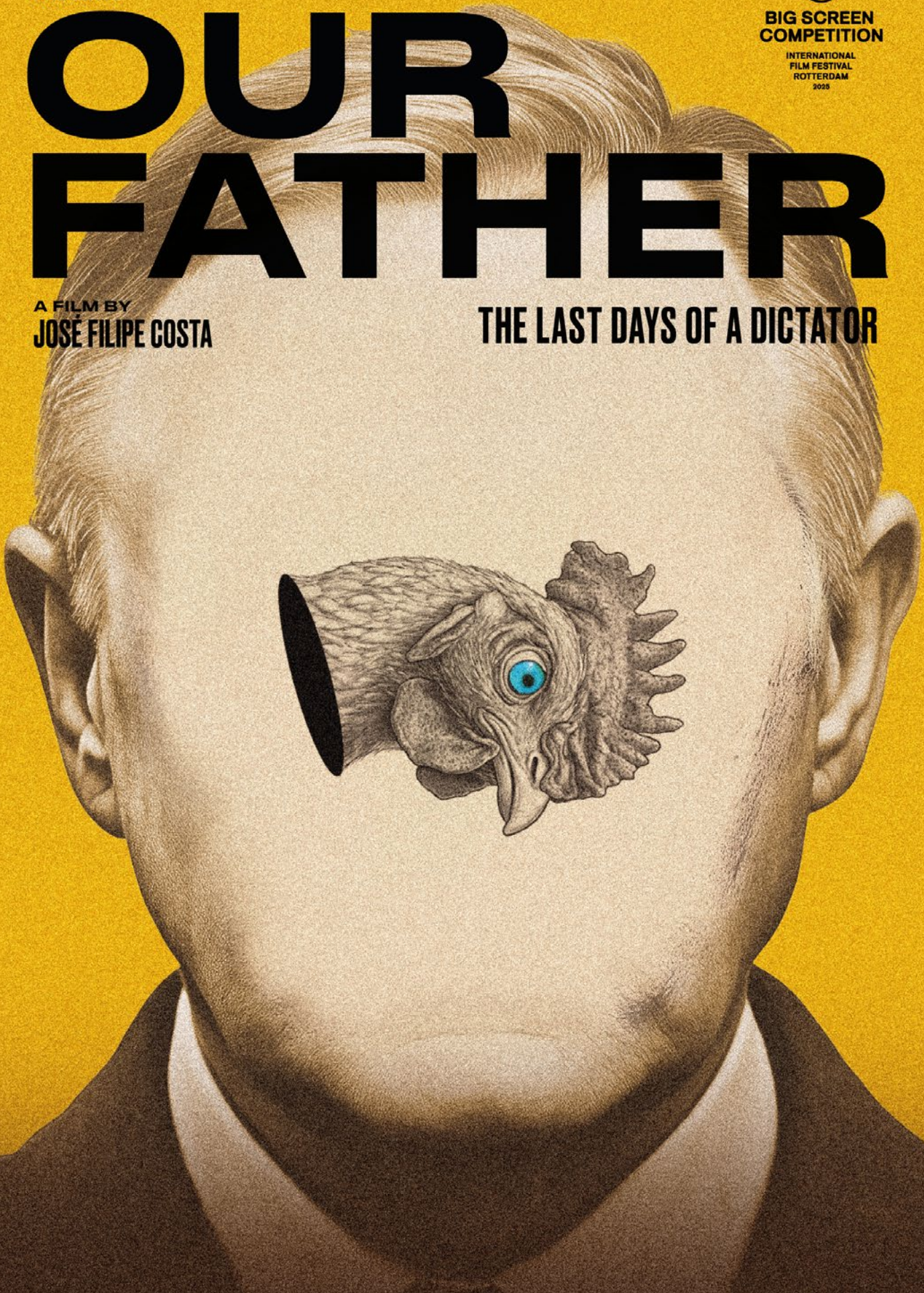
BIG SCREEN  
COMPETITION

INTERNATIONAL  
FILM FESTIVAL  
ROTTERDAM  
2025

# OUR FATHER

A FILM BY  
JOSÉ FILIPE COSTA

THE LAST DAYS OF A DICTATOR



# SYNOPSIS

Portugal, 1968. Salazar, longest-serving fascist dictator, falls off his chair and suffers a stroke. By the time he returns to the São Bento Palace, to recover from his illness, he is no longer President. None of those around him reveal this fact: neither his loyal housekeeper, nor his hard-working maids, nor his doctor. Does Salazar wish to defeat death and maintain his power? Does he secretly know the truth? How can one maintain mental sanity in São Bento Palace?

# CAST

**JORGE MOTA SALAZAR**  
**CATARINA AVELAR MARIA DE JESUS**

**VERA BARRETO APARECIDA**  
**CAROLINA AMARAL TERESINHA**  
**CLEIA ALMEIDA SOCORRO**

**GUILHERME FILIPE EDUARDO COELHO**  
**MARQUES D'AREDE CARDEAL CEREJEIRA**  
**JOÃO LAGARTO AMÉRICO THOMAZ**  
**PIERRE ENSERGUEIX ROLAND FAURE**  
**DANIEL MARTINHO MANUEL NAZARÉ**  
**BRUNO SCHIAPPA FISIOTERAPEUTA**  
**FLÁVIA GUSMÃO TALKING HEAD 1**  
**LEANDRO PIRES TALKING HEAD 2**  
**FRANCISCO PESTANA CORREIA DE OLIVEIRA**  
**ADRIANO CARVALHO JOAQUIM CUNHA**  
**JOÃO VILLAS-BOAS FILMMAKER**  
**FRANCISCO SOUSA ESPÍRITO SANTO**

# CREW

**SCRIPTWRITERS DANIEL TAVARES, JOSÉ FILIPE COSTA, LETÍCIA SIMÕES**

**1ST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR NUNO MILAGRE**

**CINEMATOGRAPHER VASCO VIANA**

**SOUND DIRECTOR RAFAEL GONÇALVES CARDOSO**

**LINE PRODUCER FREDERICO MESQUITA**

**ART DIRECTOR CLÁUDIA LOPES COSTA**

**COSTUME DESIGNER PATRÍCIA DÓRIA**

**MAKE-UP MARIA ALMEIDA (NANI)**

**HAIRDRESSER MARISA MARQUES**

**EDITING JOÃO BRAZ**

**COLOR GRADING RITA LAMAS**

**SOUND EDITOR AND MIX CARLOS ABREU**

**VFX IRMÃ LÚCIA**

**ORIGINAL MUSIC JOÃO GODINHO**

**DIRECTED BY JOSÉ FILIPE COSTA**

**PRODUCED BY FILIPA REIS**

# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

## **Why I did make this film?**

From the outset, what interested me in the last days of Salazar's life, it was not the figure of the dictator who lasted 40 years in power, but the farce staged by the characters to make him to believe that he was still the President. Those who revere him the most are also the ones who perform a bizarre and delirious theater play on the official residence of the President of the Council. This is what astounds us: What dilemmas do these characters face? Don't they have a duty of conscience to tell their dictator the truth? How can these characters, who are obedient to the religious morals and values of the fascist regime, are not torn apart by the most violent contradictions?

I'm fascinated by how cinema often shows characters saying one thing while their bodies convey another. They speak of great happiness, while a hell burns in their minds. They are tormented by doubts and dilemmas that feel impossible to overcome due to internalized obstacles and interdicts. The story of Salazar's agony highlights the tragic-comic nature of human life. Take D. Maria, the housekeeper, for example. She diligently carries out her duties and imposes order on others, all while maintaining the appearance of a normal life. She opens the letters addressed to the President to monitor their contents, collects eggs from the henhouse she had ordered to be built at the Palace and oversees the administration of injections brought from Nazi Germany, required to calm the President. Maintaining appearances is crucial, no matter the cost.



Salazar is a very peculiar dictator when compared to Mussolini or Hitler. He claims to hate crowds and aspires to be an invisible president. In *“Our Father,”* I explored his idea of being invisible to the country, which paradoxically plays a significant role in maintaining order. He pretends not to desire power, yet that is his true ambition. He is on a mission to liberate indigenous peoples from their barbarous customs and integrate them into civilization, embodying the unity of Portugal and its colonies: Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Macau and Goa.

Salazar had a peculiar fear of modernity, which he repelled. Communism is indeed a weed, but cultural relativism and the dissolute habits of American capitalism offer no good alternatives. Portugal feels like a large village where the soothing sounds of chickens fill the air, reminiscent of those in the gardens of São Bento.

However, this fascism is full of paradoxes; it is, after all, a self-devouring machine that consumes even its creators.

Everything in *Our Father* is so absurd and bizarre that we must consider whether a dictator and their regime can truly go mad: can they engage in an extremely vicious and distorted game to maintain power? Yes, they can. Can they kill and cause destruction in senseless insanity? Yes, they can.

The film suggests that no one has informed President Salazar that he is no longer in power. He lingers like a ghost, adopting the traits of certain current figures and parties in our political life. He is still very much alive. After all, nobody has told him that he has lost his authority.

### **From the doctor's notes to delirium**

This film was initially inspired by the diaries of Salazar's doctor, Eduardo Coelho, who was with him until his death. However, as the project developed, it diverged from this literal 'reality'. I collaborated closely with the actors, never looking to copy the real-life figures, avoiding a hyper-realistic biopic approach that relies on makeup and prosthetics to mimic historical figures.

As we progressed through the shoot, we enjoyed experimenting with visuals and sounds in certain scenes that recreated the delirious worlds within President's mind and home.

Some scenes may seem imaginary, but they are surprisingly documented in Dr. Eduardo Coelho's diary. Salazar and the characters in *Our Father* are always teetering on the brink of madness, yet they never violate social norms or the principles of coexistence.

When we created *Our Father*, our goal was not to provide



a comprehensive view of the fascist regime. Instead, we concentrated on the characters' gestures, silences, and expressions to reveal the subtle power dynamics and everyday violence they experienced. We explored questions such as: Who holds power? Who can take action? Who supervises whom within this power structure? The insidious violence of fascism seeps into every sound and image—whether it's when Salazar sits in his special armchair or when D. Maria kills a small animal. The truth remains unspoken. Silence always lingers over everything.

# CHARACTERS

## Salazar

Salazar was born in Vimieiro, Santa Comba Dão, in 1889 and died in 1970 at the Prime Minister's residence in Lisbon. He started his political career as the Minister of Finance in 1928 and became Prime Minister in 1932. He wielded his power discreetly yet decisively, with an iron fist. Salazar positioned himself as the savior of Portugal, championing the slogan "God, Motherland, Authority." When major European powers agreed to grant independence to their colonies, Salazar declared that Portugal would remain "proudly alone." The armed conflict that officially began in 1961 with the independence movements in Angola, Cape Verde, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau had no end in his eyes. He demanded total sacrifice, even to the last soldier.

When Salazar was succeeded by Marcelo Caetano in 1968, he had been in power for 40 years. His influence persisted for another eight years until the 25th of April Revolution in 1974, which brought an end to the longest fascist dictatorship in the world. Franco Nogueira, one of Salazar's biographers and a former Minister of Foreign Affairs, wrote that Salazar was "a slave to the idea of a dictator who does not give up power and has freed himself from the law of death." influence the country until the 25th of April Revolution in 1974, which ended Portugal's long fascist dictatorship. Today, Salazar is remembered and even celebrated by some groups online. He famously said he preferred Portugal to remain poor but independent rather than be controlled by American capital. His presence is once again rising, reflected in the election of 50 far-right party members to the Portuguese Parliament in the most recent elections.



## **Maria de Jesus**

In 1938, seeking to escape rural labor, Maria de Jesus began working in the home shared by a young Salazar and his friend, Father Manuel Cerejeira, in Coimbra. Although she was illiterate, she managed the household expenses with strict discipline while serving these two friends, who were already esteemed professors at the time. Stern and incapable of showing affection, she maintained a sacrificial routine as she moved from Coimbra to Lisbon to continue her service to Salazar with dedication and care. There, she learned to read and write to obtain a passport to visit her brother in Brazil. Over time, Maria became Salazar's confidante, secretary, and housekeeper at the Palace of São Bento. She acted as a secret agent, passing on rumors and gossip, both those she heard from high-ranking officials and those from market vendors with whom she haggled over prices. Maria felt comfortable enough with Salazar to express her opinions on ministers, ambassadors, and businessmen Offending her meant offending Salazar. Although she was a first lady in name only, she was primarily responsible for orchestrating the performances

that unfolded at São Bento.

Maria had a chicken coop in the gardens of São Bento, where she raised turkeys, ducks, pigeons, and rabbits, eventually housing up to 500 hens. She also created a vegetable garden to provide for the household needs of the São Bento Palace. In the final years of Salazar's rule, she struggled to maintain control as his health declined. After Salazar's death, Marcelo Caetano informed her that she had just one week to vacate São Bento—a tight deadline for leaving behind her beloved home, chicken coop, and garden.

### **Eduardo Coelho**

Eduardo Coelho, Salazar's doctor, kept diary entries from 1968 to 1970 that would have faced violent censorship had they been made public at the time. This diary was only revealed in a book after the 25th of April Revolution in 1974. Within São Bento, Coelho was the first person targeted by the regime - they censored his medical reports and tapped his phone. Stripped of power, tormented, and shaken to his core by the silence imposed upon São Bento, he remained



a devoted Salazarist, loyal to his friend. When I interviewed his son António Coelho, he described how his father was never the same after this betrayal by the very government Salazar had built. Eduardo Coelho died in 1974, shortly after the revolution overthrew the regime.



## Marcello Caetano

In *Our Father*, the character inspired by Marcello Caetano is merely a voice, without a body, heard on the radio in the background during two scenes of the film. He is the absent presence. Though he succeeded Salazar as Portugal's leader in 1968, Caetano never visited his former teacher and boss during Salazar's final years, despite having served under him as Minister of the Colonies (1944-1947) and Minister of the Presidency (1955-1958). Caetano ignored the tragic farce of Salazar's illness, while still praising him in speeches across Portugal and its colonies. Unlike Salazar, who never left mainland Portugal, Caetano was the first Portuguese leader to visit the overseas territories. Caetano is the herald of "evolution in continuity." He claims not to want to be a "little dictator" in one of the speeches heard on the radio in *Our Father*. However, under his leadership, Salazar's repressive institutions remained firmly in place.

## Cardeal Cerejeira

Cerejeira's friendship with Salazar began when they shared a home in Coimbra. Despite occasional tensions, their relationship remained strong throughout their lives. Cerejeira represented the Catholic Church's immense influence in Portugal, where it shaped both government policy and daily life. The Church, in turn, helped keep Salazar's regime in power. Salazar and Cerejeira remain, to this day, two ghostly figures looming over Portugal.

## Roland Faure

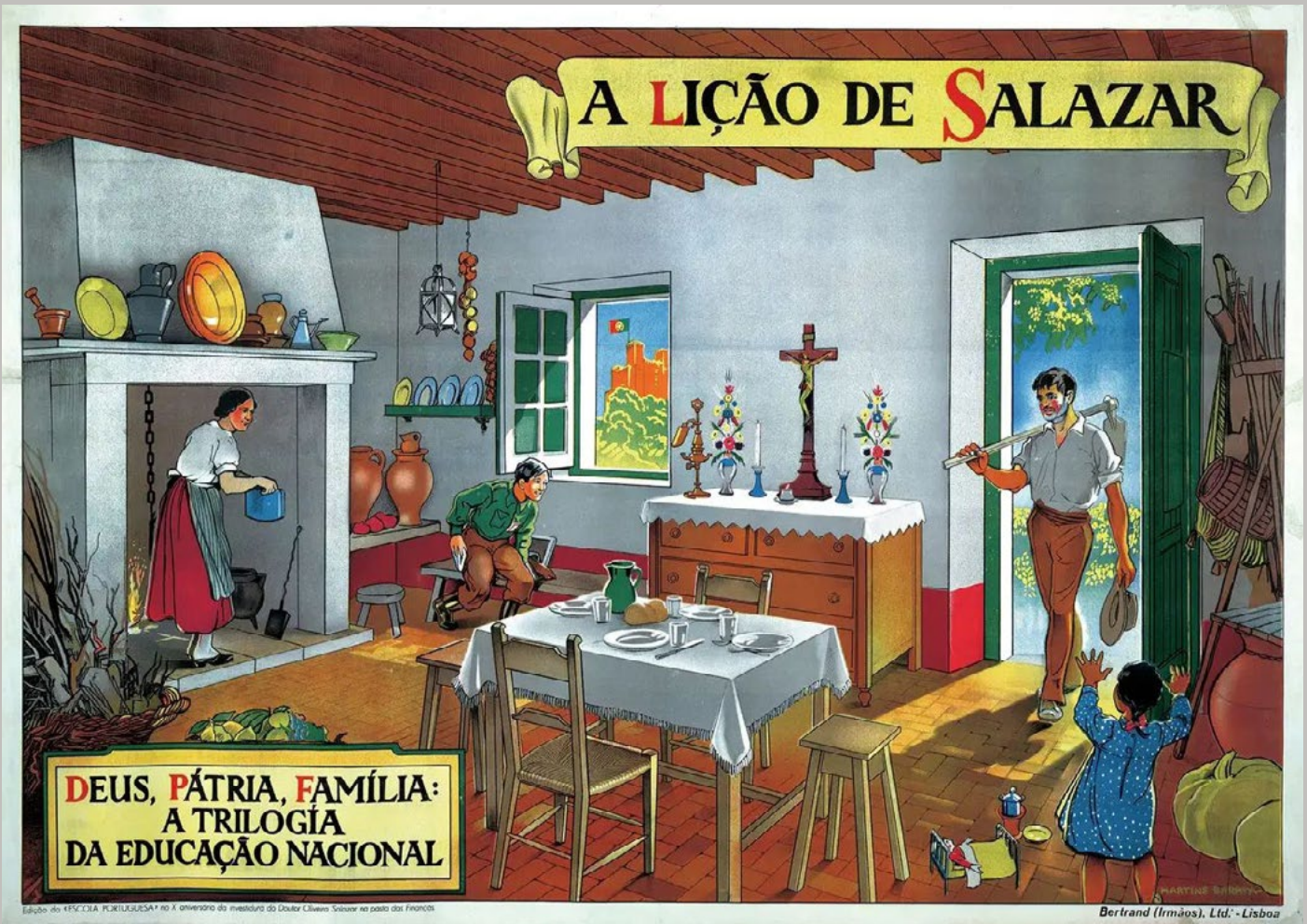
Roland Faure, editor-in-chief of the French daily newspaper *L' Aurore*, was in Lisbon in the summer of 1969 to interview Marcello Caetano and Salazar, without either of them knowing about the other. *L' Aurore* did not hide its sympathy for the Salazarist regime. With the aim of writing a report on the country's political life, Faure ended up making headlines with Salazar, who was unaware that he was no longer President. The issue of *L' Aurore* featuring this interview was confiscated in Portugal by censorship authorities.



# PHOTOGRAPHS



The French version of a propaganda poster for the Salazar regime in 1934: the maps of the Portuguese colonies of Angola, Mozambique, Guinea, Timor and Goa are overlaid on the map of Europe to show the geographical grandeur of the Empire. The map does not show Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe and Macau.



A Lição de Salazar (Salazar's Lesson), a 1938 poster to be commented on by teachers in primary schools. The bottom left-hand corner reads “God, Motherland, Family: the trilogy of national education.”



Photograph of Salazar sitting in his armchair, leaving the hospital in Lisbon to return to São Bento, the official residence of the President of the Council when he was no longer the President.

**“Inside every  
human heart,  
there’s a fascist  
waiting to come  
out”**

**Cass R. Sunstein**

Authoritarianism in America, 2018

# DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

José Filipe Costa is a scriptwriter, filmmaker, and lecturer. His filmography includes “*A Pleasure, Comrades!*” (2019), “*Red Line*” (2011), and “*In Between Walls*” (2002), with selections at festivals such as Locarno, BFI London, Hot Docs, Viennale, Cinéma du Réel, PlanetaDoc, Fórumdoc.bh, IndieLisboa, and Doclisboa. His work has also been broadcast on television channels, including RTP, Futura-Brasil, and ZDF-Arte. As a screenwriter, Costa has collaborated with directors such as Pedro Pinho, Filipa Reis, and João Miller. He has taught at various academic institutions and served as a visiting professor at the Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro from 2013 to 2014. Costa holds a PhD from the Royal College of Art in London.

## Filmography

*Our Father - The last days of a dictator*, Fic 2025

*A Pleasure, Comrades!*, Doc 2019

*The Case of J.*, Short 2017

*Red Line*, Doc 2011

*Outside*, Short 2008

*Sunday*, Short 2005

*In Between Walls*, Doc 2003

*Senhorinha*, Short 2001

# PEDRA NO SAPATO'S BIOGRAPHY

Independent production company based in Lisbon, founded in 2008 by director Filipa Reis. Its recent productions include: GRAND TOUR by Miguel Gomes (Winner of the Best Director Award at Cannes' Official Competition, 2024), OURO NEGRO (winner of the Jury's Special Prize at Tallin Black Nights - PÖFF, 2024), BANZO by Margarida Cardoso (Karlovy Vary IFF - Official Competition, 2024), UBU by Paulo Abreu (Mar del Plata IFF - Official Competition, 2023), BAAN by Leonor Teles (Locarno's Official Competition, 2023), LÉGUA by Filipa Reis & João Miller Guerra (Cannes' Quinzaine des Cinéastes, 2023), GREAT YARMOUTH by Marco Martins (San Sebastián's - Official Competition, 2022) and DIÁRIOS DE OTSOGA by Miguel Gomes & Maureen Fazendeiro (Cannes' Quinzaine des Cinéastes, 2021), highlighting the Golden Bear Award at Berlinale Shorts 2016 for BALADA DE UM BATRÁQUIO by Leonor Teles.

# TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Genre: Feature Length Fiction

Length: 113 minutes

Image: Color

Aspect Ratio: 1.85

Frame Rate: 24 fps

Resolution: 2K

Screening Format: DCP

Sound: 5.1 Surround Sound

Country: Portugal

Year: 2025

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