A. Garrido, F. Rosas, *Il Portogallo di Salazar. Politica, Società, Economia*, Bononia University Press, Bologna, 2021, pp. 243.

In an obituary of António Oliveira de Salazar, published in *The New York Times* on July 28, 1970, the day following the Portuguese dictator's death, the journalist Alden Whitman wrote: "An anomaly among modern dictators, Antonio Oliveira de Salazar exemplified the power of a negative personality. He was ascetic rather than exuberant; aloof rather than gregarious; professional rather than demagogic; understated, rather than ostentatious. Yet, he held Portugal in thraldom for more than 40 years, a record of durability unmatched by Francisco Franco, Benito Mussolini or Adolf Hitler, his flashier fascist counterparts and

good friends."[1] More recently, a conservative American magazine ran an article provocatively titled "Waiting for Salazar" whose author, in a somewhat confused reading of the historical reality, cherished the idea of the return of some version of Christian, depoliticized, post-liberal politics, applauding Salazar's governing style and accomplishments.[2] These journalistic pieces, though very different from one another in terms of political balance and accuracy, both have the merit of capturing three peculiar features of Salazar's power: first, his quiet, non-eye-catching rule; second, the profound difference between him and other fascist leaders, such as Mussolini or Hitler; third, his recent allure as an acceptable form of authoritarian ruler, thanks to a sort of "decency aura" that he was able to create around himself. In this regard, the political climate has clearly been changing in the last few years in the degree and typology of democratic governance, as recent academic works demonstrate. As a matter of fact, we are witnessing what António Costa Pinto has called the return of the dictatorships.[3] Old and new autocrats currently occupy the stage of world politics, and their number and strength appear to be growing with each passing year. Orbán in Hungary, Erdogan in Turkey, as well as older authoritarian powers such as Russia, North Korea, the Gulf countries, and China, are certainly formally different from twentieth-century authoritarian regimes. However, their democratic window-dressing[4] and their hybrid authoritarianism[5] must not mislead us, for their rigid non-democratic attitude towards society and the economy is profound. Meanwhile, echoes of older narratives have also surfaced in the first part of this century. Just to take one example among many, Orbán explicitly proposes himself as the guardian of a new illiberal, anti-communist and Christian democracy, rejecting multiculturalism and immigration in order to build an organic national community.

None of this sounds actually novel to the historical ear. Thus, in the current political environment, the book under review is topical and most welcome. It offers the first complete overview in Italian of the

[1] A. Whitman, "A Quiet Autocrat Who Held Power in Portugal for 40 Years", *The New York Times*, July 28, 1970, p. 19.
[2] M.W. Davis, "Waiting for Salazar", *The American Conservative*, January 23, 2021.
[3] A.C. Pinto, *O Regresso das Ditaduras?*, Fundação Francisco Manuel Santos, Lisbon, 2021.
[4] J. Gandhi, *Political Institutions Under Dictatorship*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2008.
[5] S. Levitsky, L.A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism. Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010.

long and complex historical trajectory of the Portuguese *Estado Novo* between 1933 and 1974 and of its undisputed leader: the coldly ascetic, anti-modern illiberal, anti-communist and zealous Christian, António Oliveira de Salazar. In a time when a new litter of dictators is coming to the fore of modern politics, a better understanding of an uncommon dictator, who ruled over the longest European dictatorship of the twentieth century, will certainly provide useful insights for understanding today's world as well.

Before treating the substance of the book under review, it is worth discussing a matter of academic practice underpinning its making of. The issue has to do with the work behind the scenes that, although invisible to the reader, always has something important to tell. In this specific case, the historical laboratory that produced the text appears to be a rich source of methodological teachings and suggestions. In fact, even if it does not fit into the currently fashionable transnational history box, the book is the outcome of an equally important international joint effort involving Italian and Portuguese scholars. The result must obviously be ascribed first and foremost to the authors – Álvaro Garrido (University of Coimbra) and Fernando Rosas (Nova University of Lisbon) – but we also wish to underscore the work of the translator, Daniele Serapiglia (Nova University of Lisbon), and of the editor, Matteo Pasetti (University of Bologna). The latter also wrote the book's preface, which has the merit of setting it in a wider context of European and global history. All of the scholars involved have profitably combined their forces to offer the Italian reader an up-to-date and complete history of Salazar's Portugal. What we are keen to stress here is that this editorial operation proves how a transnational attitude bears fruits not only with reference specifically to the practice of history, but also in regard to personal academic practices that cultivate an international spirit of enquiry and relations. For, apart from the importance of the book itself, this international collaboration, motivated by a praiseworthy curiosity to explore other national histories and cultures, seems something of a great value per se. What, in fact, is Portuguese history, if not a piece of the larger European and global puzzle? And how can we understand European history if not by cooperating beyond national frontiers? The book, therefore, serves as a reminder of the importance not only of doing transnational history, but also of being a transnational historian.

The book is organized along seven lines of analyses, each occupying a specific chapter and reflecting the principal themes of research on the history of Salazar's Estado Novo: the use of violence; relations with the army; relations with the Catholic Church; the corporatist state; the attempt to effect an anthropological transformation of the Portuguese

population; the evolution of Portuguese society; and the colonial empire. These seven chapters retrace, each from its own angle, the main phases of the Estado Novo between 1933 and 1974. Eventually, all of them converge on the final act of the Estado Novo. On the April 25, 1974 – that this was the same date on which Italy celebrates its liberation from Nazi and Fascist rule in 1945 was no coincidence and brought a powerful symbolic element to the revolt – the Carnation Revolution ended the longest European right-wing dictatorship of the twentieth century, opening the doors to democracy. Salazar had remained in power for forty years, during decades in which Europe and the world underwent enormous social, economic, and political transformations. How was this possible? How did the Estado Novo manage to last so long? What social, economic, and political tools did the regime devise and deploy in order to withstand the multiple crises it faced during its long existence? What factors, both domestic and international, guaranteed its survival through the very different phases of European and global twentieth-century history? The challenges the regimes had to face were momentous: the turbulent the interwar years were followed by the Second World War, in which Portugal remained neutral, and the post-1945 world-system marked by American hegemony and the Cold War. Furthermore, there was the intertwined action of extraordinary global processes such as democratization and decolonization, which were mirrored in Portugal by domestic crises such as the Delgado affair of the 1958, when the *general sem medo* – the "fearless general" – fomented a mass reaction against the established power but was defeated in flawed elections, forced into exile, and then killed by the Portuguese secret police in 1965; or the revolt of April 1961, followed by the great anti-Salazar mobilization of 1962. Nonetheless, the regime remained in power until 1974, firmly controlling Portugal's society, economy, and politics. In recounting the story of the regime, the book basically seeks to explain why and how this was possible.

The authors identify five principal elements in Salazar's art of political endurance. First, a use of both preventive and repressive violence. While the latter was applied brutally but selectively, the former had a wider compass and enabled the Estado Novo to anticipate and prevent rebellion of any sort. To this end, the State erected an extensive and tentacular apparatus of institutions with which to conduct a pervasive and constant campaign of terror aimed at instilling fear and inhibiting dissent. The chief elements of this apparatus were censorship, vigilance, and political prevention, pursued by the *Polícia de Segurança Pública* and the *Guardia Nacional Republicana*. Yet, perhaps even more important in the politico-ideological machinery of social indoctrination were organizations such as the *Federação Nacional para a Alegria no Trabalho* and

the *Junta Central das Casas do Povo*, coordinated by the powerful *Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional*, created in 1933 by António Ferro. Another key factor in the survival of the Estado Novo was the complicity of the Catholic hierarchy. Notwithstanding the formal secularism of the State under the Constitution of 1933, a gradual confessionalization of the regime proceeded from the 1930s onwards. An informal alliance between the Church, with its powerful local organizations and strong local roots, and the *Estado Novo* – a renovated, modern alliance between "the cross and the sword"[6] – had as its central objective the re-Christianisation of the nation in order to eradicate the common enemies of Church and State. These were identified as democrats, socialists, ethnic minorities, and anarchists – indeed, all those who imperilled the traditional structure of power. The alliance was formalized with the signing of the Concordat in 1940, whereby the Church gained a series of privileges, such as tax exemptions, legal personality, a ban on divorce, the relaxation of censorship for the Catholic press, a monopoly in the provision of healthcare in hospitals and prisons, and the directions of several organizations charged with female education. In exchange, the Catholic hierarchy guaranteed its support for the regime, operating through its network of local institutions and parishes.

If the regime's overall objective was to create an organic, Catholic, pacified, and immobile society, to underpin an equally unchanging distribution of power and economic advantage (and disadvantage), the corporatist state was another weapon in the Estado Novo's arsenal. Corporatist principles were certainly taken from the experience of the Italian fascist regime and theorizations, but they were also derived from an older domestic story of corporatist-Catholic elaboration, which unfolded especially at the University of Coimbra, where Salazar was professor of economic policy and finance. For its advocates, at least theoretically, corporatism was a sort of universal panacea for the intra-national divisions generated by liberal capitalism, as well as a way of defending traditional Portuguese society from the emergence of socialism. In fact, the principal goal of corporatist institutions was to eradicate class struggle, by banning and demolishing working-class organizations such as trade unions and political parties. Secondly, the regime began to implement a corporatist system based on inter-class organizations which, theoretically, were to govern and direct the economy. However, the authors rightly note that what was actually created was a system of coordination between different and potentially

[6] A. Garrido, F. Rosas, *Il Portogallo di Salazar. Politica, Società, Economia*, Bononia University Press, Bologna, 2021, p. 76.

divergent economic interests. In the end, Portuguese corporatism consisted in a fitful process of cartelization of the economy under the watchful eye of the regime, a process that tended to favour the agrarian, industrial, and financial groups close to Salazar.

To the question of why the Estado Novo survived so long, the first five chapters certainly provide solid answers. However, it is in the sixth chapter that these answers come together in a more coherent picture. In that chapter, the authors offer an interesting overview of the transformations of the Portuguese society between 1933 and 1974 in terms of demography, social groups, occupation, literacy, education, access to health care, and migration. This gives us a social backdrop against which to frame the economic, social, religious, and political issues discussed in the previous chapters. Indeed, the issues discussed in the chapter are so important that they could well have deserved a more prominent place in the structure of the volume. Using demographic and economic statistics, the authors give us a better understanding of "the slow transition from the *ancien régime* to a modern demographic regime"[7] and explain how the regime governed the rhythm of this transition for its own benefit. Indeed, it appears that Salazar's regime was able to remain in power as long as it was able to govern this transition, to make it work to the benefit of the élites and the ruling class. Consequently, the book's sixth chapter enlightens about important structural dimensions of twentieth-century Portugal, such as the social and political immobility of the countryside in the southern regions of Alentejo and Algarve, relegated for decades to being anachronistic remnants of an *ancient regime* society; or the profound differences between the North and the South in terms of ownership structure and access to the land; or the equally great divide between the cities and the countryside, or between the coastal areas and the interior. These pages are also valuable because, in addition to explaining more fully the social bases of the Salazar's regime, they also recount the subterranean and slower story of the regime's durability and of the structural transformations of society that made it gradually enter its final crisis in the 1960s. After the 1950s and the 1960s, the repercussions of Portugal's industrialization on the social composition and political attitude of the masses led to rapid changes that the regime was not politically equipped to cope with. Portuguese society became more open to external influences, both economic and political. The archaic immobility and isolation of the country was overcome. The worldwide wave of protests in 1968 intercepted the Portuguese population's growing desire for

[7] Ivi, p. 172.

change, something increasingly incompatible with an authoritarian regime born to rule and preserve an immobile, archaic society. If Salazar came to power with the sole objectives of "providing work, freezing salaries, and feeding the nation,"[8] the demands of a modern industrial society were completely different, and the 1960s rapidly became a cradle of resentment against the regime.

In the regime's final phase, all the factors that had guaranteed its stability begun to teeter. The death of Pope Pio XII and the election of John XXIII in October 1958 were followed by the opening of the Second Vatican Council in 1962, which marked a new attitude of the Papacy toward social and political questions around the world. Corporatism and an autarkic political economy were no longer sustainable in a period of advancing European economic integration and free trade, to which Portugal contributed in 1960 by joining the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) together with Sweden, Britain, Denmark, Switzerland, Norway, and Austria. Most of all, however, it was the outbreak of the colonial wars in 1961 that triggered a series of consequences leading to the dissolution of the regime in 1974. The story is somehow paradoxical. At the beginning of the 1960s, the regime was in serious danger as its most important pillar – the army – began to rebel against Salazar, with the failed putsch led by the general Botelho Moniz in 1961. Unsuccessful in overthrowing Salazar, the coup gave the dictator the excuse to eradicate the rebel faction and put faithful commanders in charge of the army, increasing its power on the whole. But the army's poor performance during the colonial wars, particularly towards the end of them, turned a large part of middle-ranking officers against the regime. This intermeshed with the anti-colonialist awakening of civil society, thanks above all to the growing importance of leftist social and student movements but also to a renewed Catholic and democratic political culture. At the beginning of the 1970s, the country was a powder keg; it blew up in April 1974. In the end, the authors rightly remark, "the colonial war, which saved the regime in 1961, made it fall in 1974."[9]

Overall, the emergence, functioning, and eventual fall of Salazar's Portugal compose part of the story of the varieties of right-wing dictatorships and of their ability to survive in very different domestic and international environments. As Salazar's obituary in *The New York Times* correctly observed, Salazar was very different from Hitler, Mussolini, or Franco, despite some similarity. Today, against the background of a worrisome revival of authoritarian regimes, Portuguese

[8] Ivi, p. 173.
[9] Ivi, p. 215.

history in the twentieth century shows how resourceful dictatorships can be in reinventing themselves and adapting to different situations. The book sounds an important civil warning: we must not take freedom for granted and lower our guard. At the same time, from a more scholarly point of view, the work is convincing in considering Portuguese history not as the curious *divertissement* of specialized historians who devote their lives to the study of small and peripheral countries, all in all of little importance for the broader destiny of Europe and the world. On the contrary, as a 1934 Estado Novo propaganda manifesto proclaimed, referring to Portugal's overseas territories, *Portugal não é um país pequeno* ("Portugal is not a small country"). Its colonial empire was one of the first to appear in global history, after the first Atlantic voyages and the capture of Ceuta in 1415, and one of the longest-lived (the handover of Portugal's last colonial territory, Macau, only took place in 1999). The global ramifications of Portuguese history, therefore, are important for understanding European and global history, while the trajectory of the Estado Novo between 1933 and 1974 has much to tell us today regarding authoritarian regimes and global historical transformation.

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