

John Dos Passos in the Crosshairs of Censorship:

Investigating the Portuguese Censorship Reports during the *Estado Novo*, the Portuguese Dictatorship under António de Oliveira Salazar

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Abstract

This paper aims to shed light on how the Luso-American writer John Dos Passos and his *oeuvre* were submitted to censorship during the *Estado Novo* (“New State”), the Portuguese dictatorship that lasted from 1933 to 1974.

A short introduction will explain how censorship functioned and how other North-American writers, such as Upton Sinclair, Howard Fast, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, and Norman Mailer were blue-penciled, too.

After this general overview, I shall explore in depth the ways in which John Dos Passos was subjected to cuttings and banning. Based on his particular case, I will show what the bowdlerization eventually meant for the author. In doing so, I will mention and quote from—so far—inedited archive documents, namely the existing censorship reports on John Dos Passos, i.e. the reports on *Adventures of a Young Man*, *The 42nd Parallel*, *1919*, *The Big Money*, and *Chosen Country*.

Keywords

1919, *The 42nd Parallel*, *Adventures of a Young Man*, *The Big Money*, Censorship, John Dos Passos, *Estado Novo*, Ernest Hemingway.

Introduction

We now have the moralizing aspect of censorship, its necessary intervention in personal attacks and immoral language . . . I understand that this inspection irritates journalists, because it is not done by them, because the surveillance is handed over to censorship, which can also be passionate, since it is human, and that will always mean for those who write, oppression and despotism. I do understand that censorship irritates you, because there is nothing that a man considers more sacred than his thinking and the expression of his thinking. . . . Censorship is a defective institution, sometimes unfair, subject to the free will of the censors, to the variations in their temperament, to the consequences of their bad mood. . . . I myself have been the victim of censorship and I confess to you that I got hurt, that I got angry, that I even had revolutionary thoughts. . . [Yet, we will not revoke censorship to prevent] the illegitimacy of misrepresenting the facts out of ignorance or out of bad faith.—Dr. António de Oliveira Salazar (qtd. in Franco 101¹)

- 1 With the overthrow of the first Portuguese Republic (1910-1926) and the implementation of the *Ditadura Militar* (“military dictatorship” that lasted from 1926 to 1933), the practice of censorship was intensified (Almeida 66).² Even speaking about the existence of censorship was, if not forbidden, at least avoided. Yet, the journalist António Ferro questioned Salazar—at the time already head of government—about its significance, during a 1932 interview, published in *Diário de Notícias*, a newspaper of national importance and influence. Soon afterwards, Ferro—known for being an admirer of Salazar—assumed, at the invitation of the dictator, the position of secretary of propaganda. Ferro’s question, which no other journalist could have dared to ask at the time, might have been pivotal to Ferro’s extraordinarily rapid career advancement. The question proved useful to Salazar, since now the dictator could blatantly explain why he considered censorship necessary and legitimate. He could thwart an increasing unpopularity regarding the suppression of free speech within Portuguese society and discourage the hope of the ordinary people that the end of the detested *Ditadura Militar* and its transition into the *Estado Novo* would mean the end of censorship. The people believed that this “New State”—the English translation for *Estado Novo*—stood for a socio-political improvement, orchestrated by Salazar.
- 2 The truth, however, was that censorship was to be maintained in force throughout the prolonged existence of the *Estado Novo*, which remained a dictatorship after all. As stressed in the epigraph, quoted above, António de Oliveira Salazar defended censorship even though he recognized its arbitrariness, pointing out that it was a necessary evil to prevent attacks against him and his governance, as well as to fend a distortion of facts. Of course, any criticism of the newly founded *Estado Novo* was regarded as a misrepresentation of the facts or the truth. Censorship was thence practiced “*a bem da nação*,” “for the good of the nation.” Article 3 of the decree that

substantiated censorship and which passed into law on April 11, 1933, expressed that the declared purpose of censorship was to prevent

the perversion of public opinion as a social force; it should be carried out in such a way as to defend public opinion from all factors that may misguide it against truth, justice, morality, efficient administration and the common good, and to prevent any attack on the basic principles of the organization of society. (Spirk 10-11)

It was up to Salazar to decide which principles were part of Portuguese society or not, as well as to select what should be understood as the common good, truth, justice, morality, and efficiency.

- 3 Furthermore, censorship had the function of conveying both internally and externally the image of a country that worked successfully on all levels due to the capacity of its astute leader and the reliability of the newly instituted governmental organs. Yet, the fact that social ills nonetheless persisted exposed the country's perfect image as a lie. Incapable of developing policies to solve social problems, censorship had the purpose of preventing the mentioning of these misfortunes. What was forbidden to be expressed, mentioned, or widely and critically discussed in public, apparently ceased to exist. In such a way, as stated by César Príncipe,

[t]here were no . . . political prisoners. No suicides. No slums. No cholera. No price increases. No abortions. No hippies. No strikes. No drugs. No flu. Nor were there homosexuals. No crises. No massacres. Not even nudism. No floods. No yellow fever. No imperialism. No hunger. No violations. No pollution. No derailments. Not even typhus. There was no Communist Party. No fraud. . . . No racism. (12)

The *modus operandi* of Censorship

- 4 A commission was founded to guarantee the proper functioning of censorship, with headquarters in Lisbon, responsible for the entire South, whereas in Oporto, a commission was in charge of practicing censorship in the North of Portugal; and another one in Coimbra was accountable for the central part of the country. There was a delegation in Madeira, namely in Funchal, which was responsible for controlling the Portuguese islands. Each commission was further divided into several departments. However, for the purpose of this
- 5 study, only the "*secção de livros*," the "book department," will be of interest. Within these book departments the censors were called "*leitores*," "readers." They were high-ranking officers, specifically lieutenants, captains and majors, as well as lieutenant-colonels. Many of these military officers were well educated; they were able to read in different languages, among them, of course, French (at the time the internationally spoken language), Spanish,

Italian, some English, and German. This was quite outstanding at a time when the bulk of the population was still illiterate and could hence not even read Portuguese.

- 6 The law allowed the confiscation of suspect books to be presented to the *leitores* for their inspection. The apprehension was executed by PIDE (*Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado*), the political state police; the ordinary police force; the customs at all harbors or at the country's frontier with Spain; the Portuguese post office; as well as by the National Library. Editors, small local libraries, and bookstores were regularly inspected by the authorities to ensure that no forbidden literature was being printed, sold or lent. Furthermore, individuals and other institutions (like colleges and schools) could denounce authors, publishers, libraries, and bookstores to the commission or directly to PIDE. Offenders would face penalties such as heavy fines, or they were forced to close down their shops or printing houses, eventually facing bankruptcy. In some cases, when, for instance, Salazar or the *Estado Novo* had been severely criticized in print, both authors and editors could serve a sentence in prison or be deported to the colonies, like to *Colónia Penal de Tarrafal*, a concentration
- 7 camp on the island of Santiago, Cape Verde.

Books that had been forbidden by the “*comissão de censura*,” “censorship commission,” were seized and usually taken to the headquarters of PIDE, where they were stored for destruction.³

- 8 The *comissão de censura* exercised censorship in two ways. On the one hand, “post-publication censorship” was applied to those books that had already been published (normally prior to 1934 or to those books that were imported from abroad). On the other hand, “pre-publication” censorship compelled authors, translators and editors to send in their manuscript in three copies for prior approval (cf. Spirk 7).
- 9 After reading the books or manuscripts, censors would come to one of the following conclusions: “*autorizado*,” “authorized,” which meant that the text could be published or sold as it had been presented to the censorship services without any alterations; “*autorizado com cortes*,” “authorized with cuts,” which meant that specific words, sentences, paragraphs or entire pages, chapters, etc., which were carefully and methodically registered, had to be removed from the manuscript before being published; “*suspense*,” “suspended,” which essentially meant that the censor was not sure if the manuscript or the book could pass as is; in these cases, a second opinion was required, normally from a higher-ranking ‘reader;’ and, last but not least, “*proibido*,” “prohibited,” which meant that the book or manuscript could not be published or traded within the country.
- 10 In Italy, the text could sometimes be altered to avoid prohibition, as it happened, for instance, with Cesare Pavese’s translation of John Dos Passos’s

The Big Money, in 1938, when Pavese confessed having “scrupulously followed the ministry’s suggestions, that is, [he had] anglicized all Italian names, cut all mention of Lenin and the Soviets, deleted or replaced any mention of Fascism, omitted or translated with dignity *wop* or *dago*” (Bonsaver 139). This procedure was not approved in Portugal. Any alterations to the text, except cutting, were not allowed. Article 6 of the country’s censorship law “stipulated that censorial boards should not introduce changes in the censored texts but limit themselves to eliminate the questionable passages only” (Spirk 7).

- 11 Principally, the censors would try to authorize publication with cuts, rather than forbid the entire work, since the Portuguese government did not want people to realize that censorship was so thoroughly exercised. In fact, only the authors, the translators and editors would know which parts had been suppressed. The book’s reader would never become aware of the mutilations of the text. To somewhat dilute the idea of randomness, a “*relatório de censura*,” “censorship report,” had to be elaborated and signed by each censor. In it, the *leitor* had to explain and to justify their decision, which, nevertheless, remained an act of arbitrariness and subjectivity.
- 12 What mostly irritated censors, resulting in the prohibition of a work, was the use of foul language; the description of eroticism, which *leitores* more often than not associated with pornography; works about homosexuality; free love; adultery; feminist literature that encouraged emancipation; books about contraceptives, even medical studies; books about abortion and infant mortality; works that discussed the social acceptability of divorce; books that went against Christian morality; publications on witchcraft; murder mysteries that were considered too realistic or too violent were forbidden to prevent imitation; any political criticism of Salazar and his government: any mention of misspending, anti-colonialism or anti-militarism, or any disapproval of the dictatorship in any other form; any criticism uttered of the country’s allies.⁴ Any favoring of opposing ideologies like the sponsoring of socialism, syndicalism, communism, anarchism; books by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, and Mao⁵ were considered of the most sordid propaganda; any pro-democratic or liberal treatises, too. Moreover, it was not allowed to write about important social problems like crime; low wages; organized labor strikes; or about the fact that a great part of the Portuguese population lived under very poor conditions and suffered from hunger, was housed in barracks, still walked barefoot, had almost no schooling; that a part of the male population had drinking problems; domestic violence was not to be mentioned, either. It was forbidden to write on women making a living out of prostitution. It was not allowed to write on asylums and the treatment of mental disorders. From the early 1960s onwards, information on the ongoing wars in the colonies was suppressed; as well as the fact that people were jailed for political reasons.

Censorship Applied to American Authors

- 13 To shortly exemplify the magnitude of censorship and the real damage caused in particular to North-American literature within the *Estado Novo*, I shall briefly refer to a few American authors, whose works were censored, before analyzing how censorship was exercised on John Dos Passos who was not treated differently.
- 14 It should not come as a surprise that Norman Mailer's *An American Dream* (i.e. its Portuguese translation) was forbidden "rigorously and effectively." The *leitor* justified his decision by writing that Mailer's novel broached the subject of "perverted sexual pleasures . . . of the lowest sensualism" (Censorship report on Mailer 1-4).
- 15 For the same reasons, John Updike's *Rabbit, Run* and Henry Miller's *The World of Sex* were banned, given their "sexual immoralities" (Censorship report on Updike 2) with the latter's censorship further justifying that it had been "refused in England and in America" as well (Censorship report on Miller, *The World of Sex*). According to the 'reader,' almost all books by Miller were banned, such as *Tropic of Cancer*, a frequently "discussed book, like all the other works of the author, whatever his literary merit may be, he uses the most reckless language," the censor concluded by calling the novel the "most sordid pornography" (Censorship report on Miller, *Trópico de Cancer*). Neither did the Nobel Laureate William Faulkner escape this labeling with *Sanctuary*. The censor found the novel "condemnable for its perversion, sadism and vicious amorality" (Censorship report on Faulkner).
- 16 Moreover, the censors found "scandalous revelations" also made by Irving Wallace in *The Chapman Report*; not only was the English original forbidden, but also its Portuguese translation (Censorship report on Wallace).
- 17 The Spanish version of Emma Goldman's *The Traffic in Women* was banned, since this essay described "prostitution throughout history, stating that it had a religious origin." Furthermore, the essay criticized the fact that women were treated unfairly, as they received unequal pay for equal work. Curiously enough, the censor did not see herein any embarrassment, concluding that "there is no great inconvenience in the circulation of this leaflet or any benefit either, since no lessons are learned from it" (Censorship report on Goldman). Nevertheless, the essay was eventually forbidden by a second 'reader,' who did not agree with his colleague and found the essay feminist enough to have it banned.
- 18 Howard Fast, on the other hand, was censored for theming "homosexuality" in *Spartacus*. The work was nonetheless authorized, although with cuts; "words and sentences" had to be eliminated because they "referred with too much cruelty to masculine homosexuality." The reason for the authorization had to do with the fact that the censorship film department had allowed a

screening of the movie “in one of Lisbon’s first cinemas.” Since the motion picture did not bring up the subject of homosexuality, the *leitor* decided that “a translation could be published” with what he called slight and “minor eliminations” (Censorship report on Fast, *Spartacus*).

- 19 Tennessee Williams’s play *Summer and Smoke* (in a translation by the Portuguese playwright Luís de Sttau Monteiro, who had been censored and imprisoned during the *Estado Novo* himself) was authorized, too, even though the censor considered several passages to be overly “realistic.” However, he did not “think them so immoral that” he would have to “propose a ban on the sale of the book” (Censorship report on Williams 3).⁶
- 20 Other books were outlawed for being “communist propaganda” (Censorship report on Reed) or for “sympathizing” with the communist movement (Censorship report on Steinbeck). Further examples included: John Reed’s *Ten Days that Shook the World*, the French version of John Steinbeck’s *In Dubious Battle* as well as Howard Fast’s *The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti* (cf. Censorship report on Fast, *A Tragédia de Sacco e Vanzetti*). For serving the “propaganda of democratic principles that are being combatted by the *Estado Novo*,” even Thomas Jefferson’s writings were considered inopportune and were thus banished (Censorship report on Jefferson).
- 21 A censorship report that stands out deals with Ernest Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms*, since the *leitor*, a major in the Portuguese army, perceived its “authorization as an inconvenience, despite” the fact that the work was “of first-rate.” The “defeatist” tone and some passages that the ‘reader’ considered “anarchist” and “immoral,” drove the censor to advise the prohibition of the novel (Censorship report on Hemingway, *Adeus às Armas* 1-2). Yet, in the end, the Portuguese translation *Adeus às Armas* was authorized with cuts. Contrary to what happened to Emma Goldman, a second censor preferred to authorize the book (even though mutilated) rather than to forbid the work completely, particularly so because Hemingway was a writer of such international fame, as professed in another censorship report, this time on *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, in which the censor somewhat worships Hemingway by stating:

the author is considered one of the greatest North-American novelists of our time. I already read this very revered work some three years ago. . . . The book is very well written; the action takes place during the Spanish Civil War between red legionnaires. The Spanish nationalists are viewed by a democratic and anti-fascist American writer. I don’t think that the work was written with the intention to propagate communism, even though I think it is quite inconvenient given the Portuguese position towards the Spanish Civil War. . . . Yet, bearing in mind that the book is already available for three years, I think it is not opportune, at least for now, to prohibit it. (Censorship report on Hemingway, *Por Quem os Sinos Dobram*)

Even though *For Whom the Bell Tolls* clearly criticizes (Spanish) Fascism, the censor astonishingly does not advise to forbid the novel, apparently because of his personal taste, using the argument that the book had already been available for three years as some sort of justification.

- 22 Michael Gold did not have the same luck. In 1947, *Jews without Money* was considered “bolshevist” and “absolutely prejudicial.” Exaggeratedly “realistic especially concerning pornography,” the censor concluded that the novel was “without any interest,” so he decided “that its sale should be prohibited in Portugal” (Censorship report on Gold, *Judeus sem Dinheiro*, 1947). In 1936, the novel had already passed through the hands of the censorship commission. Back then, however, the outlawing of the book had been justified differently. The censor of the thirties thought that Gold defended “libertarian ideas” (Censorship report on Gold, *Judeus sem Dinheiro*, 1936). In this opposing assessment of the very same novel, one might notice how illogically and contradictorily censorship was executed and how dependent it was on each of the censor’s (mis-)interpretations. The same might be observed as regards Samuel D. Proctor and Malcolm X.
- 23 Proctor’s *The Young Negro in America* was forbidden to circulate in Portugal. The censor justified his decision by stating: “As true apostles of equal rights, and of anti-racism, we would have nothing to oppose the publication of this book, if it was not, in fact, an expression of inconvenient racism given the revolutionary action of blacks against American whites and whites in general” (Censorship report on Proctor 2). On the other hand, Alex Haley’s biography on Malcolm X (a Spanish translation) was curiously enough, considered to depict a man that had come out “in favor of a movement crucial to the history of black emancipation.” “Even though some references in the book could raise some objections,” the censor nonetheless concluded that the work’s prohibition was not advised, since “the Portuguese ultramarine politics” and interests were “not directly touched” (Censorship report on Haley 1-2). Whereas Proctor’s approach was considered a discrimination against whites, Malcolm X’s attitude and discourse were, oddly, not.

Censorship Applied to John Dos Passos

- 24 Just like the authors to whom I succinctly referred above, John Dos Passos was a victim of censorship during the *Estado Novo*. Being a prominent writer and having Portuguese ancestry did not mean that he was treated in a different way. In this part of my article, I want to comprehensively explore how and for what reasons censorship was applied to John Dos Passos.
- 25 Dos Passos not only produced poetry, novels, plays, essays, but also articles for periodicals. Consequently, I questioned if Dos Passos’s journalistic work had likewise been subject to censorship in Portugal. According to Prof. Dr. Orlando

César Gonçalves—to whom I am much obliged for our correspondence—the only article by John Dos Passos published in Portugal, in *Notícias da Amadora*, on January 29, 1966, titled: “Rodolfo Valentino, Um ídolo que se fez mito” had not been “subject to any cuts,” since nothing in the text (dealing with the Italian-born American actor Rudolph Valentino) had roused the suspicion of the censorship commission (Gonçalves). Consequently, I shall focus on the writer’s novels henceforward.

- 26 John Dos Passos’s *The 42nd Parallel* (in a Brazilian Portuguese translation by Silveira Peixoto for Guáira, Rio de Janeiro) was suspended, according to the handwritten report, dated from July 12, 1949. Only one day later, it eventually became authorized by a second *leitor*, a captain, who made a few handwritten remarks on the same report himself. Whereas the first censor commented that *The 42nd Parallel* was: “a realistic novel about. . . life in America” with some passages that he considered not yet “pornographic,” he stressed that in it “references to mainly socialist doctrines” were made. Unsure whether these should be suppressed, the ‘reader’ forwarded the novel “for superior appreciation,” informing his superiors that “the pages where the subject is dealt with at length [had been] marked.” The second ‘reader’ observed that these “were of no [such] importance” that could justify “the prohibition of the book.” He hence concluded that the novel “should be authorized” (Censorship report on Dos Passos, *Paralelo 42 1-2*).
- 27 In spite of this, the English original of 1919 (the second novel that follows *The 42nd Parallel* in Dos Passos’s U.S.A. trilogy) had been forbidden, as a matter of fact, already on September 25, 1938. The censor explained his decision by writing in his report that the novel was composed of:

Romanticized episodes with partial criticisms of the events of 1919 (peace treaty) and the action of the Americans in the Great War. By using a language of raw realism, the intention is revealed to propagate leftist and anti-militarist ideas. There is no advantage in promoting this work that can be considered preparatory for the expansion of leftist social ideas. (Censorship report on Dos Passos, 1919)

A member of the military forces, the captain, did not appreciate the novel’s anti-military remarks. Whereas in *The 42nd Parallel*, the censors found the mentioning of leftist concerns unproblematic, things changed with 1919. I concur with many scholars who characterize Dos Passos’s “early fiction,” such as the U.S.A. trilogy, as criticism of the capitalist system, which, to Dos Passos, was corrupted by the greediness of the rich. During this period, it is claimed that Dos Passos sympathized with leftist—the communist and the anarchist—movements (see Oliveira, *From a Man* 258). He, for instance, defended Sacco and Vanzetti, two anarchists who were charged with armed robbery and

murder, and the young poet, David Gordon, who served a prison term for having written an obscene poem published in 1927 in the *Daily Worker*, a communist paper.

- 28 Another reason to ban Dos Passos's work was its realism, since the censors, as already mentioned, did not like authors to discuss social ills in their writings. The social and political faults and difficulties that Dos Passos depicted in his novels existed not only in America but also in Portugal, such as poverty and the hardships of the working class to make a decent living, and accordingly had to be kept silent. Describing how things really worked, and how people really lived, was feared, since the ordinary reader of the novel could jump to conclusions, i.e. that things had to change. This went against the expressed aim of Fascism, which sought to preserve society as it was. Subsequently, the dissemination of 1919 was condemnable and not advised.
- 29 Not surprisingly, *The Big Money*, Dos Passos's third novel in his trilogy (translated into Portuguese by Peixoto and Zenha Machado) was forbidden as well on July 13, 1949. The header of the report clarifies that the Brazilian Portuguese translation had been seized by PIDE that handed it to the *direcção dos serviços de censura*, "directorate of censorship services." "This book," the censor noted in his report,

is made up of a series of 'news', without any interest, where here and there sentences are read that denote communist ideas and, therefore, if it had not already been published, it would be advised not to get published. In the following pages are the sentences to which I refer: 11-21-22-33-36. . . (Censorship report on Dos Passos, *Dinheiro Graúdo*)

Once more, the dissemination of the work of an author that defended communist thoughts was considered undesirable and even of no interest. The literary importance of this canonical work was, of course, ignored and left out of the decision-making process.

- 30 Another work by Dos Passos that was forbidden on June 6, 1957 was the French translation of *Chosen Country*, which had been confiscated by C.T.T. (*Correios, Telégrafos e Telefones*), the Portuguese post office, and handed over to the censorship commission. In his report, the censor noted:

The author makes his autobiography out of this book. He is an internationally known writer, with deep knowledge of philosophy and sociology. However, for the immorality that he reveals, for the communist mystique that he demonstrates to possess and which he intends to advertise and for the anti-warmongering that . . . he manifests—in no case he admits that war should exist—the book is to be forbidden. [signed] The reader (Censorship report on Dos Passos, *Terre Elue*)

This interpretation of *Chosen Country*, first published in 1951, is somewhat flawed. One of the incidents in which Dos Passos reveals ‘immorality’ in his novel is the scene in which the quasi-autobiographical character Jay Pignately sleeps with a prostitute in Paris during WWI; “When they woke up his whole body felt easy. They yawned and stretched and smiled at each other. They were slow getting dressed because they had to take their clothes off again half way. He gave her fifty francs and she gave him a friendly kiss” (Dos Passos, *Chosen Country* 192). Even though the scene is rather harmless, and contains no description of the sexual act, the censor must have considered the mere fact that a character slept with a prostitute as immoral and condemnable.

- 31 Moreover, Dos Passos is accused of wanting to propagate communism; yet the truth is that, by then, he had become increasingly disillusioned with the left. As a matter of fact, Dos Passos’s disenchantment with communism had already occurred in the late 1930s, when his friend and Spanish translator José Robles Pazos was executed by “the Russians on suspicion of espionage” (Bautista-Cordero 148). From then onwards, Dos Passos no longer found the communists reliable since they had no scruples in killing their own supporters for their cause. Dos Passos later said:

The Soviet Government operated in Spain a series of ‘extra legal tribunals,’ more accurately described as murder gangs, who put to death without mercy all whom they could reach and who stood in the way of communists. Subsequently they smeared their victims’ reputations. (Dos Passos, qtd. in Oliveira, *Classified and Confidential* 121-22)

With *Chosen Country* Dos Passos had sustained

his opinion of late that America was after all a country worthy of living in; America’s freedom and democracy, established since its early settlement, allowed its citizens and immigrants to overcome all difficulties and become successful. North America was the land of opportunity; the American dream was not a myth anymore, since according to Dos Passos it had turned out to be true. (Oliveira, *From a Man* 207)

- 32 Yet, the dream, based on democracy, could have been jeopardized by the dictatorship of the proletariat. Consequently, Dos Passos started to write against it; “The communisti,” Dos Passos stated in *Chosen Country*, “they want martyr. They don’t mind about one . . . man” (Dos Passos, *Chosen Country* 374). Moreover, Dos Passos “denounces” “Communist politics” and “all crooks who deceive the poor” (Dos Passos, *Chosen Country* 390). Dos Passos had become “a conservative to the point of sponsoring McCarthyism, i.e. the purge of the reds, which Dos Passos believed treacherous, and a menace to the free world; as he now saw them, they would not halt at killing their own supporters if

these dared to express freely an opinion contrary to the party-line” (Oliveira, *From a Man* 206).

- 33 Another misinterpretation in the censorship report concerns Dos Passos’s anti-war remarks. In fact, Dos Passos had criticized military hierarchies and the cruelty of war before (in *Three Soldiers*, among other works), but the censor’s belief that, as a result, Dos Passos would not approve of any wars, was incorrect. “John Dos Passos was no pacifist. According to him, some wars had to be fought in the name of liberty;” for instance the Spanish Civil War, in which Dos Passos sought to get involved, sponsoring the Republicans against General Franco, and, shortly afterwards, WWII that freed the world of National-Socialism (Oliveira, *From a Man* 197). Yet, the fact that Dos Passos had taken sides against Franco—who besides being Fascist like Salazar, was one of the country’s allies—was reason enough for censors to prevent these denunciations from being spread.
- 34 Actually, *Adventures of a Young Man* might be considered Dos Passos’s first novel in which the author disclosed to have made up his mind about communism. And yet, PIDE seized its Brazilian Portuguese translation and had it submitted to the censorship commission. The reason the political state police might have spotted the novel was due to the fact that its Brazilian translator Enéas Camargo had changed the title to: “*Aventuras de um Comunista*” (“Adventures of a Communist”) instead of maintaining the English original *Adventures of a Young Man*. Undeniably, the translation’s title (with the word ‘communist’ in it) was decisive for the confiscation of the novel. On December 23, 1958, the novel published by Guáira in Rio was ultimately forbidden. Even though the censor acknowledged that the book had been “written by a determined author” and that it did “not seem intended [to spread] propaganda” he believed: “The title—stupid and contrived.” He paradoxically stated that the title “seems to be sheer propaganda and it aims at being attractive to the masses” and thus, in the end, he decided on “prohibiting the book” (Oliveira, *From a Man* 450). This opinion about the novel seems rather contradicting and confusing. On the one hand, the censor believed the book not to be propagandistic, and yet, on the other hand, he thought that its title was. Further down in his report, he eventually resolved that the book was “frankly Communist-Marxist.” As already stated, the novel was, above all, against communism. Its main character, Glenn Spotswood, was betrayed by the very movement he believed in, a fact that did not go unnoticed by the censor, who summarized the plot by stating that the novel “depicts a time and environment where youngsters are thrown into life to make up for themselves and are thus an easy prey for audacious and domineering or fashionable ideas. Their environment collides with poverty, . . . and it contrasts with empty lives, vice and wealth,” while “the hero . . . ends up [being] killed by the reds—during the Spanish Civil War.” Therefore, the

editor established: “The work is dangerous and seductive to youths” (Oliveira, *From a Man* 450).

- 35 This rather self-contradicting report contrasts with another one that was written nearly three years later, when the state-owned publishing house *Empresa Nacional de Publicidade* (National Advertising Company) asked the censorship commission for the approval of a new (European) Portuguese translation of *Adventures of a Young Man*. This time, the censor received the French translation of the novel (*Aventures d'un Jeune Homme*) by Mathilde Camhi for Gallimard in Paris. Herein, the word ‘communist’ did not figure on the book cover and thus the censorship report read very differently from the first one. The new report resolved that the work was neither communist nor propagandistic, but that the novel contained descriptions which the censor found too realistic and cruel and consequently advised their elimination.

Schematically this book is a historiography of communist infiltration and action in the United States of North America. At the same time, and providing the romantic background, the life of an idealistic young American develops, who has lived fighting for the social demands of the most unprotected workers and classes. But the work is not of communist propaganda; rather it is a political-sociological analysis as clearly shown in its final conclusion (p. 350). There are, however, throughout the book, expressions or words so realistic and crude that I think that they should be suppressed in the translation that is intended to be done, especially since they do not imply anything with the general line of the work nor its deletion distorts its intention. . . . I also believe that some sentences that are marked (pages 70 and 317) should be deleted due to the possibility of political misinterpretation. With these slight deletions, I believe the translation into Portuguese of this French translation could be authorized. The reader (Censorship report on Dos Passos, *Aventures d'un Jeune Homme*)

Today it may seem rather peculiar that a novel is translated from another translation instead of from the original version. Nevertheless, in those days, as already stated, French was the hegemonic language spoken by the upper classes in Europe, including Portugal. Thus, the Portuguese translator Antunes das Neves used the French version as source text.

- 36 In his report, the censor clearly marked which pages contained words and expressions that he wanted to be removed from the forthcoming translation. In the following, I shall examine what the censor meant by ‘realistic’ and ‘crude’. Whereas the French translation reads: “— Du diable si je le sais. Je suppose que tu ne connais pas en endroit dans cette putain de ville où l'on puisse trouver quelque chose à boire?” (Dos Passos, *Aventures d'un Jeune Homme* 33), the Portuguese version of this excerpt misses the word *diable* (which stands for ‘devil,’ or ‘damned’) and the word *putain* (that stands for ‘whore’) (cf. Dos Passos, *Aventuras dum Jovem* 35). By ‘realism,’ the censor meant hence ‘realism of language;’ Dos Passos let his characters swear and curse and use profane

language, since the author intended to depict in his novel how people really talked in everyday life. This, however, was seen as c/rude by the censor, who therefore advised the elimination of the words which he considered offensive. The same applied to expressions in the next passage. “Entre, Toby, espèce de c... Bon Dieu, c’que je suis content de te revoir! — Et alors, Duke, vieil enfant du putain, elle te plaît, notre capitale?” (Dos Passos, *Aventures d’un Jeune Homme* 34) In the Portuguese translation, the ‘c...’ (in itself an evidence of Dos Passos’s own self-censorship) is missing, as well as “Bon Dieu” —“my God”—the English original reads “Jesus Christ” (Dos Passos, *District of Columbia* 31); and finally “putain” again, which this time is not omitted but translated into a less vulgar expression, actually with the Portuguese equivalent for “dude” (cf. Dos Passos, *Aventuras dum Jovem* 37).

- 37 The censor assumed that by deleting these expressions, among others, Dos Passos’s text would not suffer major alterations. The truth, however, is that *Aventuras dum Jovem* was bluntly castrated, since the *Empresa Nacional de Publicidade* not only had the selected words and sentences deleted but surprisingly went beyond the censor’s instructions. They eliminated entire pages, even the last page of the novel (p. 350 in the French version referred to by the censor), the very page that was so conclusive for the *leitor* and from which he established the non-communistic character of the novel. Actually, all of the missing pages illustrate Dos Passos’s gradual disillusionment with communism. While early pages in the novel are still filled with praise towards the communist movement, it becomes less and less euphoric as the novel progresses and turns into severe critique.
- 38 The editors of the *Empresa Nacional de Publicidade* that was under the control of the Fascist government seemingly decided to blue-pencil much more than indicated by the censor, most probably because they feared that deleting a sentence here and there would not have been enough to avoid the so-called inconvenient, ‘political misinterpretations.’
- 39 Quoting from the English original version, here are two passages that were altogether omitted in the Portuguese translation:⁷

THE CAPITALISTS rigged their corporations to buy cheap and sell dear . . . They tried to trade with Mussolini when he took over paralyzed Italy and fell dreaming himself Caesar among the ruins of Rome. They thought Hitler would keep the trade unions in order and wages low . . . The capitalists had invented advertising, a bombardment of lies and half truths in pictures and print and stories and songs . . . the Fascists had discovered the trick of making lies as plausible as truth; the Communists lumped all these inventions that degrade to shoddy the mind of the medium man to serve a simple globecircling dogma: those who would not submit their will to the will of the Party (which meant the will of the Central Committee, which meant the will of the autocrat supreme in the Kremlin scheming mankind’s domination were enemies of the human race. (Dos Passos, *District of Columbia* 307-309)

It is certainly curious that the censor did not refer to this passage in his report and it may become clear why the editors therefore decided to censor this passage themselves. Dos Passos not only criticizes both Mussolini and Hitler but also Fascism in itself, exposing the followers of the movement as liars. The part concerning the communists is in line with what could have been published at the time. Yet, *Empresa Nacional de Publicidade* must have decided that it would be best to eliminate the whole passage.

- 40 Even though Dos Passos criticizes communism on the last page of his novel, this was removed, too, since Dos Passos stresses freedom as an opposing and desired force.

In America the Communist Party grew powerful and remarkably rich out of the ruin of freedom in Europe and the sacrifice of righteous men. . . . Stalin, the schoolingmaster of fascism, could become in the editorials in liberal newspapers the grand antifascist; . . . because the American People had forgotten our primer of liberties: that every right entails a duty that free institutions cost high in vigilance, selfdenial . . . and that the freedom of one class of people cannot be gained at the expense of the enslavement of another; and that means are more important than ends. (Dos Passos, *District of Columbia* 340-41)

Besides having removed pages that had not been mentioned in the censorship report, Dos Passos's editors further decided to autonomously eliminate the titles of certain chapters and thus to restructure the novel. For instance, the title of the second chapter, "Man in God's Image," simply disappeared. In the Portuguese translation, the two chapters (chapter I and II) were merged into one. Instead of five subchapters, as in the original, the Portuguese rendition gained four subchapters more. Herewith, Dos Passos's Portuguese editors created an unnecessary imbalance of chapter arrangements, since Antunes das Neves could have simply altered the title (a common practice in translation) that the editors must have found inconvenient for religious reasons.

Quod erat demonstrandum: A Brief Conclusion

- 41 In this article, I have discussed the fact that North-American writers were censored for several reasons in Portugal during the *Estado Novo* dictatorship. Their works were described as being pornographic; theming adultery and homosexuality; making use of foul language; expressing feminist ideas; being too realistic; presenting communist propaganda; disseminating libertarian and democratic ideas; being too defeatist; exposing anti-militarist sentiments; and containing racism against whites.
- 42 John Dos Passos's works were censored, too: *The 42nd Parallel* (in a Brazilian Portuguese translation by Silveira Peixoto) was authorized, but *The Big Money* (translated into Portuguese by Peixoto and Zenha Machado), *Chosen Country*

(i.e., the French translation *Terre Elue* by Yves Malartic), 1919 (the English original), and *Adventures of a Young Man* (in a Brazilian Portuguese translation by Enéas Camargo) were forbidden; while the European-Portuguese translation of the same book (by Antunes das Neves) was authorized with cuts; thence words, sentences, and whole pages were erased in the latter.

- 43 I believe that John Dos Passos did not know that *Aventuras dum Jovem* had been censored. Having been a victim of censorship on several occasions,⁸ Dos Passos went vehemently against the suppression of freedom of speech. For instance, when “referring to Christ as ‘old boy,’” Dos Passos’s editors “objected” to print *One Man’s Initiation* in 1920, and demanded that the young author rewrite the passage, which they considered “offensive.” Even though Dos Passos was forced, then, to give in, he was nevertheless reluctant and preferred “to delete the entire scene” rather than submit to the printer’s “dictums.” In a letter to his editors, he stated “I am willing to have almost anything omitted, but I cannot consent to paraphrases” (Ludington 192-93). Yet, by becoming an eminent writer (especially after *Manhattan Transfer* had become a huge literary success in 1925), Dos Passos no longer approved of any omissions. In the early thirties, Harper’s pressured Dos Passos to delete the biographical thumbnail about John Pierpont Morgan in 1919, since the editor considered the text an “insult,” and because Harper’s finances depended on the loans made by J.P. Morgan’s bank institute. Dos Passos declined and switched to Harcourt, Brace and Company, where his novel appeared without suffering any of the imposed changes (Ludington 296).
- 44 In fact, the young Dos Passos had to struggle with being published or not and was thus initially forced to consent to the publication of a “slightly censored book,” as suggested by his authorized biographer Prof. Dr. Charles Townsend Ludington (193). Yet, the famous Dos Passos no longer agreed to the publication of his works with deletions and neither did he agree to be silenced in any other form. As a matter of fact, in the early 1930s, as stressed, when he “published in *The Nation* and the *New Republic*,” his “requirements were that the magazines be free from censorship” (Willig 10). Furthermore, Dos Passos “opposed any type of censorship and [henceforth] insisted on freedom to publish” whatever and “wherever he chose” (Willig 17).
- 45 It is often claimed that by succeeding Salazar in 1968, Prof. Marcello Caetano, who essentially preserved the *Estado Novo*—and thus continued the dictatorship—nevertheless allowed the country a short breath of freedom. Censorship was, however, maintained. It was only after the Carnation Revolution on April 25, 1974 that the constitution of the newly implemented Portuguese Republic officially outlawed the suppression of free speech.

- 46 Nevertheless, John Dos Passos's censored books like *Aventuras dum Jovem* are still available at Portuguese public libraries without any note that the edition underwent censorship. This might pose a problem in terms of the author's reputation as well as the literary identity of his work. In my opinion, publications that were subject to cuttings should be marked as such. In Dos Passos's case, *Aventuras dum Jovem* was so much disfigured that the translation became rather dull and lifeless. It should not, however, be removed from the shelves of the libraries, since these translations are, as a matter of fact, a significant part of the country's translation history.
- 47 Finally, I feel obliged to point out that my article is an incomplete study, since, unfortunately, right after the revolution, many censorship reports, which were to be archived at the Torre do Tombo in Lisbon, went missing. It is estimated that some 22% of the total amount of reports disappeared. Some resurfaced in the assets of private collectors. Others, however, have not reappeared, which ultimately means that scholars have lost valuable archive material to conduct comprehensive studies on censorship and specific authors. The same applies to John Dos Passos, since no matching reports could be traced for the requests for Portuguese translations that must have been submitted in the 1960s to the censorship commission by Portugal for the novels that were published eventually that decade, such as *The 42nd Parallel*, (translated by Helder Macedo⁹) or 1919 and *The Big Money* (translated by Daniel Gonçalves). Furthermore, no reports were found on: *Manhattan Transfer* (translated by Alfredo Amorim), *Three Soldiers* (translated by Luís Pizarro de Melo Sampaio for Arcádia), *Most Likely to Succeed* (commissioned by Minerva and translated by Fernanda Rodrigues), *The Best Times*, and *The Portugal Story* (requested by Íbis and translated by Maria da Graça Cardoso). It would be too naïve to believe that these missing reports could be brought to light one day.

Notes

¹ All translations in this article are the author's own, unless otherwise noted.

² Contrary to popular belief, censorship did also exist during the first Portuguese Republic. It had been introduced to inhibit pornography from being disseminated, and to protect, particularly youth, from perversion. Furthermore, all information that could have been considered harmful to state security and national defense had to pass through censorship, especially so from 1916 onwards, when Germany declared war on Portugal. The declaration of war had been issued, since the republicans had ordered the apprehension of some seventy German vessels anchored at Portuguese harbors, after having been put under severe diplomatic pressure by Sir Edward Grey, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. From then onwards, censorship aimed at suppressing all criticism of Portugal's involvement in WWI.

³ As the saying goes, the forbidden fruit is always the sweetest, so these banned books soon became underground bestsellers. Some store owners risked their necks by hiding the banned books and selling them only to clients of their utmost confidence. Having interviewed for my studies one of these vendors in an old Lisbon bookstore, he remembered that among the concealed books was one in particular whose cover stated that it had been written by Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov. Indicating Ulyanov as the author granted to some extent that the police, ignorant of Lenin's real name, would not spot the book right away as subversive literature.

⁴ In 1943, a German pamphlet, printed and disseminated by the German representative in Lisbon, was forbidden and seized, since the brochure stirred up sentiments against Portugal's oldest and most important ally and was thus considered by the censors "anti-British propaganda" (See censorship report on *Inglese sobre Portugal*).

⁵ Books by Marx and Engels normally did not even need to be read. They were automatically forbidden, since their authors were directly associated with communism. Consistent with this practice, a French version of their authorship (*Textes sur le Colonialisme*) was outlawed right away as "anti-colonial and communist doctrine" (Censorship report on Marx and Engels).

⁶ Of course, not all American writers were subject to prohibition nor were all of their texts cut. Among those that were not censored was *This Side of Paradise*, a novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald. The censor considered the book "a true panorama" of the decade between 1910 and 1920 in the United States and did not find any immoral, sexualized or pornographic scene that could have justified "the ban on the novel" (Censorship report on Fitzgerald). There was also "no inconvenience" with the "dissemination" of *Dodsworth* by Sinclair Lewis (cf. Censorship report on Lewis) or with Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, a book that the censor enjoyed and thus considered having been written "by a genius of a great imagination" (Censorship report on Capote).

⁷ The following pages are missing in the Portuguese translation by Antunes das Neves: 1-3; 21-2; 66-68; 179-81, and 341-42. (Pagination of the English original, referred to in my bibliography as *District of Columbia*) Almost all of these passages are used by Dos Passos to introduce each of his chapters, whereas pp. 341-42 are the final pages of the novel.

⁸ Dos Passos had been censored before, during his service at the front, as an ambulance driver in the course of WWI. His "anti-war and anti-officialdom remarks in his letters," which he sent home, were caught by the military "postal censorship" and culminated in Dos Passos's dishonorable discharge from the American Red Cross, since the "Sedition Act" forbade Americans

Notes

to use “disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language about the U.S.A. government, flag, and armed forces” during the war (see Oliveira, *Classified and Confidential* 51-52).

⁹ I feel deeply honored that Dr. Hélder Macedo, Prof. Emeritus at King’s College London, a famous writer in his own right, generously gave his time to correspond with me on his translation of *The 42nd Parallel*, which was published in 1963. Macedo used the English version for his translation. He knew that at the time “the writings of John Dos Passos were not appreciated” in Portugal and he was *au courant* that Portugália had submitted several manuscripts that had been turned down by Salazar’s censorship commission. Thence, Macedo was aware of the “considerable risk” that his editors were running (Macedo). Whereas many translators were fearful at the time, Prof. Macedo stated not to have been afraid, since, by then, he was already living in England. Yet, those who remained in the country, every so often, felt fear, like José Cutileiro, who expressed in one of his poems: “It is with fear that I write. With fear that I think” (Ferreira 53). Even though it might be assumed that no cuts were made to Macedo’s translation of *The 42nd Parallel* (its Brazilian Portuguese version had been authorized without cuts, too), “a novel,” which Macedo “wrote in the 1960s could not be published.” Of course, Macedo could have committed himself to self-censorship. Yet, as he disclosed, he rather “preferred not to publish than to self-censor.” Actually, many translators and writers had to follow through with self-censorship as confessed by Ferreira de Castro, in November 1945, in an interview he gave to the newspaper *Diário de Lisboa*. Castro stated that: “Writing like this is a real torture. The problem is not only in what censorship prohibits but also in the fear of what it can prohibit. Each of us places, when writing, an imaginary censor on the table—and that invisible, incorporeal presence takes away all spontaneity, . . . [and] forces us to disguise our thinking, if not to abandon it, always with that obsession: ‘Will they let this pass?’” (Ferreira 55)

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Biography

Miguel Oliveira holds a Ph.D. in American Studies, which he earned with distinction at the University of Lisbon. He has taught at several universities and colleges. From 2003 onwards, he directed the Language Lyceum in Funchal. Oliveira was appointed head of the Forum for Philosophical Studies of the Forum for Sciences, Arts and Culture on Madeira Island. He then worked for the John Dos Passos Studies Centre and the Regional Directorate of Cultural Affairs of the Madeiran Government. Furthermore, he founded the John Dos Passos's Portuguese Literary Prize and was invited to chair its first jury. In 2007, Oliveira wrote the Portuguese biography of the Nobel Laureate in Literature Günter Grass as well as various scientific monographs on the North-American writer John Dos Passos. He also translated Ödön von Horváth's novel *Jugend ohne Gott* into Portuguese. Oliveira is considered a major figure of Madeiran present-day literature. A selection of his work was included in several anthologies of contemporary Portuguese poets. In 2021, Miguel Oliveira became an Associate Professor at ISG, Lisbon's first Business and Economics School. Additionally, he teaches at the Language School at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon.