

Manuel, Paul (Ed.). *Voices of the Revolution: Revisiting the Portuguese Revolution of 25 April 1974—Interviews and Insights*. Peterborough: Baywolf Press, 2019, 381 pp. ISBN: 978-0921437604

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Paul Manuel's most recent edited volume brings back to us the voices of some of the most important and active members of the Portuguese armed forces that participated in the revolutionary period of the country's democratic transition. The book's purpose is not necessarily to provide any new evidence on the Portuguese democratic transition, but instead to bring together in one single volume both the memories of the actors and the reflections of some of the historians who have worked most extensively on this topic.

In fact, *Voices of the Revolution: Revisiting the Portuguese Revolution of 25 April 1974—Interviews and Insights* contains fourteen interviews, published in the original Portuguese, side by side with their English translation, and a set of essays which build the framework for a better understanding of these personalities and the events that they discuss in their interviews.

This volume begins with an introductory essay by Maria Inácia Rezola, one of the historians who has worked most extensively on the MFA—*Movimento das Forças Armadas* (Armed Forces Movement), the group of middle-ranking officers who planned and carried out the coup of April 25, 1974, and who later became some of the main actors in the political process. Rezola's introduction clearly defines the main aim of this volume: to highlight the importance of the so-called "Carnation Revolution" that overthrew the Portuguese dictatorship of the *Estado Novo* in the spring of 1974, and to underline why we should continue to study and learn from it.

The first essay is by Douglas Wheeler, Emeritus Professor of History at the University of New Hampshire, Durham, and a well-known specialist on twentieth-century Portuguese political history. Wheeler's essay focuses on the last years of the dictatorship (from 1961 onwards), concentrating mostly on the period of Marcelo Caetano's premiership. Wheeler's argument revolves around the idea that Portugal was already facing a period of

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profound social and cultural change, which helps to explain the success of the military coup of 1974, and the support that it received from the Portuguese people.

Indeed, Douglas Wheeler identifies a series of “accelerating changes” that were already being felt in Portuguese society from 1968 onwards. First and foremost, the feeling of hope generated by Caetano’s initial measures on becoming prime minister (the so-called *Primavera Marcelista* or Marcelist Spring), such as, for example, the changes that were introduced with regard to the censorship of media and books, and the easing of political constraints—which allowed for the return of Mário Soares and the Bishop of Porto, António Ferreira Gomes—among other initiatives. According to Wheeler, this situation meant that by April 1974, there had already been six years of “preparation” for change in Portuguese—and particularly Lisbon—society. Following Douglas Wheeler’s argument, this “quiet intellectual revolution among the ruled elites and about-to-rule elites” was the reason for the “sympathetic cover” that the military received when they overturned the *Estado Novo*. In fact, the most recent historiography on this subject has developed along similar lines. The Marcelo Caetano period has gradually come to be associated with a period of profound transformation in Portuguese society, even though this transformation was not directly reflected in the governing regime itself. But the way in which Wheeler presents and develops his argument makes it particularly interesting for the book’s readers. In fact, it will certainly encourage further research about the final years of the *Estado Novo*, something which is always to be welcomed.

The third essay, by Luís Nuno Rodrigues and David Ferreira, an associate professor and a PhD Student at ISCTE-IUL, respectively, presents a review of the literature linked to studies on the Portuguese democratic transition. In order to somewhat limit the extent of their sample, the authors chose to focus on works that were published between 2000 and 2017 and indexed on the Scopus database. In order to restrict their sample even further, they focused on works dealing with the coup of 25 April 1974, and the revolutionary months following this, up until the establishment of the main institutions of the new parliamentary democracy, after the approval of the Constitution in April 1976.

The limitations of these criteria are directly addressed by Rodrigues and Ferreira, but this literature review nonetheless presents some very interesting conclusions. The first of these is that the works on the Portuguese revolutionary period of the mid-1970s have largely been published in journals dealing directly either with Portugal or Southern Europe, or with topics relating to the study of democratization processes. This raises the question of whether a greater effort should be made to include studies of the Portuguese case alongside texts

dealing with other issues, focusing not so much on narrating its specificities, but on increasingly comparing it to or encompassing it within different perspectives, and not necessarily ones with a regional input. A second conclusion from Rodrigues and Ferreira's essay relates to the greater internationalization of the research being undertaken into the subject of Portugal during that period. We can observe a diversification in terms of the nationality of the authors of these studies, although Portuguese researchers still continue to be in the majority. Finally, a third conclusion can be drawn from this essay: there is still a "predominance of a so-called Eurocentric narrative" regarding the end of the Portuguese empire and the decolonization process, which took place at the same time as the democratic transition in Portugal. As the authors clearly state, there is a gap in the literature in terms of Asian and African perspectives about this period (at least as far as the publication of such studies in Scopus-indexed journals is concerned). Again, this is another topic requiring further research that is highlighted by this book and which may lead to further investigations.

Paul Manuel's essay constitutes the main framework for understanding the interviews. In this chapter, Manuel contextualizes not only the period under analysis, but, more importantly, the interviewees and how they positioned themselves in the Portuguese political scenario at that time. In order to do this, Paul Manuel structures his essay around three sets of tensions ("push and pull") that illustrate the ideological tendencies which frame the fourteen interviewees. The first is the tension between "reform vs. revolution." Here, Manuel focuses strictly on the main actors' position regarding the colonial issue and whether they proposed a solution based on the reform of the colonial system (as did Spínola and his supporters, for example) or a profound revolution, which would lead to the whole decolonization process. This divide would end up being settled after the events of 11 March 1975, when Spínola left Portugal and the negotiations with the nationalist movements in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau were concluded. Then, a second tension emerged, centered around the dichotomy between "East vs. West," or "communist Eastern Europe vs social-democratic Western Europe." This divide would reflect the main concern of the Portuguese political forces and had as its leading figures Álvaro Cunhal, from the Communist Party, and Mário Soares, from the Socialist Party. However, as Manuel himself stresses, other Portuguese politicians played decisive roles at this particular point, namely the leader of the Popular Democratic Party, Francisco Sá Carneiro, and the leader of the Social-Democratic Center, Diogo Freitas do Amaral, both of whom were clearly pro-Western Europe. The elections for the Constituent Assembly in April 1975, were "the first chance of the Portuguese society to have a say" on this issue and its results were clear: a strong majority of

the Portuguese preferred to follow a Western European-style democratic regime. The tension between the electoral legitimacy of the moderate political parties (which were later joined by the moderates of the MFA) and the revolutionary legitimacy of the more radical elements of both the political scenario and the Armed Forces Movement led to the increased fervor of the revolutionary process throughout the summer/autumn of 1975.

Paul Manuel also identifies a third divide: on the one hand, in order to explain the positions of two of the interviewees, Mário Tomé and Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho, and, on the other hand, in order to stress the “moderate” position of some of the other interviewees, such as Vitor Alves, Vasco Lourenço, or Garcia dos Santos, who were signatories to the *Document of the Nine*, the materialization of the moderate tendency in the MFA. This third divide encompasses “radical change vs. moderation” and recalls Saraiva and Tomé’s ambition to establish some sort of “revolutionary, socialist regime in Portugal, like Cuba,” which had the support of some populist tendencies within the MFA.

This was the framework that Paul Manuel used to present the men whom he interviewed in the winter of 1990 and spring of 1991, and whose interviews are now translated and published in this volume. The most interesting aspect of Manuel’s introductory presentation of these characters is the personal dimension that he offers to the reader. We understand the reverence and formality of his meeting with Spínola, in contrast to his encounter with the “compelling personality” of Costa Gomes, whose groceries Manuel helped him to carry. We are similarly presented with the intellectuality of Vitor Alves, the charismatic personality of Otelo and the justificatory attitude of Vasco Gonçalves.

The reader is now better prepared for delving into the interviews and understanding not only the context in which these men performed their functions, but also for identifying certain traits of their personality that sometimes help to explain many of their decisions. The fourteen interviews are published here in Portuguese and in English, side by side. There are two Presidents (António de Spínola and Francisco Costa Gomes), a Prime Minister (Vasco Gonçalves) and eleven other leading figures in the military (Manuel Monge, Casanova Ferreira, Jaime Neves, Vitor Alves, Fisher Lopes Pires, Vasco Lourenço, Costa Neves, Garcia dos Santos, Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho, Mário Tomé, and Carlos Fabião). Among these men, there are ministers and members of the Council of the Revolution. Some of them continued their political activities (such as Mario Tomé, who was a member of parliament for the *União Democrática Popular* and later became a member of the *Bloco de Esquerda*), while others still remain today as the guardians of the memory of the revolution of April 25, 1974, such as Vasco Lourenço, President of the *Associação 25 de Abril*.

The book ends with a provocative but straightforward essay by Stewart Lloyd-Jones. Notwithstanding what was written in the previous pages, Lloyd-Jones provides a thought-provoking reflection on the real impact of the events of 25 April 1974. The main argument of his essay is summed up in its last sentence: “The Carnation Revolution of 1974-1976 was significant, not because it *brought* democracy to Portugal, but because the revolutionary turmoil created a diversion that enabled democracy to *be brought* to Portugal.”

Indeed, although the book focuses on explaining the roles and positions of the members of the military interviewed by Paul Manuel, one cannot help but wonder about the other actors. On 25 April 1974, the military and the MFA gave the political forces space to establish a democracy in Portugal. Although these forces had only recently been created (with the exception of the Communists and the Socialists, all the other political parties were created after April 1974), they corresponded to existing tendencies in the Portuguese society. But the mere fact that there were political forces that could seize this opportunity and lead the process of transition is significant. Lloyd-Jones builds on the argument presented in Wheeler’s essay, but instead he identifies the presidential elections of 1958 (Humberto Delgado’s campaign) and the failed coup of 1961 (led by defense minister Botelho Moniz) as the beginning of a slow but profound change in Portuguese society. This change was then reinforced by the deeper social and economic transformation of the 1960s and early 1970s.

There are, therefore, many reasons for conducting further research into the events of 25 April 1974 and their consequences—as well as their antecedents. This book edited by Paul Manuel certainly highlights many of the still unanswered questions. However, to conclude this review with the ideas presented in the foreword by Nancy Bermeo, the publication of this book is also timely for what it specifically reminds us of in relation to recent Portuguese political history. Namely, that democracy is something which takes time and energy to establish and maintain, and that Portugal was one of the first cases to demonstrate the importance of commitment, or to be more precise, the strategies adopted by several actors (both domestic and international) in engaging in something that we now call the promotion of democracy. Despite all the tensions, hardships, and challenges, the Portuguese succeeded in establishing a democratic regime after forty-eight years of dictatorship. And Paul Manuel’s volume represents an important contribution towards our gaining a deeper knowledge about these events.