

Book Review

Rezola, Maria Inácia. *The Portuguese Revolution of 1974–75: An Unexpected Path to Democracy.* Liverpool UP, 2024.

Maria Inácia Rezola's *The Portuguese Revolution of 1974–75: An Unexpected Path to Democracy* aims to provide a synthesis of the Carnation Revolution that unfolded after the military coup of 25 April 1974 in Portugal. It explores the process of institutionalization of democracy, explaining how, until mid-1976 (not 1975, as the title of the book suggests), the country saw the confrontation between ideas harbored by different organizations and people.

One of the most well-known scholars in the field of Portuguese transition to democracy, the author has been studying the subject throughout her career. Rezola's book builds on her previous work, while also integrating contributions from scholarship. She begins with the events surrounding the overthrow of the Estado Novo regime, detailing the origins of the Armed Forces Movement (MFA), how it organized the coup d'état, the rise of António de Spínola to the presidency of the Republic, the presence of the military in politics, and the power struggle, namely between Spínola and the MFA, for hegemony over the political life.

By concluding that initially Spínola prevailed over the MFA in the complex correlation of forces post-25 April, the book then turns the attention to the actors and agents of change in the Portuguese revolution: the military leaders, the MFA, the political parties, and the popular masses. This is an attempt to address an old debate in scholarship about "Who led the Revolution?" Rezola engages with the debate by studying, among other topics, the discussions on the institutionalization of the MFA, the attempted coup d'état of 11 March 1975, the challenges from the political parties to the military power, the fragmentation of the military, the role of the Catholic Church in the revolution and in the counterrevolution, the social mobilizations, and the events surrounding the 25 November crisis. As she goes through these episodes, some of which remains open to interpretation, the author argues that the military were the main figures of the revolution, but a severe crisis exposed the heterogeneity and programmatic-ideological contradictions of its members. Because of these developments, Rezola understands that the parties and

political forces, as well as the social movements, conquered ground in the political terrain.

Moreover, the last part of the book describes the complex politico-military situation following 25 November 1975, which prompted, according to the author, the transition between the revolutionary process and the institutionalization of democracy. In particular, it analyzes the debate over whether the military could continue to participate in political life, the reorganization of the armed forces, the restructuring of the Revolutionary Council, the signature of the Constitutional Agreement Platform between the MFA and the main political parties, the drafting of the Constitution, the first legislative elections, the election of Ramalho Eanes as President of the Republic in June 1976, among other aspects. This culminates in an assessment of the Portuguese revolution, in which Rezola points toward the supremacy of the civilian forces over the military, resulting in the consolidation of democracy.

Overall, *The Portuguese Revolution of 1974–75: An Unexpected Path to Democracy* makes several contributions to the scholarship on the Carnation Revolution. It provides a detailed analysis of the multiplicity of paths and possibilities opened by the Portuguese revolution, showing that democratization was not a monolithic process. No less significant is Rezola's inclusion of the voices of the actors into her narrative, revealing how they dealt with the events and the interpretations they offered for their actions. In addition, the author examines the assessment made by other scholars of the episodes studied, highlighting the different understandings about their impact. By including tables, listing names, dates, roles, and other information, Rezola also helps overcome the obstacles in obtaining accurate data about the aftermath of 25 April.

The Portuguese Revolution of 1974–75: An Unexpected Path to Democracy might have explored several topics in more depth and detail. For example, the book could have given greater attention to the international pressures upon the Portuguese democratic process since, as mentioned by the author, “the 25th of April was an event that transcended national boundaries” (2). The decolonization process is another theme in need of further consideration, due to its interdependence with democratization. How a number of participants in the revolutionary process looked for references not only in socialism but also in third-worldism as they sought to devise a strategy for Portugal is notably absent. At times, the book refers to events studied as if the reader has previous knowledge of

Portuguese history, which is all the more evident in the fact that there is no introductory explanation about the regime overthrown on 25 April. Although the book is well-written, the index terms provided at the end are not listed in alphabetic order and some are repeated in different places.

In any case, the book is rooted in Maria Inácia Rezola's profound knowledge of the complex process of building democracy in Portugal. The author presents a compelling account, deserving praise for her attentiveness to the ideas that circulated and the agency of the actors who participated in the Portuguese revolution. The book can be successfully marketed to a broad audience interested in the history of democratization in Portugal. In particular, it can be channeled to scholars, as well as to upper-level seminars for undergraduate and postgraduate students. The publication can be used in classes related to different academic disciplines.

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