

Mary McCarthy's Criticism of Portugal Polemics in the (New Bedford) *Diario de Noticias*

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The matter of Mary McCarthy's published remarks and overall observations regarding Portugal in the early 1950s has been studied in detail in the pages of this journal.¹ But that the controversy spilled over into the pages of the *Diario de Noticias*, published in New Bedford, Massachusetts (U.S.A.), offers a substantial and, I think, revealing international commentary on this cultural episode from a more international point of view.

As a lagniappe, I throw in an American poet's hitherto unpublished words concerning McCarthy's writing about Portugal. Reading the essays in McCarthy's collection *On the Contrary* (1962), she remarked that McCarthy's "pieces about Portugal hold fairly good for Brazil, too – except that Brazil is much worse in poverty, no Salazar..."² It is intriguing that she made this comparison (and contrast) between Portugal and its former colony within two years of the military coup that established a long-lasting dictatorship in Brazil.

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1. Mário Cruz, "Uma Americana em Lisboa: Mary McCarthy 'traduz' Portugal (1954)." *Revista de Estudos Anglo-Portugueses*, No. 25 (2016): 383-401.
 2. Manuscript letter, Elizabeth Bishop to Frani Blough, February 20, 1962, Elizabeth Bishop Papers, Vassar College Libraries, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York (USA). Quoted with permission.

1. Unsigned. "O 'Século' Responde ao 'The New Yorker,'" May 31, 1955, 1.

Subtitled "A Sra. McCarthy Não Representa o Pensamento Americano," this article questions Mary McCarthy's largely unfavorable view of the day's Portugal as expressed in "Letter from Portugal" in the *New Yorker* magazine on Feb. 5, 1955. It points out that when the American writes of the susceptibility to communism in the Alentejo, she ignores, *O Século* points out, she's silent on the United States' problems in Harlem, New York.

2. Unsigned. "Mary McCarthy Volta Referir-se a Portugal com um Artigo no 'Harper's,'" Aug. 23, 1955, 1.

In the essay "Mr. Rodriguez of Lisbon" in *Harper's* magazine (Aug. 1955), McCarthy is not an impartial observer. Clearly she favors her own democratic principles over the palpable and benevolent fascist results. Her tone is arrogant, especially when she tells of her relations with the chauffeur provided for her and describes her unseemly reaction to the hospitality of a well-to-do Mr. Rodrigues.

3. Dutra Faria, "'Mister Rodriguez of Lisbon,'" Aug. 31, 1955, 1, 6.

Re-printing Dutra Faria's editorial piece in *Voz*, one in which he asserts that "Mrs. Mary" (the ill-mannered "dama") knows nothing about Portugal. To amuse her readers she invents and lies, trying (unsuccessfully) to be "original" and witty about things and matters other journalists have already written about. In addition she betrays her bad manners by her ingratitude to the courtesy, kindness and hospitality the Portuguese show her.

4. Alberto Machado da Rosa, "Carta ao Editor," Sept. 9, 1955, 1, 6.

Demurs from the tone and substance of Dutra Faria's attack on McCarthy's *Harper's* piece. She is a respected writer, not, as D.F. seems to characterize her, a "pseudo-journalist." Machado da Rosa thinks the piece, notably hostile in tone, will work against the accepted notion – particularly among Portuguese-Americans – that the Portuguese people are agreeable and affable.

5. Dutra Faria, "Carta Aberta a um Luso-Americano", Oct. 5, 1955, 1, 6.

This editorial reprinted from *Voz* asserts that there is no antisemitism in Portugal (its record of such does not matter, for it took place in the long-ago past) and then proceeds to list numerous of examples of racism and antisemitism in the United States (historical and present. Faria writes of his love for America and the Luso-Americans he knows personally. He impugns his fellow Azorean's (Machado da Rosa's) ancestry and applauds a friend's answer to a question put to him by Mary McCarthy, namely, that thanks to Salazar the economic revolution continues – which McCarthy might have characterized (in all but words) as "Marxist."

6. Alberto Machado da Rosa, "Carta ao Editor," Oct. 14, 1955, 1, 2.

Replying to Dutra Faria, Machado da Rosa states that his intention originally was to call attention to D.F.'s hostile tone, which was at odds with widely accepted "realities" of Portuguese character. He reaffirms that D.F.'s attack on Rosenthal is an instance of antisemitism. His denigration of McCarthy's observations (calling them lies) fails to recognize her accurate depiction of a dictatorial regime that perpetuates the myth that it has reduced economic disparities among the Portuguese people.

7. Manuel Seixal, "Cartas ao Editor," Oct. 31, 1955, 2.

Retells Camilo Câmara's anecdote regarding President Harry Truman's ease with reporters as they accompany him on his walks. This leads Seixal to refer (in passing) to Mary McCarthy who was called (from "afar") a "liar."