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Contents

Preface and Acknowledgements	9
1. Introduction:	
The Burden of History and the Pace of the Century	13
2. 1900s: the Demise of the Old Monarchy	17
3. The Republican Culture	23
4. An Ill-fated Regime.	27
5. The “Religious Question” and the First World War	31
6. The Death of Portuguese Liberalism.	35
7. The Failure of the First Republic	39
8. The Military Dictatorship and the Rise of Salazar	43
9. The Ideological Essence of Salazarism	47
10. The Institutional Making of Salazarism	51
11. The Historical Definition of Salazarism	57
12. Fascism: the Impossible Solution	61
13. The Evolution of the New State	65
14. The Colonial War and the 1960’s Winds of Change ...	71
15. The Marcelist Deadlock	75
16. Readings of the “April Spirit”	81
17. The Revolutionary Biennium	85
18. The Path to Europe	91
19. Modern Portugal(s)?	95
20. Conclusion:	
Schools of Citizenship and Lessons from History.	99
Notes	103
Appendixes	
Acronyms	121
Chronology	123
Biographies.	133
Bibliography	143

Preface and Acknowledgements

1.

Providing an overview of Portugal's 20th century historical evolution and reshaping is a challenging task, not only because of the time span involved – one hundred years of the most recent, vivid and controversial history – but also because of the variety of political experiences that Portugal endured in those years, each aiming at the establishment of one given social and institutional framework. For such a long-established country – one of the oldest in Europe dating back more than eight centuries – the last one hundred years were among the most vertiginous and important in its history. It was a time of speedy and often contradictory change that set a backward and underdeveloped nation on the road towards the present national economic development, political democracy and free society, enabling Portugal to become, despite structural weaknesses, an actively participating member of one of the most advanced regions in the world.

This task of sketching the Portuguese 20th century becomes even more challenging when it is aimed primarily at an international audience (English speaking above all), which apart from perhaps a few facts, names and dates, is not specialist on the Portuguese contemporary reality. The broad purpose of this short book is therefore to familiarise all those who share an interest in the historical course of the Portuguese nation, with its reality, challenges,

