

"A Sort of Family Feeling": The Two Dos Passoses, Portugal, And Brazil

Townsend Ludington

(University of N. Carolina at Chapel Hill)

John Randolph Dos Passos and his son, John Roderigo, the noted author, were thoroughly North American, but they were proud of their Portuguese heritage. Father and son were intelligent, imaginative men with wide-ranging interests; it seems only natural that both would take an interest in their ancestral roots. The father, truly a self-made man of the Horatio Alger sort, was interested because he was proud of the fact that he had begun life as the son of a Portuguese immigrant, a man who was for a time a cobbler and a shoemaker. John Randolph, the first generation American born, rose to become a prominent, sometimes wealthy, corporation lawyer.

His son's interest in his heritage eventually became even greater than had been John Randolph's. John Dos Passos, best known for novels such as *Three Soldiers*, *Manhattan Transfer*, the trilogy *U.S.A.*, and *Midcentury*, visited Portugal, the Madeiran archipelago, and Brazil on numerous occasions; and from 1948 until his death in 1970, he took a particular interest in Brazil and Portugal after he had become as much an historian as he had earlier been a novelist. A part of his growing concern for history was his effort to define the roots of his own nation — the United States — and its political traditions, once it had become in the latter 1930's his "chosen country", as he referred

ILBA DO DESTERRO, Nºs 15/16 - 1ª e 2ª semestres de 1986, pp.

to it in one novel. In the process of definition, he sought to know more about his own ancestral heritage, which he had first learned of from listening to his father, but which he had not examined in detail. Typical of John Dos Passos, he threw himself whole-heartedly into the task, and the result was first a book of reportage, entitled **Brazil on the Move**, and second, a history, the last volume published while he lived, entitled **The Portugal Story: Three Centuries of Exploration and Discovery**.

It is not my intention here to tell you of every reference to matters Portuguese and Brazilian in the Dos Passos canon. Rather, I want to tell you something about the Dos Passoses, father and son, and about several of their experiences which, I hope, you will find interesting in and of themselves but which, more importantly, may suggest something of the significance of the men's Portuguese ancestry for them. They were North Americans, as I have said, and no two people were ever more involved with their nation, although both were on occasion its severe critics. My point is that their involvement and their pride in the United States stemmed in part from their knowledge of their ancestry. Having faith in American ideals such as material success and individual freedom, they believed their experiences were proof of the validity of those ideals. The United States was truly a land of opportunity for these two men of Portuguese descent.

Which is not to say that either Dos Passos was entirely conscious of this motivation throughout his life. John Randolph acted as he did because he assumed the truth of the immigrant-becomes-free-American-becomes-successful ideal. His own life seemed to demonstrate its validity. His son, once he came to believe that the United States system of government was the best possible system, in turn assumed the truth of that ideal. Secure about America, he sought to increase his knowledge of his heritage.

But I get ahead of myself. I should like to tell you something of John Randolph Dos Passos, and then of his son, who at an early age, and repeatedly thereafter, visited Portuguese territory, so that he was reminded of his heritage long before

it became particularly significant to him.

John Randolph Dos Passos, "John R." as he was often called, was an aggressive man, in his fifties described as "a slim, lithe figure of middle height; always well, even elegantly, dressed; quick in movement, suggesting an athletic habit and love of the outdoor world". The man who described him thus, J.I.C. Clarke, told of being aware of John R.'s "keen dark eyes gazing directly at you" and noted in particular "the sharp compression of the face" which his baldness exaggerated.

John Dos Passos remembered his father much the same way, but short, not of middle height, broad shouldered, bald, and with "gray moustaches that bristled like the horns of a fighting bull". His moustaches were truly "cavalier", remarkably long so that he had to wax them frequently to keep their rakish curl. The veins stood out on his forehead, and when he went walking he had a defiant spring in his step as he strode along swinging a cherry walking cane. He did not belie the impression he gave of immense energy. He "got up at six or earlier and charged into each day like a bull charging into the arena", his son recalled, and when he arose, he first "did a half hour of vigorous sitting up exercises. Then he plunged into whatever cold salt water was to be had."

This ebullient man had been born in Philadelphia on July 31, 1844, the fifth of six children of Manoel Joaquim Dos Passos and Lucinda Ann Cattell. According to Dos Passos, his grandfather Manoel emigrated in 1830 from Ponta do Sol, a village on the south coast of the island of Madeira. He was somehow involved in a stabbing incident, so hastily signed on a ship for America. He landed in Baltimore and there worked as a cobbler and later, a shoemaker. Next he moved to Philadelphia, where he married and had a family.

John R.'s childhood, he told his son, was not easy. Manoel earned little, had a violent temper and particular culinary tastes. Dos Passos' father told him that if Manoel "didn't like the way a dish was cooked he would raise the window and pitch it out into the street. The hungry children would sit in their chairs wide-eyed with horror at seeing their dinner disappear."

Whether in rebellion against his father or simply because he was himself adventurous and strongwilled, John R. early tried running off to sea, but soon returned and began work as office boy for a law firm in Philadelphia. After serving in the Civil War, he apprenticed himself to a lawyer named Price while at the same time attending law courses at night at the University of Pennsylvania. In 1865 he was admitted to the Philadelphia bar, then two years later moved to New York City.

Success followed upon success, until companies sought his expertise about problems of incorporation. When in 1891 H.O. Havemeyer wanted to set up the American Sugar Refining Company, he called on John R., whose efforts produced a part of the great "Sugar Trust". John R.'s fee was said to be the largest ever at that time, and he was further rewarded by becoming counsel for Havemeyer's creation. John R. also played a large part in reorganizing the Texas and Pacific, the Reading, and the Erie Railroads.

Committed as he was to the concept of large corporations and all that they symbolized at the time — entrepreneurial capitalism, the individual's right to amass great wealth, the American rags-to-riches myth — he distrusted increasing government intervention into private business. Beliefs that God and nature had given man the freedom to accumulate and that the most fit would rise to the top were crucial to many American capitalists in the 1880's and 1890's and wholly embraced by John R. He asserted, "without the corporations, without the power of combined financial action, we never would have reached the remarkable condition of commercial and physical prosperity which we now enjoy, to the envy of the balance of the world." And, like another capitalist named Rockefeller, he believed that American business bloomed only at some sacrifice: "Individuals do suffer and must suffer from the consequences of the general march of commercial and manufacturing progress. In that war of commercial development, the batteries of science and skill wound and kill their own countrymen and allies."

Any kind of regulation was anathema to him. If there had to be legislation, he pleaded, let it be by the individual

states. He espoused states' rights and stood against the developing trend to let the federal government intervene in interstate commerce. As an astute observer of late nineteenth-century America, he saw how its corporations had prospered, and he knew how he had succeeded personally — by hard work, intelligence, and a superior grasp of the facts which enabled him to dominate situations.

John R.'s interests were hardly limited to commerce. He wrote extensively; in addition to books about the law he tried out ideas for fiction and essays about such subjects as "The Gods of the different centuries," while publishing books and pamphlets such as **The Anglo-Saxon Century and the Unification of the English-Speaking People**; "The Trend of the Republican Party"; "Gambling and Cognate Vices"; and **The American Lawyer: As He Was — As He Is — As He Can Be**.

The Anglo-Saxon Century reveals how much John R.'s thought was attuned to the elitist ideas of his day and how, although the son of a Portuguese immigrant — or, one might even suppose, partly because of that fact — he came to have the exuberant faith in Anglo-Saxon America which played an important part in the nation's course after the Civil War. Many Americans believed that they had a mission to lead the world toward a higher civilization, to Christianize it, and — mingled with these ideals — to preserve and strengthen the dominance of the white race. John R. called for a union of English-speaking peoples, while acknowledging that "the suggestion of an Anglo-Saxon union will be looked upon with disfavor by foreign nations." However, he avowed,

power lodged in the proper hands hurts no one. Mistakes there may be here and there, but the course of this great race cannot be retarded. It must move forward in the mission to spread Christianity and civilization everywhere, and to open up the undeveloped part of the world to the expanding demands of commerce, and of all that commerce, liberally conducted, implies.

The assured, aggressive lawyer, the self-made man, hoped

that when the twenty-first century dawned, "the successful anglicization of the world" would be revealed. "May the real spirit of our institutions and laws prevail everywhere," he inveighed, "and become the universal dialect of mankind." The son of a Portuguese immigrant had thoroughly embraced the chauvinistic ideals of late nineteenth-century, entrepreneurial America.

To John Dos Passos looking back at it, his first lonely years seemed like a hotel childhood. He was small and frail as a child, although later he grew to be over six feet tall. He was coddled by his adoring mother, and their travels abroad, where he lived most of his early life, kept him apart from other children. The travel never stopped; scenes rushed by — people, colors, smells, noises — and when he and his mother moved to England in 1902 after leaving Brussels — but touching down in America so that the boy was reminded of his homeland — he felt like "a double foreigner... A Man Without a Country," as he described his autobiographical character Jay Pignatelli in the novel *Chosen Country*. Nothing more accurately catches his own acute yearning to belong somewhere and be among friends.

Among Dos Passos' papers at the University of Virginia are several unpublished, autobiographical essays which make no attempt to fictionalize his childhood. Perhaps the best sources to give a sense of his earliest childhood, these essays are some he wrote for a composition course he took while at Harvard. In them he described his first memories, acknowledging the difficulty of capturing "those sudden pictures, from which the mists are withdrawn for so brief a space. Other memories, vaguer, dusky-winged, throng about you, until your early childhood seems a dull chaos of emotions and glimpses of scenes." One such memory was of a visit to Madeira, his ancestral home, where he and his parents voyaged after he had undergone a hernia operation. He thought he had been six; thus it might have occurred in the summer of 1902, after a stint in the United States at the Friends Select School in Washington, D.C. The trip left him with vivid images of a miserable voyage from Lisbon to Funchal, where they stayed for three weeks at Reid's Hotel, overlooking the town. Sailing over he lay much of the time stretched out in a steamer

chair, he wrote, "while a kind hearted gentleman fed me strawberries of miraculous sweetness" to offset the sea sickness induced by the constant rolling of their "wheezy old steamer."

The bay stretching before Funchal was lovely, "hemmed in by lavender-brown cliffs," while at the far end the town "rose in white and red steps up the mountainside." As soon as the steamer anchored, all sorts of boatmen surrounded her, shouting to the people on board. Dos Passos was fascinated by them and awed by the "small boys, olive skins flashing in the sunlight, [who] dove for the pennies we threw them."

Once ashore, he and his parents climbed into a *carro*, a two-seated sled with a white canvas top from which curtains hung down. After their luggage was piled in front of them, oxen began dragging the sled up the cobbled streets to the hotel. A barefooted driver walked beside the oxen,

brushing off the flies with a long horsehair whisp... Every now and then he lets the metal runners pass over an oil soaked rag he keeps hanging over the shaft. The hot oil emits an exotic intoxicating odor which is my most poignant memory of Funchal. It is an odor unlike any other I have ever smelt, hot and choking and heavy, yet mixed with the fragrance of endless gardens and the tang of the South Atlantic. As it jolts glidingly along, white curtains swaying from side to side, the *carro* groans and creaks painfully.

In the hotel Dos Passos was horrified to find red ants in his bureau drawers; that and "a nice oldish gentleman with two large white moustaches — the American consul I think — who used to bring my mother a gigantic bunch of pink and apricot tinted roses every morning" were all he remembered of the hotel where he stayed. The garden outside, however, was striking, "with its gravelled paths, its wealth of flowering shrubs, and its dark green luxuriant foliage, all impregnated with the cloying sweetness of giant honeysuckle." And he had a vivid recollection of clambering "down the face of the cliff on rock cut steps to the rocks at their base, where a small swimming pool was hollowed out of the live rock." Seaweed on the bottom waved in

the eddies that swirled between the rocks as Dos Passos tried to catch the tiny black fish darting among the algae. The pool was ideal, but for him it was disagreeable, because there he first tried to swim. "How hard I tried to strike out boldly as I saw other people do who bathed in the ocean beside the pool!" — his father, a strong swimmer, among them. "No use; hardly did my feet leave the bottom before there was a frightened agonized splutter and a great gulp of burning salt water. Then, after tearful coughing, I would be urged to try again with the same miserable results."

As slow and creaking as a trip up the mountain by *carro* had been, so the one down was fast and furious:

There is a brilliant picture in my mind of white walls and vivid trees shooting past us as we dove towards the blue sea and the red tile roofs of Funchal. The sled rattled over the stone pavement at a tremendous pace, amid the shouts of the steersman, who held on behind to keep the car from coming to grief in the ditches that lined the narrow lane. It was an experience that took my breath away: the hot odor of the burning oil from the runners, the glimpse of the dazzling azure sea every moment growing nearer, the bright green foliage that melted into pink villas and white, clustered houses as we sped by.

From then until his final days at Harvard in 1916, Dos Passos did little that would remind him of Portugal. During that time, however, he had developed into a remarkably wellread man, reserved yet friendly. He had an adventuresome spirit — he was constantly restless for travel — and he had come to despise war, while appreciating solitude, independence, and the fortitude to keep at tasks even if they were arduous. I would not claim that in 1916 Dos Passos thought much about these qualities; but I do believe that his own life reflected them, and I believe, further, that his affinity with the Portuguese and Brazilian grew as he recognized those qualities in them. In fact, he said as much near the end of his life.

In the spring of 1916 it was his spirit of adventure that moved him, once his exams were over, to indulge in some wandering before the graduation ceremonies at Harvard, so he planned what

he called his "Conquest of Cape Cod", a trip that would take him to Provincetown, the spot which later would become his home for 18 years and would remind him constantly of his Portuguese heritage.

He had little contact with anyone or anything Portuguese between that trip and the fall of 1919, although he spent most of the time in Europe. His attention, however, was riveted on World War I and its aftermath, and Portugal seemed less important than France, Italy, or Spain. Also, he was a young man, impatient with government, eager to experiment with "the new" in the arts, and little interested in history, either his own or that of his country. In this mood he took an assignment as a correspondent in Spain for an English labor newspaper, the **Daily Herald**.

Although his assignment was to Spain, he was drawn to Portugal in early October. Before that, he had brief contact with the Portuguese when, hiking with his friend Dudley Poore along a mountain path toward the small village of Cain, in Spain, they met two Portuguese men, cynical laborers who claimed to have left their country to avoid the draft. Although the workers were vague about the political situation in Portugal, Dos Passos pressed them for their sentiments, which were simple enough: the government had been bad, was bad now, and probably would be bad in the future. "What about foreign influences?" he asked, remembering his role as correspondent. Foreign businessmen were the worst of all, was the response. It was a great shame that there was but one socialist deputy in the national parliament, the Portuguese said, because socialists at least were not thieves. Politics in Portugal were very backward, they declared, and they hoped for better things in Arenas, a small town in Spain below the mountains toward the Atlantic Ocean.

When late in September in Granada Dos Passos heard of a farmers' strike in progress against the great landowners in the region of Cordoba and of an impending revolution against the government in Portugal, he traveled to Lisbon, stopping first in Cordoba, where he talked with several natives from the region, people who understood the plight of the farm laborers and who supported the strike.

He remained in Cordoba long enough to obtain what information he wanted, then traveled west through Merida to the Spanish border town of Badajoz, thence across the border into Portugal. In Elvas the Portuguese doubted his U.S. passport, because Dos Passos was a Portuguese name, and the authorities suspected him of being a subversive. Unable to speak the language, he could not present his case, so they insisted that a policia accompany him to Lisbon, for which they charged him ten dollars. Before his escort would leave him, Dos Passos had to cross his palm considerably, the policeman vanishing abruptly when the two confronted the American consul.

Dos Passos soon tired of what he considered the loquacious evasiveness of the Portuguese. After much searching that led him from one person to another, he found a man named Emilio Costa, who was to help him find the information he sought. Costa provided him with four letters of introduction, then disappeared. Dos Passos imagined he had scared Costa away by his talk of the suspected monarchist revolution against the republican government, prompting Dos Passos to remark that "the scariness and talk of frankness of the Portuguese is detestable. You might be in France. You feel that everyone has got their damned little irons in the fire and is much too busy feeding slyly little bits of wood to the flame to be interested in anything else." His attempts to gather information were largely unsuccessful, while the Portuguese language frustrated him — he told a friend it was the main vice of the country. "How can you stay in a country where they call your name Dsh Pass-sh?" he asked. "The other day in a trolley-car I sneezed violently into my handkerchief. The man opposite answered in Portuguese." After a week's stay at the Hotel International, he departed Lisbon aboard a train back to Elvas, writing fretfully in his journal that he had spent more time fussing over Three Soldiers — "The damned army and the merde colored garments and that wretched Fuselli" — than thinking about Portugal. Glancing around his train compartment full of "elderly, musty funny shaped little men," he concluded that "the Portuguese have an irresistible tendency to benevolence: they are a good people, somewhat dirty, somewhat thievish in a small way, humble god-fearing, without swagger and the possessors of a mild

ambient gaiety. They are a good sweet little people but at the present moment I don't like them — no not so strong as that — but I don't find them sympatico. Yet the syndicalists and people I've talked to have been most excellent people." What he would remember from his trip would be towns like Sintra, near Lisbon, and Portuguese painting.

His petulance was due at least partly to the fact that he was ill. By the time he returned to Granada, he was feeling the full effects of his first serious bout with rheumatic fever, a disease which would plague him off and on for years. Also, his mind was on **Three Soldiers** and Spain, so he would have been impatient with anyone or anything which interfered with them.

He remained in Europe until August, 1920, then returned to the United States, where he spent that fall and the early winter of 1921 preparing **Three Soldiers** and his first book of reportage, **Rosinante to the Road Again**, then with George Doran scheduled to publish **Three Soldiers** in the spring and **Rosinante to the Road Again** in the fall, Dos Passos craved to return to Europe, from whence he planned to travel into Persia. He arranged to write articles for the New York **Tribune** and **Metropolitan Magazine**, so felt secure to depart New York's *vie littéraire*. He and E.E. Cummings, one of his closest friends and a high-spirited man, had its amusing moments.

They had a relaxed passage that lasted three weeks aboard the ship, which they quickly nicknamed the Holy Roller because of her propensity to roll scuppers under in a heavy sea, especially when — as was the case almost immediately after leaving port — her engines died. But they soon became accustomed to the **Mormugao's** unsteadiness, got over their seasickness so that they could down the eight courses of oily Portuguese dinner set before them each day, and became good friends with the ship's crew. After stopovers in the Azores and Madeira, the voyage ended in Lisbon, where, Dos Passos claimed, he tried to interest Cummings in great Portuguese art, but the poet wanted to move on toward France, especially after a tooth became painfully ulcerated. So the stay in Portugal was cut short, and the two Americans traveled into Spain.

Except for occasional stops in such places as the Azores, Dos Passos had practically no direct contact with Portugal for the next 27 years. He did settle in Provincetown in 1929 with his first wife, Katharine Smith, however, and considered their house at 571 Commercial Street home until 1947, when on September 12 she was killed and he badly injured in an automobile accident in Wareham, Massachusetts. After he recovered, he never returned to Provincetown for any length of time, but began a new life for himself in Westmoreland, Virginia, on land his father had owned before him. There, near the mouth of the Potomac, he spent the rest of his life writing about the heritage of the United States, the homeland which he had embraced in 1937 after becoming thoroughly disillu^sioned with the Communists because of what he considered their treachery during the Spanish Civil War.

It was after Katy's death and after his decision to move to Virginia, after, that is, he made a kind of symbolic commitment to his family heritage and that of his country — Westmoreland Country being the birthplace of George Washington, among others, and Virginia, the state of Thomas Jefferson — that Dos Passos took a renewed interest in matters of Portuguese origin. In 1948 he traveled for the first time to Brazil, part of a trip where his stated purpose was to study "the competition between government by dictation and government by consent." Latin America, because of the poverty of its peoples, was a prime target for the Communists; yet they had not succeeded in taking over. But a fierce struggle was going on, he believed, and he declared that "If we are to win the contest it is up to us to study more carefully and more dispassionately than [the Communists] do the social situations we have to deal with."

He first visited Bogota, a city that had recently experienced tremendous growth and exemplified the volatile situation created by the new conditions. The spring before Dos Passos's visit, a popular uprising had broken out during a Pan-American conference, and the Colombians' confusion about the causes of the unrest and its solutions was for Dos Passos a matter of concern. He did not remain long in Colombia, however, before flying to Rio de Janeiro, where he learned at the Time-Life news service bureau that William White, the bureau chief, and his wife, Constance, were

about to drive into the raw country inland. He joined them, and on their way north they stopped in villages where food and lodgings were rudimentary. Large towns like Ouro Preto and Juiz de Fora provided comfortable hotels, making the trip for Dos Passos a thoroughly enjoyable introduction to Brazil.

He flew next to Vitória, where he found out about Brazil's public health service and its problems, before traveling by railroad to Colatina, Aimorés, and Governador Valadares. There and later at the mining town of Itabira Dos Passos got a sense of Brazil's mineral wealth, but also of the difficulties in mining it. The country, he repeatedly declared, appealed to him as much for what he felt were its people's pioneering instincts as for its natural beauty. Traveling as far north and west as Goiania, seven hours by plane from Rio, he was moved by the patriotism of two intellectuals whom he met. They had come to distrust Communism and wished that the United States would provide leadership to counter the Communists. To learn more about the development of the interior, Dos Passos flew from Goiania farther inland into wilderness to meet Dr. Bernardo Sayão, an engineer in charge of building roads for the government. Dos Passos, when he met Sayão, was immediately taken with the man's independence and enthusiasm for his work. He had, Dos Passos wrote later, "the greatest quality of leadership of any man I ever met."

Clearly he was enamoured of Brazil. "I can't help a sort of family feeling for the Brazilians," he wrote in *Brazil on the Move*. "Perhaps the fact that I had a Portuguese grandfather helps account for it," he continued, adding that, "when people ask me why I keep wanting to go to Brazil, part of the answer is that it's because the country is so vast and so raw and sometimes so monstrously beautiful; but it's mostly because I find it easy to get along with the people."

His second trip was in 1958, when from mid-July until the end of August with his second wife Elizabeth and their daughter Lucy he traveled in Brazil, where one of their major ventures was into the interior to visit the site of Brasília, then being constructed in the wilderness. Particularly, Dos Passos was intrigued by the architecture of the city's chief designer, Oscar Niemeyer. Guided by his new friend Dr. Israel Pinheiro, who

headed the government corporation responsible for the building of Brasília, the Dos Passoses received a detailed tour of the site and the land surrounding it. Pinheiro ensured that they met people working at Brasília who might give them a sense of the excitement of the project, and before the Dos Passoses left Brazil, Pinheiro had seen to it that they talked with President Juscelino Kubitschek, a major force behind the new city, and with Niemeyer. To get a better sense of how an inland city like Brasília might fare, the three Americans traveled inland from the site to Goiania, also an "invented city," and to other spots in the states of Goiás and Mato Grosso. Dos Passos was impressed with the prosperity of these regions and with the enthusiasm of the people he met. The new settlements, he noted, had little of the poverty he had observed elsewhere.

After returning to Rio, they flew to Curitiba, inland to the south, where he lectured at one of the binational centers supported by the U.S. State Department. From Curitiba they were driven northwest to Monte Alegre and then flown in a small plane to Maringá, a fresh city in the midst of a fertile region ideal for growing coffee.

His next trip was in 1962, when in August he, Elizabeth, and Lucy visited Peru and Brazil, where he remained during September to travel into the northeastern region of the country after the other two had returned to the United States so Lucy could begin her school. While the three of them were together, they first spent two weeks in Peru — seeing Lima and the ruins of Andean civilizations along the Urubamba River inland before flying eastward to Equitos, a town in Peru at the head of the navigable waters of the Amazon. From there they took the single weekly flight to Manaus, a city on the banks of the Amazon in Brazil. The slow airplane, a battered "Catalina" amphibian, landed along the way at the town of Leticia in Colombia on the borders of Peru and Brazil. The next stop was at Benjamin Constant, then Tefé, and only after four more uncomfortable hours by plane did they arrive at Manaus as the sun set. After spending a short time there learning from their guides about the agriculture in the region and taking a fishing trip on the Amazon, they flew by jet to Brasília to visit Israel Pinheiro

and observe the development of the city since they had last seen it in 1958. The city had progressed, but was still new and raw. The resulting inconveniences were not especially distracting, however, so the Dos Passoses enjoyed their stay before they rented a car and drove to Goiania, and then flew to Rio de Janeiro. There Dos Passos investigated the political situation, which was enlivened by the fact that elections were to be held in the fall of 1962. An important figure whom Dos Passos had first met in Washington ten years earlier was Carlos Lacerda, a journalist, political activist, and in 1962 the governor of the state of Guanabara. The Dos Passoses and some Brazilian friends took Lacerda to lunch near Petrópolis, and a few days later Dos Passos visited him again at his apartment in Rio, where Dos Passos was able to find out more about this energetic man whose anti-Communist politics attracted him.

Before Elizabeth and Lucy departed, Dos Passos lectured at the Brazilian-American Institute in Rio. Elizabeth recalled their utter fatigue afterward because their ability to speak Portuguese had been taxed while they attended a three-hour reception in Dos Passos's honor after the lecture. He also spoke with law students at the University in São Paulo, where the anti-American attitude worried him. In September he traveled by himself to Recife on the northeast coast. He stayed with friends, the Douglas Ellebys, with whom he shared his gloom that the United States — Latin America Alliance for Progress had stalled and that Communism — in Brazil he thought it was the sort of "modern Communism" which Fidel Castro had instituted in Cuba — was threatening whatever leadership the United States could provide. To have a better sense of what he termed "the uneasy northeast," he drove with Douglas Elleby north along the coast to Natal. Dos Passos was encouraged by the administrative abilities of the young governor, Alufcio Alves, whom he met and followed briefly as the governor campaigned for reelection. He interviewed the bishop of the region, whose Christian labor movement the religious leader hoped would be independent of politicians, Communists, and businessmen. His aim was to create strong labor unions. Dos Passos returned from his talk with the bishop feeling relieved by the man's determination.

After Dos Passos had returned to the United States in early October 1962, he began to put together a book of reportage about Brazil from the notes he had made during his trip and from the materials he had gathered during his earlier journeys there in 1948 and 1958. **Brazil on the Move** appeared in 1963; although it recounted his fears about Communism, it concluded with a description of the merriment which accompanied a campaign appearance by Aluísio Alves in the town of Mossoró. Dos Passos meant to convey not only his hope for a democratic Brazil but his fondness for the people, a fondness which drew him back in 1966 and again in 1969 and which as much as his own ancestry was the impetus for **The Portugal Story**, a historical narrative he wrote in the last years of his life.

The 1966 trip was during the last of July and all of August. "We've just completed one of the best trips ever — really getting into the dry and dusty hinterland," he wrote Edmund Wilson from Rio just before he, Elizabeth, and Lucy left Brazil. They had visited friends in Rio and had traveled to Goiânia, from where they flew farther north into the interior to be deposited on the banks of the Araguáia River, a tributary of the Tocantins. There they boarded a **botel** aboard which they cruised north along the river, tying up each night to a sandbank and hunting for turtle eggs and fishing in the evening light. Near where their voyage began they visited the village of the Tapirapé tribe. At the village the Dos Passoses were amused when an old hunter came up to them, pounded his chest, and declared, "I John." Dos Passos pounded his chest in return and responded, "I John." It was just such direct friendliness that appealed to him.

On this trip they had also visited their friends Ellen and Carson Geld near São Paulo and had driven to, among other places, the colonial town of Parati. The entire journey filled Dos Passos with an enthusiasm which enhanced his interest to complete **The Portugal Story**.

As usual, finishing the historical narrative took longer than he anticipated. To check materials he, Elizabeth, and Lucy took a trip in July and August 1967 to Portugal, where for almost a month and a half they traveled extensively while he looked at historic locations and excavations and studied documents in the

national archives. Dos Passos combined these firsthand observations with material drawn primarily from secondary sources to recount the history of the growth of the Portuguese nation, its "peak of empire" and its abrupt decline as a major European power during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. When the book was published in April 1969, it received praise as had his other histories for its lively narrative pace and for his ability to portray characters and scenes vividly. Further, because comparatively few general histories of Portugal had been written in English, the volume was commended as a worthwhile addition.

But histories to suit contemporary critics must be more than narrative; the books must tell why as well as what; they are expected to struggle with the meanings of what happened, and this the ~~The~~ **Portugal Story** did not do. The historian J.H. Plumb in his generous review summarized the strengths and weaknesses of the book, and his remarks seem equally applicable to Dos Passos's other histories as well. "Dos Passos," wrote Plumb, "brings to his material a novelist's acute eye for human character and a narrative skill that any historian might envy; and he has produced one of the most readable books on the subject that I know. He is particularly adept at the brief dramatic profile." Plumb believed that Dos Passos was "a brilliant narrator"; yet "one realizes the great distance that... lies between the professional historian and — without using the word in any pejorative sense — the amateur." It was not that Dos Passos had not read widely nor even that he had not assimilated his materials. Rather, he was accustomed to writing reportage, to recounting what happened, and not to interpreting it as the professional historian would.

Dos Passos's last trip to Latin America was in January and February 1969, when after visiting Chile and Argentina, he traveled to Brazil one more time, staying with Erico Verissimo in Porto Alegre and the Gelds near São Paulo.

As well as these trips, there were many other signs during his lifetime of his and his father's Portuguese heritage. To list but several: Cintra, the name of the point on John R.'s land in Virginia where mail was delivered by boat; Gaivota, the name of his luxurious steam yacht; and the son's deep commitment to the

convicted Sacco and Vanzetti in 1926-27 who, though Italians, were a part of the immigrant tradition. In 1961 Dos Passos received the Peter Francisco Award from the Portuguese Continental Union. At the ceremony he remarked in his modest way that his ignorance of Pedro Francisco was "only matched by my ignorance of many other things Portuguese," and he added, "That's something I hope to remedy before I die." He was not merely being polite when he asserted that "The Portuguese tradition has a certain mildness about it, a lack of the racial and ideological fanaticism that has brought our civilization to the verge of destruction." The tradition deserved examination, he believed; and his personal feeling was that "the more I study it the prouder I am of my Portuguese inheritance."

What he had learned about the Portuguese and their new-world relatives, the Brazilians, was expressed in a tale he told about a trip he and his wife took in 1966 down the Araguaia River in Brazil. They landed at a remote spot and found the encampment of a married couple who were fishing to help sustain themselves. As Dos Passos told the tale,

While they talked the travelers made a mental inventory of the couple's possessions: the hammock, a light blanket, a battered cooking pan, a gun and a fishhook on a handline. Besides they had the dugout and two paddles.

The travelers reluctantly wished them good evening and walked back toward the houseboat for supper. There was such serenity about this man and this woman alone and at home in the enormous wilderness that it was a wrench to leave them. It was people like these, the travelers told each other, men and women at home wherever they found themselves, who had explored the four corners of the world and the American continents. Now they were peopling Brazil.

Next morning the man turned up under the stern of the houseboat in his canoe with a medium-sized pirarucu. This is the giant lungfish which is the most important source of food for the dwellers on these waters. He wanted to trade it for fishhooks, because fishhooks, he explained, were almost unobtainable on the Araguaia River.

Peacefulness, independence, fortitude and simplicity were

qualities Dos Passos admired throughout his lifetime and qualities he had much of himself. He found them in abundance in this couple.

This may seem to romanticize matters and to make more of Dos Passos's interest in Portugal and Brazil than is justified. After all, among the large corpus of his writing he wrote only several articles and two books — neither of them major — about the two countries. What is significant, however, is that for him Brazil especially — his interest in Portugal was more a matter of its background in his family — had about it the qualities that he admired about the United States, those qualities that one of his heroes, Walt Whitman, saw: vast expanses of land, potential for growth and for individual freedoms, and a polygot population whose values he appreciated. It is noteworthy that although Dos Passos was an often harsh satirist, he did not subject Brazil to satire. He was also a romantic, and the nation so endeared itself to him that, had he had another life to live, he might well have attempted to embrace it as, in a more satiric vein, he did the U.S.A. He probed and poked at Brazil as much as he could during his visits, trying to learn about matters great and small that would help him understand Brazilian culture, and thus to understand something more about his world. "Hotel Jaragua, São Paulo, warm, clear, Wednesday February 26 [1969]," Elizabeth Dos Passos wrote in her journal during their last trip:

At eleven Ellen [Geld] came and we met Julio Mesquita in lobby. Went up to his office in Estado de São Paulo. 5 generations have run the paper. Talked very frankly about Brazil and U.S. Thinks present state of the country almost as dangerous as when João Goulart was thrown out. Says he is only man in Brazil who still believes in Carlos Lacerda — that he couldn't possibly be elected president but would make a good one. Thinks anti-Americanism reaching an explosive point and we must pay more attention to Latin-American problems. Likes Rockefeller.

Or during their 1966 trip Elizabeth recorded "Costa e Silva" stories, one of which runs:

Riding in a plane over Brazil
C&S to pilot — How high are we?
Pilot — About 5000 meters
C&S — I knew Brazil was very large but
I didn't know it was so high.

Dos Passos and Elizabeth came to love Brazil for its culture, the vitality of its people, and its turmoils. Certainly knowing the country benefitted the North American author and broadened his perspective during his last years. I like to believe that, had he had the vitality of his younger days, he would have celebrated Brazil in literature as earlier he had the United States, its merits **and** its faults.