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By Filipe de Meneses

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Antonio de Oliveira Salazar entered the government of Portugal when Herbert Hoover was president and ended his political career at the end of the Johnson administration; he remained in power for forty years (1928–1968), one of the longest tenures in modern history. As a young man he planned to enter the priesthood and attended the seminary until he decided to become a political economist and an academic. Unlike the other "great dictators" of the twentieth century, including Franco, Mussolini, and Hitler, Salazar immersed himself in the minutiae of government and administration, maintaining a prodigious work rate throughout his forty years in power. He managed his country's finances and economy—one of the poorest in Western Europe—successfully during the Great Depression. He became a seasoned diplomat who spared Portugal from the horrors of World War II by remaining strictly neutral, ultimately favoring Great Britain and the United States. But Salazar would always remain an extremely conservative, even reactionary statesman who relied on secrecy and a police state, appearing to favor fascism, fearing modernity, and ultimately rejecting the anti-colonialist movements in Asia and Africa. He saw the universal granting of independence to the colonies as a sign that the West was abdicating its civilizing mission. This is the first full-length English-language scholarly biography of a key Portuguese political leader and an icon of twentieth-century politics.

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Salazar: A Political Biography By Filipe de Meneses Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #891857 in Books
- Published on: 2009-11-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.10" h x 1.40" w x 6.10" l, 1.94 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 544 pages

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