



# Press Release

## F.B.I. Investigated John Dos Passos

“I have no idea why the F.B.I. might be interested in some of the many communists I’ve known. [...] I just can’t figure it out. It does sound as if the Federal Government now has “Thought Police.” What right does the Government have to investigate the political opinions of any private citizen? And if they want to know mine [...] why the hell don’t they ask me?” — **John Dos Passos**

Over the course of several years, the F.B.I. gathered information on many American writers, such as John Dos Passos. The Portuguese researcher, Miguel Oliveira, who was granted access to the Dos Passos file, uncovers in his study *Classified and Confidential* the motives behind the F.B.I.’s interest in the American modernist writer.

The agency’s director J. Edgar Hoover found Dos Passos suspicious due to the latter’s earlier sympathies for the communist movement. In his file “Security Matter-C” was remarked; “C” standing of course for “Communist.”

Amongst others, a request by the INS (Immigration and

Naturalization Service) is to be found in the file. The INS wanted to know from the F.B.I. more detailed information on John Dos Passos, like, for instance, if he was American born, or if he had been born abroad. If so, he could have been expatriated as legislated by the *Immigration and Nationality Act* (also known as the *McCarren Walter Act*) that allowed to deport anarchist and communist immigrants, even if they had obtained American nationality. This was, of course, not applicable to John Dos Passos, who—although of Portuguese ascendancy—had been born in Chicago, USA, in 1896, and hence could neither have been

“denaturalized” nor “expatriated.”

The F.B.I. asked Dos Passos for an interview, which the writer granted to the agency in 1952 in his home estate at Westmoreland, Virginia; and which is commented in Oliveira’s book.

Furthermore, the monograph discloses why Dos Passos became increasingly dissatisfied with the leftist movements and why he gradually turned conservative with the flow of years.

The paradox of sponsoring McCarthy only to become a victim of McCarthyism himself is also evaluated in the volume.

**Miguel Oliveira** taught at the University of Madeira and ISAL, a private academic Institute. From 2003 onwards, he directed the Language Lyceum in Funchal and was appointed head of the Forum for Philosophical Studies of the Forum for Sciences, Arts and Culture in Madeira. In 2005, he commissioned the bicentennial documentary exhibition on Friedrich von Schiller on Madeira Island. He then worked as coordinator and curator for the John Dos Passos Studies Centre and the Regional Directorate of Cultural Affairs. Furthermore, he became one of the founding members and was invited to join the advisory board of the John Dos Passos’ Portuguese

Literary Prize, whose first jury he was designated to chair. He eventually became a permanent member of the Council on Reading of the Regional Directorate of Cultural Affairs, whose aim it was to sponsor the publication of young, promising authors. In 2007, Oliveira edited the Portuguese biography of the German Nobel laureate Günter Grass, starting in the same year to publish scientific monographs on John Dos Passos. In 2009, he translated Ödön von Horváth’s novel *Being Youth without God* into Portuguese and launched a students’ guide on self-learning that was co-financed by the Goethe Institute in Lisbon and the Chamber of Commerce of Porto

Santo. Moreover, he published a lyrical biography on Federico García Lorca. Later on he acted as councillor for the Austrian Bureau of the Dialogue Among Civilizations, whose purpose was to bring closer together and strengthen the friendship ties between the Austrian and Portuguese peoples, through exchange projects in the areas of education, science and culture. In addition, Oliveira held several lectures amongst others at the University of Vienna. For his work in the dissemination of American and German cultures, Oliveira was awarded two honours of merit: one by the American Consulate, the other by the Regional Government of Madeira.

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### Title

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### Author

Miguel Oliveira

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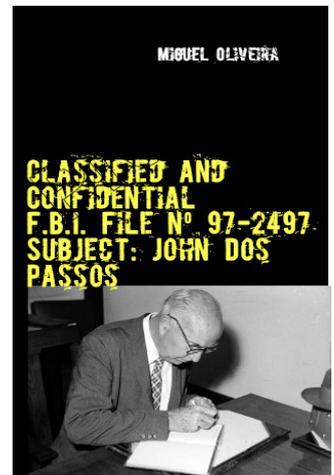
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“A journalistic-like investigation, with a literary reading clearly based on a sound knowledge of Dos Passos’s biographical data and writing matrix. — Unquestionably valuable pioneer material and input to suggest both researchers and readers new paths to a deeper understanding of Dos Passos.” Dr. **Luísa Feneja**, *Op. cit.* (Portuguese Academic Journal on American Studies)