Queste esplorazioni contribuiscono con esemplare rigore filologico a sanare alcune lacune nello studio dell'umanesimo rumeno. Il volume consiste in una meditata trattazione di vari aspetti letterari, linguistici, storici, religiosi, artistici e rappresenta il completamento e il compimento delle laboriose ricerche che ne costituiscono il retroterra. Nell'esporre ciascuno le proprie argomentazioni, i relatori si mostrano animati da un tale slancio verso la ricerca e verso gli studi umanistici in particolare, da infondere calore e una certa amabile discorsività ad un lavoro filologico che rischiava altrimenti di risultare freddo.

Purtroppo si rischia di riuscire sommari nel presentare un volume come questo, che, mentre copre diversi aspetti della multiforme cultura umanista, approfondisce allo stesso tempo temi specifici, i quali sostanziano di informazioni e riflessioni puntuali le direttrici della ricerca sugli argomenti umanistici. Sia il convegno che la pubblicazione degli atti hanno contribuito ad una rilettura dell'Umanesimo rumeno nelle sue varie manifestazioni. La varietà degli argomenti affrontati nei saggi è un indizio della vastità degli orizzonti storico-culturali coinvolti. Le citazioni degli umanisti rumeni e l'inserimento di espressioni e voci derivate da altri autori si inseriscono nel tessuto linguistico e stilistico degli interventi con un valore tutt'altro che ornamentale, ma argomentativo e dimostrativo. Con la limpida chiarezza di questa definizione il libro si congeda, consegnando utili materiali di ricerca agli studiosi di questa corrente letteraria.

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Carotenuto, Gennaro. *Franco e Mussolini. La guerra mondiale vista dal Mediterraneo: i diversi destini di due dittatori*. Milano: Sperling & Kupfer Editori, 2005. 242 pp. ISBN 8-8200-3938-9. 17 Euros

This well researched book opens a window on the vicissitudes of the complex ideological, political, military and economic relationship between the two dictators, Franco and Mussolini, their countries, and the institutions (Phalange or Fascist Parties, army, Catholic Hierarchy, and economic interests) that brought them and kept them in power. The different character and personality of the two dictators emerge clearly in this volume: smack sure Benito Mussolini, indecisive (or prudent) Francisco Franco.

A man without a vision, Franco always procrastinated in making decisions until forced to do so by events: "navigava a vista," states Carotenuto (127). The Spanish dictator and his regime were "non-belligerents" when the war was favourable to the Axis forces, but became "neutralists" when the Axis troops were on the run. In the early years of the war the key man in the Spanish cabinet was the pro-Axis Ramón Serrano Súñer; when the military fortunes of the Axis began to fade he was replaced at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the "neutralist" Francisco Jordana. Franco was ideologically and full heartedly on the side of Mussolini and Hitler, however Spain's need for food forced him to accept American and British aid on conditions dictated by American President Theodore

Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. One of these conditions was that Spain should stay out of the conflict. At the end of the war, Franco and the leaders of his Phalange Party made "an ideological somersault" and denied even the fascist origins of *franchismo*, writes Carotenuto (195).

Unlike the prudent Franco, Mussolini, believing that he could homologate the Spanish regime on the model of Italian fascism, jumped into the Spanish Civil War without much thinking. This led Roberto Cantalupo, Italian ambassador to Spain, to say that "Italy went into Spain with its head in a bag" (26). Although Italy could not afford it, Mussolini contributed to the Spanish Civil War with 80,000 men from the CTV (*Corpo Truppe Volontarie*). Italy also gave Spain a credit for an extraordinarily high sum of 8 billion Liras, most of which was never repaid (after World War II, democratic Italy received a mere 7% of the original sum with payments delayed till 1967).

The two dictators met face to face only once, on 12 February 1941, in Bordighiera. At this meeting, Mussolini intended to convince Franco to enter the war, but failed as the Germans had failed before him. In fact, on 20 September 1940, the Nazi Minister of Foreign Affairs Joachim von Ribbentrop and his Spanish counterpart Serrano Súñer signed a protocol regarding the date Spain should join the Axis forces in the war, occupy Gibraltar, and close the Mediterranean gate to the British navy. However, Franco immediately began quibbling about the details and procrastinated for the entire duration of the conflict (82). When, with the attack on Russia in June 1941, Hitler moved the theatre of war from the Mediterranean to Eastern Europe, Franco had the opportunity to continue his policy of sitting on both sides of the fence: he sent 47,000 men, the "*División Azul*," to fight on the Russian front, indicating to the Axis countries that he was on their side and to the Allies that he had nothing against them but was fighting their common enemy, Communism.

Carotenuto's study draws a clear distinction between Fascism, which had a popular power base and preached social legislations, and the Spanish regime that was, essentially, "jail, church and barracks" (32). Of the three dictatorships that ruled over Western Europe in the Thirties and Forties, the Spanish one was the most bloodthirsty. In 1939-1942, even after the Civil War had ended, the Spanish regime executed between 130,000 to 200,000 people, ten times more political executions than what were carried out in Nazi Germany and 1,000 times more than Fascist Italy (108). Carotenuto does not mention the Holocaust victims, probably because he considers them a separated chapter in the sordid history of Nazism. In 1953 the man who was responsible for such carnage received from Pope Pius XII Pacelli the "Supreme Order of Christ," the Vatican's highest honour (61); and Dwight D. Eisenhower marched through the streets of Madrid "with his brotherly friend" Francisco Franco (7).

Throughout the course of the Second World War, Spanish Italian relations progressively worsened. The once ostentatious friendship and comradeship between Italian fascist leaders like Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano and his Spanish counterpart Serrano Súñer became cool, at first, and then hostile. When Mussolini was dismissed and arrested on 25 July 1943, Count Francisco Jordana,

a staunch neutralist, replaced Serrano Súñer at the Foreign Affairs Ministry. When, on 8 September, Italy was divided between the Italian kingdom in the South and the German-supported Italian Socialist Republic (RSI) in the North, Jordana recognized in the Monarchy the continuity of the Italian state and, in spite of German pressure, sent only a consul without real diplomatic credentials to the RSI. With Jordana at Foreign Affairs, the divergent policy between Franco, who continued to allow a base on Spanish soil to Axis planes bombing Gibraltar, and the neutral position of the new Minister, became quite evident (119).

The Italian military setback induced further deterioration of the Italian image among the Iberian ruling classes and reaffirmed their proposition to stay out of the war. Silvio Camerani, Italian consul general in Barcelona, confirmed this when he wrote: "keeping all the ancient divisions and adding new ones [...], all the [Spanish] parties find unity and a provisory accord in the unanimous desire to keep the country out of the World Conflict and they stick to this desperate desire to stay neutral even if this means giving up every ideal." He continued, "The *Caudillo's* renowned Galician slyness is entirely devoted to maintaining this unity and to convincing them that only he is able to apply an exclusively negative program: don't upset the Axis and don't upset the Allies" (131).

At the end of the WWII and the beginning of the "cold war," Western democracies, among them Italy, welcomed Franco in the anti-communist block. Led by Alcide De Gasperi, the ruling Italian Christian Democracy welcomed relations with Spain while the Italian Communist Party, following "la svolta di Salerno," kept a low profile on Spain. When the socialist leader Pietro Nenni asked the government to break its "relations with Spain" (197), Trotskyites and the radical liberals of *Giustizia e Libertà* added their voices to his request and denounced the oblivion of democratic Spain (222).

After reading this well researched and captivating book, a question remains. If examined from a moral and principled perspective, the Spanish dictator was undoubtedly a heartless and unpleasant human being. Not for nothing did Hitler affirm that, "he would prefer having three teeth extracted rather than meet Franco again" (86). However, in considering him as head of the Spanish state, we should not forget Machiavelli's phrase: "la realtà fattuale delle cose." Franco successfully navigated through the most turbulent waters of the twentieth century and kept clear of the many contrasting forces of its political bases. He cleverly played on both side of the fence and stayed in power like an absolute king for 39 years, from 1936 till he died on 20 November 1975. Certainly, he was not the man "with little or no personal merits" as Carotenuto would have it (7); on this point, the book falls short indeed. Comparing the political realism of the two dictators, the inconspicuous Franco looms larger than the demagogue, *arringa popolo* Mussolini. In the final analysis, this volume is a stimulating read and lends weight to the truth of the popular saying: "*chi va piano va sano e va lontano.*"

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