

Lusardo: O Último Caudilho. Vol. I: *Revolução de 1923*. Vol. II: *Entre Vargas e Perón*. By GLAUCO CARNEIRO. Rio de Janeiro, 1978. Editora Nova Fronteira. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliographies. Pp. 366, 613. Paper.

Glauco Carneiro, author and editor of nine volumes on aspects of twentieth-century Brazil, promises us an illuminating study of the life and times of João Batista Lusardo, *gaúcho* political chieftain, physician and lawyer, a “maragato” *caudilho*, and confidant of fellow *gaúcho* Getúlio Vargas. Indeed, Batista Lusardo’s career represented a microcosm of Brazilian political life: he played a central role in the Rio Grande do Sul civil war of 1923, the Liberal Alliance coup of 1930, and the Vargas provisional cabinet of the early 1930s. Lusardo also served as ambassador to Montevideo and Buenos Aires after semi-exile during the Estado Novo and acted as intermediary between Vargas and Juan Perón. He participated in Vargas’ last presidential term and was president of the Caixa Econômica. In all, he enjoyed a reputation for guile, political audacity, and competence; he was, in Carneiro’s words, Brazil’s “last *caudilho*.”

Given Carneiro’s access to the Batista Lusardo materials and his breadth of knowledge about Brazilian political history, one would expect a revealing portrait of the man and more than a soupçon of insight into the period. But Carneiro serves up unvarnished hagiography, wholly uncritical and rambling, and of only minimal utility. The author’s promised “sensational revelations” are anecdotal, as are most of the long two volumes of text. His style is detailed but unfocused, and his text chatty but banal. The two volumes are handsomely produced, although the many photographs reproduced are of poor quality.

Since the author has chosen to be self-congratulatory instead of probing, the result becomes a caricature of the worst kind of narrative history. Carneiro promises us at least four additional studies in the same vein, including a biography of Assis Chateaubriand, subtitled “The Brazilian Citizen Kane,” and a potentially fascinating edited memoir of a “mother of a typically middle-class Brazilian family” written between 1908 and 1977. Carneiro is on the mark as far as his subjects are concerned, but his treatment, however enthusiastic, leads to great disappointment.

State University of New York,
Stony Brook

ROBERT M. LEVINE