

# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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## Portuguese Society of the History of Civilization (1947-1953?)

The SPHC [Portuguese Society of the History of Civilization] was a historiographical institutionalization project conceived in 1947 by Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, who wished to implement in Portugal the theoretical foundations and research practices that characterised the historians organised around the *Annales* journal, and the institutions emerging on the social sciences scene in France associated with that journal. For reasons that are still unclear today, the SPHC did not go beyond its initial project phase and therefore its influence on Portuguese historiography was highly limited. Even so, it was one of the rare examples of an attempt to organize research in history outside the network of institutions under the tutelage and funded by the *Estado Novo* [New State], with the clear goal of renewing methods, themes and perspectives in the study of the past.

The history of the SPHC is inseparable from the academic path of its main promoter, Vitorino Magalhães Godinho. After leaving the *Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa* [Faculty of Arts of the University of Lisbon] in 1944 - and after some years dedicated to teaching private courses, publishing, translating and editing history works, but also to participating in political opposition movements (Sousa, Vitorino Magalhães Godinho..., 2012) - he established epistolary contacts from 1946 with Lucien Febvre and Fernand Braudel through the Hispanist Marcel Bataillon. The following year, as a result of these contacts, he obtained a scholarship at the *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique*, to which the work of the Lusitanian Pierre Hourcade, then director of the *Institut Français au Portugal*, also contributed (Godinho, *Do ofício e da cidadania...* [On the profession and citizenship], 1990, p. 50).

Magalhães Godinho's arrival in Paris coincided with a favourable scenario for the renewal of historical studies in France, with the emergence of new research institutions that were not dependent on universities and that welcomed researchers wishing to embark on new thematic and methodological paths (Gemelli, Fernand Braudel, 2005, p. 155; Picard, "Enseignement supérieur et recherche, 2010, pp. 146-148). The most successful institution was section VI of the *École Pratique des Hautes Études*, founded in 1947 with an interdisciplinary perspective where history coexisted with other social science disciplines.

**Pág. 2 ->** This network of institutions also included the *Association pour l'Histoire de la Civilisation*, sometimes referred to as the *Société Marc Bloch*, in memory of the French historian shot during World War II. The presentation of the project on the pages of the *Annales* featured the principles that would also be shared



# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

<http://dichp.bnportugal.pt/>

by the journal and section VI of the EPHE: working in interdisciplinary teams and overcoming traditional research methods. Basically, as stated in this presentation, it was the "spirit of the Annales" that underlay the objectives of the *Société Marc Bloch* (*Annales* E.S.C., vol. 2, no.1, 1947, p. 2).

But that was not all. It also alluded to the objective of "spreading French thought", suggesting an expansionist strategy from the outset, through the creation of branches of the Association in different countries. The newcomer, Magalhães Godinho, among the founding members - who included figures such as Lucien Febvre, Fernand Braudel, Maurice Lombard and Charles Morazé - was a response to this objective, and he was immediately met with the proposition of creating a Portuguese branch (Godinho, *Do ofício...*, p. 59). Although the available information regarding the *Société Marc Bloch* does not shed light on how successful this expansionist plan was, it is known that contacts were established, as early as the mid-1960s, for the creation of a centre in Naples (Gemelli, Fernand Braudel, p. 198), however whether there were other foreign centres besides the Portuguese project remains unknown.

This expansionist strategy of the "spirit of the Annales" - in his presentation of the Portuguese project, Magalhães Godinho also refers to the "spirit of one Henri Pirenne or Marc Bloch", a narrative on the "memory of origins" that was part of an institutional and promotional strategy developed from the mid-1940s (Gemelli, Fernand Braudel, pp. 152-3) - was also a response to needs arising from the very historiographical principles adopted at the time, namely the need for broader geographical and chronological horizons in the study of the past, which were present, for example, in Fernand Braudel's magnum opus, *O Mediterrâneo e o mundo mediterrânico* [The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World] (1949). This required increasingly detailed knowledge of diverse spatial and temporal contexts, only made possible by the deepening of international relations between researchers who would share their collected data and by the expansion of research networks.

**Pág. 3 ->** In a letter sent to Magalhães Godinho in March 1946, Fernand Braudel suggested the creation of a *Centre d'Études et de Documentation Portugaises* to make up for the lack of knowledge in France regarding Portuguese history (Magalhães Godinho, *Do ofício e da cidadania...*, pp. 115-116). It is therefore not surprising that the letter of principles sent by Magalhães Godinho from Paris to the founding members of the SPHC in February 1947, already set forth the objectives of sending all the historical information on the Portuguese reality that was requested of them, the identification of errors relating to the history of Portugal in French works and a report on the research and teaching of the human sciences in Portugal.

In turn, the SPHC also aimed to establish relations with foreign researchers, specifically from Brazil. In April 1948, Borges de Macedo reported that the SPHC's organising committee had already requested the collaboration of Brazilian researchers or researchers working in Brazil, such as Pedro Calmon, Gilberto Freire, Simões de Paula, Olga Pantaleão and Donald Pierson. Beyond France, relations with Brazilian researchers were a clear priority. In the statutes sent to the Civil Government, it was stated that SPHC centres could be set up in any Portuguese or Brazilian territory (Art. 2) and that ordinary members would be solely of these



# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

<http://dichp.bnportugal.pt/>

nationalities (Art. 7). This focus on relations with Brazil appears to suggest that in the expansionist intention of the Annales-related institutions - not least for the attention paid to the themes of overseas expansion and the blossoming of commercial capitalism on a global scale - Portugal would act as a platform for connection with the South American country.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that academic relations between Brazil and France had already been strengthened in the 1930s with the creation of the University of São Paulo. In its initial phase it established a partnership with a French mission that included Fernand Braudel, who taught there between 1935 and 1937. Almost two decades later, in 1954, another French mission went to São Paulo, this time including Magalhães Godinho (Ferlini, "*Affluences, croisements...*", 2005), which bears witness to the important academic relations and historiographical affinities between these countries' researchers - indeed, the academic trajectory of Joaquim Barradas de Carvalho is perhaps the best example of these connections (Mota, "Joaquim Barradas de Carvalho, 1994).

**Pág. 4 ->** At the time of the SPHC's creation, research in Portugal was undergoing a very different experience to that in France. The year 1947 marked one of the greatest political purges of Portuguese universities during the *Estado Novo* [New State] (27 professors and university assistants), mainly affecting the areas of mathematics, economics, physics and engineering (Rosas and Sizifredo, *Depuração política...* [Political purge...] 2011). It was a period of enormous political unrest, fuelled by the opposition's hope that with the end of World War II the *Estado Novo* could be overthrown.

Magalhães Godinho, who was in Paris at the time, had delegated the mission of promoting the SPHC to nine researchers: Jorge Borges de Macedo, Joel Serrão, Joaquim Barradas de Carvalho, Rui Grácio (who had replaced José de Assis Mafra), Fernandes Martins, Fernando Pinto Loureiro, Armando Castro, António José Saraiva and Óscar Lopes. One of the common features characterising this group was that they all, to varying degrees, were involved in political and/or cultural opposition movements - six of these founding members were or would become communist activists (José Neves, *Comunismo e nacionalismo...* [Communism and nationalism], 2010, p. 311). Opposition to the *Estado Novo* was an important criterion, albeit not exclusive, in the composition of the SPHC. In the suggestions for new members, essential to the SPHC's financial feasibility, it is possible to partially reconstruct many of the personal, cultural and political relationships of these founding members and also to identify many of the intellectuals who were critical of the regime.

Magalhães Godinho immediately suggested the historians Jaime Cortesão and Veiga Simões - the former exiled in Brazil and the latter living in Paris, having being dismissed from his diplomatic post in 1946 - while other names were also advanced by the founding members: Fernando Piteira Santos, Armando Bacelar, Rui Feijó, Flausino Torres, among others who were well-known opponents of the *Estado Novo* and frequent contributors to some of the main cultural journals - *O Diabo*, discontinued in 1940, *Seara Nova* and *Vértice*. This network of contacts had been woven or strengthened around the Second World War, marked in Portugal not only by the emergence of the PCP but also by the formation of opposition movements such as the Anti-



# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

<http://dichp.bnportugal.pt/>

Fascist National Unity Movement (MUNAF), the Democratic Unity Movement (MUD) and the Youth Democratic Unity Movement (MUD Juvenil). The creation of the SPHC benefitted from these 'opposition politics' (José Neves, *Comunismo e nacionalismo...*, p. 312), difficult to replicate in the following decades that were not infrequently marked by personal and theoretical divergences, emigration, exile and the political demobilisation of many SPHC researchers.

**Pág. 5 ->** Despite this oppositionist vein in the trajectories of most of the names associated with the SPHC, the available documentation reveals extreme caution in dissociating the political activity of its members from the institution's aims. In a letter sent by Fernando Pinto Loureiro in November 1947 to Borges de Macedo, secretary of the SPHC, he suggests replacing the word "civic" in the draft statutes with "scientific", since the inclusion of the former "could serve as a weapon for the future prohibition of the 'Society's' work, on the apparently legal grounds of the lack of civic suitability of some of its members".

Manuel Heleno, the only representative of Portuguese university institutions, also joined the SPHC. A full professor at the *Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa*, his entry into the SPHC stemmed from his good relations at the time with Magalhães Godinho - who had invited him to teach at this faculty and claimed to have been the only member of the School Council who had voted in favour of his continuation in 1944 (Godinho, *A expansão quatrocentista...* [15th-century expansion], 2008, p. 10). On the other hand, Manuel Heleno's inclusion was intended to provide a guarantee to the authorities of the project's scientific integrity. It was no coincidence that he had been granted the honorary position of president of the SPHC's general assembly. With the troubled departures of Magalhães Godinho and António José Saraiva from the FLUL a few years earlier, and the public knowledge of several founding members' oppositional activity, at least at a cultural level, a strategic goal was behind the presence of a full professor, given the need to legalize the SPHC.

The contacts established with the aforementioned Brazilian researchers can also be interpreted in the same light, however without underestimating the recognition of their scientific skills and suitability for the purposes of the SPHC. Thus, it should be noted that both Pedro Calmon and Gilberto Freire were then members of the Portuguese History Academy, an institution created by the *Estado Novo* in 1936. In the case of Gilberto Freire, his intellectual prestige went far beyond Brazilian and Portuguese borders. Indeed, the laudatory preface written by Lucien Febvre to the first French edition of *Casa-grande e Senzala* in 1952 attests to the relevance of his affiliation with the SPHC. Only in the 1950s and 1960s, after the SPHC's invitation, did Gilberto Freire's work come to be politically and ideologically orchestrated by the *Estado Novo* in the context of the emerging decolonization of the African and Asian continents. It was used to highlight specific features of the Portuguese overseas presence throughout history in order to legitimize the continuity of the colonial situation.

**Pág. 6 ->** In short, it may be said that the SPHC had an admission policy which, without renouncing its guiding principles, opened the door to new members who, due to their prestige or integration in the teaching and research institutions under the tutelage of the *Estado Novo*, might have a bearing on the decision to



# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

<http://dichp.bnportugal.pt/>

legalize the Society. As Armando Castro hinted to Borges de Macedo in May 1948, "I believe the decision to invite foreign personalities can only be applauded, both because of the importance this represents for the scientific process and also since it will afford the SPHC greater stability".

On the other hand, the absences are also noteworthy, especially that of António Sérgio. This must have been mainly related to his reputation as an oppositionist to the regime, and to the fact that he was also actively and publicly involved in the main political movements that had sprung up around World War II, which might undermine the SPHC's legalization. However, it is also worth noting that while many SPHC founders unmistakably regarded Sérgio as one of the main philosophical and civic influences of their youth, some would come to challenge him on various levels in the late 40s and early 50s. These confrontations were not only related to theoretical and ideological disagreements, brought to light in 1950 in the controversy initiated by António José Saraiva in *Vértice* (no. 81), but also to different historiographical interpretations (see Borges de Macedo's criticism of him in 1949 regarding the revolution of 1383-85 in the pages of *Seara Nova* [no. 1119]) and even to divergences over a conception of history that was limited to essayism and pedagogy. This criticism came, in fact, from one of his staunch admirers, Joel Serrão, who at the time (although he would later come to value his influence) excluded him from a genealogy of the great names in contemporary historiography since he had "ended up immobilizing himself in an essayistic and polemic attitude which, however fruitful it may have been, is now, in the eyes of the generation that has entered its thirties, drained of its "pedagogical" virtues." (*Seara Nova*, no. 1194-5, Nov.-Dec. 1950, p. 370).

In terms of the research into Portuguese economic history, one of the SPHC's priority areas, Virgínia Rau's absence should also be noted. Interestingly, the Portuguese historian took part in seminars in the mid-1950s organised by the *Association pour l'Histoire de la Civilisation* in Toulouse, which were also attended by G. Duby, F. Mauro and J. Vicens, among others (*Association...*, [n.d.]).

**Pág. 7 ->** The affinities of the founding members were not only a result of the effervescent post-war political context, additionally they all held degrees in different areas of the social sciences in the early 1940s, and four of them had been students of Magalhães Godinho at the FLUL. At the time, their professional careers were unstable or marginal to their ambitions of pursuing an academic career: some were engaged in other research and teaching activities, others were high school teachers or made a living from publishing articles, translations and other activities linked to the rare publishing initiatives in their social circles. Moreover, financial concerns often emerged in the correspondence of some of these founding members. They had been excluded, or had excluded themselves, from state research and higher education institutions. On the other hand, the universities of the 1940s had seen residual growth in the number of students, professors and budgets, which made it difficult for recent graduates to pursue a university career, and promoted clientele and mandarin practices in the rare calls for tender.

Against this backdrop, news of the creation of the SPHC was greeted with enthusiasm and hope, as was the possible fall of the regime within the political sphere. In his project presentation letter, Magalhães



# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

<http://dichp.bnportugal.pt/>

Godinho enticed his recipients by forwarding books and journals from France, with the possibility of publishing their work and scholarships to study in Paris. This enthusiasm is also evident in the work proposals suggested for discussion. For example, in April 1948, Fernando Pinto Loureiro proposed setting up a team to write a short history of Portugal; in the same month, Armando Castro expressed an interest in conducting a joint study with other members on some of the problems in the history of the Portuguese economy that occupied him at the time - the formation of the salaried class and the "transition from a feudal to a capitalist economy", among other topics; Borges de Macedo, at the 1st General Assembly of the SPHC, also held that month, reported on a project to study the period of *fontismo*, although he considered it premature as there were far more urgent organisational tasks to consider: attracting new members or patrons; the publication of a bulletin; the venue for meetings; legalization of the society; etc.

Despite these proposals, there appears not to have been a structured research plan beyond the guidelines laid down in Article 1 of the statutes sent to the Civil Government: "The purpose of the Portuguese Society for the History of Civilization is to cultivate and promote the study of economic, social, technical and cultural history and, in general, of all civilization, as well as the study of human geography, demography, economics, sociology, social and collective psychology, linguistics, etc. insofar as these sciences contribute to clarifying man's past and better defining the human condition."

**Pág. 8 ->** The collected correspondence regarding the SPHC focuses on the years 1947 and 1948. However, references to this project can still be found in 1951, the year in which Magalhães Godinho informed Fernand Braudel of the imminent publication of the first issue of the *Bulletin d'Histoire de la Civilisation*, requesting some introductory words from Braudel, E. Labrousse and Lucien Febvre for this journal sponsored by the *Institut Français au Portugal*. However, in 1953, the *Bulletin d'Études Historiques* was indeed published, sponsored by the institute, but no reference to the SPHC was to be found on its pages. Despite their known affiliation with the *Annales*, the contributors to this single issue of the *Bulletin* were not entirely aligned with the founding members of the SPHC - only the names of Joel Serrão, Barradas de Carvalho, Rui Grácio and Borges de Macedo appear. Thus, it may be assumed that the end of the SPHC dates back to 1953.

A series of history conferences held between 1951-52 on the premises of the IFP were featured on pages of the *Bulletin d'Études Historiques*. In addition to Magalhães Godinho, Borges de Macedo, Joel Serrão and António José Saraiva, Jaime Cortesão, who was visiting Portugal after a long exile, also attended these conferences, which was met with celebration by the opposition circles (Seara Nova, nos. 1270-71, Jan. 1953; Soares, Portugal gagged, 1974, p. 47).

In the late 1980s, Magalhães Godinho claimed that not only had the authorities not allowed the legalization of the SPHC, but they had also pressured the IFP to stop sponsoring these conferences (Godinho, *Do ofício e da cidadania*, p. 59).

From an analysis of his PIDE [International and State Defence Police] file, it is known that these conferences were monitored by the political police, with the respective identification of the attendees and the



# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

<http://dichp.bnportugal.pt/>

content of the papers. In the paper presented by Magalhães Godinho in October 1951, on "Economic history and political history", the undercover agent noted the presence of some communist activists, as well as criticism of the absence of *O Capital* and of Marx in his speech. However, he observed that this presentation had been exclusively restricted to the scientific and scholarly domains, without any political or ideological allusions.

**Pág. 9 ->** The founding members were aware of the danger that their backgrounds and political affinities represented for the SPHC's legalization. As already seen, the strategy not only involved inviting prestigious personalities known for their collaboration with research and teaching institutions under the tutelage of the *Estado Novo*, but also the IFP and *Société Marc Bloch's* intervention in the Civil Government. Nevertheless, this was a risky strategy with unpredictable results. As mentioned by António José Saraiva to Borges de Macedo in March 1947, dependence on a foreign partnership (and even more so on post-war France) did not necessarily guarantee that the legalization of the SPHC would be facilitated, and this concern was also shared by Armando Castro. In the statutes sent to the Civil Government, a cautious and ambiguous stance was adopted which, while not omitting the connection to the French *Société Marc Bloch* (Art. 4), stated that the SPHC would be affiliated to the *Associação Portuguesa para o Progresso das Ciências* [Portuguese Association for the Progress of Sciences] (Art. 5), the institution responsible for organising the periodical Luso-Spanish colloquia of that name. However, on the basis of the existing documentation, it is not possible to ascertain the role of the IFP and the *Société Marc Bloch* in favour of legalizing the SPHC. A letter from Armando Castro to Borges de Macedo in April 1948, suggesting that the *Société Marc Bloch* be informed of the SPHC's legal and financial situation, appears to suggest that the latter was not aware of these difficulties or that it recognised its inability to intercede with the Portuguese authorities and help it financially.

In addition to the legalization and aforementioned financial difficulties, which led to a campaign to attract members from all over the country, the SPHC's survival was also undermined by other problems, such as the geographical dispersion of its members (Madeira, "Os novos remexedores da história" [The new agitators of history], 2007, p. 321). According to Armando Castro in a letter to Borges de Macedo dated October 5, 1947, a project seeking to be interdisciplinary and based on teamwork required frequent meetings of its members. The few meetings held attested to these difficulties.

The project's advocate was in Paris and a significant number of the founding members were scattered across Lisbon, Coimbra, Porto and abroad. By comparison, this problem had already been raised upon the creation of the Portuguese Academy of History, and it had been recommended that the tenured academics should reside in Lisbon, precisely to ensure the regular functioning of the institution (Torgal, "A história em tempo de ditadura" [History in times of dictatorship], 1996, p. 254).

**Pág. 10 ->** Since, for the most part, we only have access to the correspondence (or at least part of it) sent to the secretary of the SPHC, it is not possible to find answers to fundamental questions about this institution. What was the reason for its demise? And if, as stated by Magalhães Godinho, this was due to the



# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

<http://dichp.bnportugal.pt/>

Civil Government's rejection of its legalization request, what was the reasoning advanced? What support did the *Institut Français au Portugal* and the *Société Marc Bloch* give to the SPHC? These and other questions can only be answered with documentation that is not yet publicly available.

Regardless of the answers to these questions, the project's failure was reflected in the limited influence of the different paths taken by the *Annales* in Portugal until the 70s. Apart from a few historians who remained in Portugal, this influence was seen above all in those who opted or had the opportunity to work in French research institutions, such as Magalhães Godinho, Joaquim Barradas de Carvalho and José Gentil da Silva, treasurer of the SPHC and one of Magalhães Godinho's students in the 1940s, who went on to work with F. Braudel.

References to the SPHC in essays or memoirs on Portuguese historiography during the *Estado Novo* period are scarce or non-existent. And while this is partly due to the little importance it objectively came to have, on the other hand this absence is surprising, if only for the visibility of the *Annales* in Portugal from the 70s and 80s onwards. Apart from a few references by Magalhães Godinho, there was mainly silence and even a depreciation of its importance (Saraiva, *Crónicas* [Chronicles], 2004, p. 962).

**Pág. 11 -> Primary references:** Much of the known documentation relating to the SPHC is in the individual PIDE file on Jorge Borges de Macedo, which is archived in the ANTT (no. 1151/47-SR NT 2605). It consists mainly of correspondence sent by other members between 1947 and 1948, since he held the position of SPHC secretary. Further documentation is also likely to be held at the Documentation and Archive Department of the General Secretariat of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (where until recently the documentation relating to the Civil Government of Lisbon was held), the institution responsible for analysing the articles of association of new societies. However, it was not possible to consult this documentation as it is currently being transferred to the ANTT, however the SPHC Statutes were made available by the kind staff of the aforementioned Documentation and Archive Department. I would also like to thank Christophe Araújo for granting access to the aforementioned letter sent by Magalhães Godinho to Fernand Braudel in 1951, which is in the Fernand Braudel collection of the *Bibliothèque do Institut de France. Association pour l'Histoire de la Civilisation. Séances des années 1955-56, 1956-1957, 1957-1958*, Toulouse, [s.d.]; GODINHO, Vitorino Magalhães, *Do ofício e da cidadania – combates por uma civilização da dignidade*, Lisboa, Edições Távola Redonda, 1990; Id., *A expansão quatrocentista portuguesa*, Lisboa, Dom Quixote, 2008; SARAIVA, António José, *Crónicas. Entrevistas, críticas e outros escritos de António José Saraiva*, Matosinhos, Quidnovi, 2004.

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# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

<http://dichp.bnportugal.pt/>

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