

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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CASTRO, Armando Fernandes de Moraes e (Oporto, 1918 – Oporto, 1999)

Armando Castro had two very different experiences as a historian. These experiences were closely linked to the essential rupture that 25 April 1974 represented in the Portuguese political chronology. In his first academic life, before the Carnation Revolution, as a researcher, he was the 'Sunday historian'. This expression was coined by Philippe Ariès when he introduced himself to Michel Winock in an interview. In fact, Ariès would only obtain a position at the *Centre national de la recherche scientifique* [National Centre for Scientific Research] in 1978, at the age of 64. Prior to this professional change, which officially integrated him into French academic life, Ariès was only able to do research at the time he had left outside of his professional occupations. In this sense, and to the extent that he was prevented from joining a Portuguese university for political reasons during the Estado Novo, Armando Castro also had to work as a lawyer. Only in his spare time could he devote himself to writing History. His only teaching experience before 25 April was at the Higher Institute of Applied Psychology. There, he taught Introduction to Human Sciences between 1970 and 1973. However, when this institute was recognised by the state, his contract was not renewed due to an impediment from the Directorate-General for Security. This is how Armando Castro summarised his early life, which was divided between practising law and conducting research during the dictatorship: 'Practising law under the tragic conditions of always having as little work as possible to be able to continue my research. Sometimes I went below that minimum and had problems making ends meet. This is how things were for more than thirty years. Sometimes I had no money to pay the rent. When I had a bit more to do, I was bitter because I had no time for my work' (AA.VV., 'Interview with Armando Castro by António Mendonça, Carlos Bastien, Elivan Ribeiro', in *Vértice* [Vertex], July 1988, no. 4, p. 100). His second life, radically different from his previous one, began shortly after the April Revolution when he took up a chair at the School of Economics in Porto. He remained there until he retired in 1988, having reached the age limit. During this period, he was already a professional historian who could write and teach Economics and History to undergraduates. By studying his intellectual and civic career, we can gauge the importance of politics in the historian's life and thinking.

Armando Castro was born in Oporto to an upper-middle-class family. He was the son of Amílcar de Castro, a lawyer, and Irene de Castro, a teacher in Oporto at a kindergarten and then a primary school, after pre-

school education was abolished by decree no. 28 081 of 9 October 1937. Both were oppositionists to the Estado Novo and clearly left-wing. In this politically militant family environment, given that they were both members of the Portuguese Communist Party, Armando Castro added to his education a strong left-wing civic and political stance. When he was still a teenager at Rodrigues de Freitas Secondary School in Oporto, around 1935, he became a sympathiser of the then clandestine party. Later, when he enrolled in Legal Sciences at the University of Coimbra between 1937 and 1941, he became a militant during his degree. He completed his studies with another degree in 1942 at the same university: Political and Economic Sciences. In addition to the student political struggle, he had a clear appreciation for Economics, which he considered much more interesting than Law. Therefore, after finishing his degree in Legal Sciences, he was awarded a scholarship from the Institute for High Culture at the Centre for Economic Research at the University of Coimbra between 1941 and 1943. This connection to Portuguese academia could have marked the beginning of a quiet academic career, but due to his political activity known to the political police, his career came to a halt. This hiatus prevented him from leaving Coimbra and returning to Oporto to be near his family. Married since 1943, he practised Law and, despite his distaste for his work to provide for the necessities of life, he never lost his desire to publish scientific works.

From the city of Oporto, in the period before 25 April 1974, he began an uninterrupted activity as an opposition activist. Unlike other historians with similar views, such as Joaquim Barradas de Carvalho, António José Saraiva, Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, or Flausino Torres, Armando Castro decided to stay in Portugal and continually fight against political power. Thus, he was a supporter of the Movimento de Unidade Democrática [Democratic Unity Movement] formed after the Second World War.

Sometimes, his professional occupation gave him the opportunity to defend opponents of the Estado Novo: this was the case with Óscar Lopes and Agostinho Neto, an anti-colonialist activist who became President of the Republic of Angola after the 25 of April. Armando Castro combined his militant activity with that of a writer. In 1958, he travelled around the then Portuguese colonies for four months in order to publish an underground book entitled *O Sistema Colonial Português* [The Portuguese Colonial System]. While he wanted to present a thorough analysis of Portuguese imperialism, he was also committed to defending the colonised: 'This does not mean, in fact, that the author does not feel deeply the misery, suffering and physical degradation imposed on the colonial peoples and which are the result of the growing brutality and dehumanisation of the dominators' (*O Sistema Colonial Português* [The Portuguese Colonial System], 1978, p. 23). A critic of Portuguese imperial policy, the book only appeared in Russian at this time, under the pseudonym Joaquim Silva, and in Portuguese in 1978, after the end of the dictatorship. Armando Castro also took part in the three conferences that brought together the opposition to the Estado Novo in Aveiro in 1957, 1969 and 1973, which were strong moments for the forces of democracy in Portugal. He was also an opposition candidate in the legislative elections for the Democratic Electoral Commission in 1969. Furthermore, his book *Prisioneiros políticos, documentos de 1970-1971* [Political prisoners, documents from 1970-1971], written with Luís Filipe Lindley Cintra and Francisco Pereira de Moura, was prevented from



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circulating by censorship. After 25 April 1974, he did not give up his political activity and remained loyal to the PCP. While many of the party's former supporters moved away from its ideological line in the 1980s and especially in the 1990s, after the fall of the Soviet Union, Armando Castro never shifted his position. His active presence in the pages of *Avante!* and the funeral eulogy written by Óscar Lopes in this newspaper after Armando Castro's death are signs of this commitment to the PCP.

Alongside his civic and political activity, Armando Castro produced important scientific work. He wrote exclusively in Portuguese, penning more than fifty books and a hundred articles for journals and newspapers. His work focused on Portugal and was not widely disseminated abroad because he wrote solely in Portuguese.

Before becoming a university professor, it should be noted that he always published in periodicals that criticised the dictatorship – *O Diabo* [The Devil], *Sol Nascente* [Rising Sun], *Pensamento* [Thought], *Vértice* [Vertex], *Seara Nova* [New Harvest] and *Revista de Economia* [Economics Magazine] – which shows the close connection between his activity as a writer and the practice of political activism. In his valuable and vast output, he perfected his historical, economic and also epistemological thinking, which deviated little from a Marxist reading. In fact, from both a civic and intellectual point of view, he can be considered an orthodox Marxist who never deviated from the grid of interpretation of historical materialism. He quoted Marx countless times, took up Marxist rhetoric and used it throughout his writings. He read *Capital* in the 1940s when few economists had read it; he always drew on this author, his followers and his main concerns. His interest in Economics, developed when he was a student in Coimbra, was marked by the books *A Investigação Científica ao Serviço da Economia* [Scientific research at the service of the Economy] and *Alguns Aspectos da Agricultura Nacional* [Some aspects of national Agriculture], published in 1945. Both volumes on economic issues that were relevant at the time. However, he quickly connected Economics with History when he published the double volume *Introdução ao Estudo da Economia Portuguesa (Fim do Séc. XVIII a Princípios do Séc. XX)* [Introduction to the study of the Portuguese Economy (late 18th century to early 20th century)] in the Cosmos Library in 1947. This collection, directed by Bento de Jesus Caraça, had a clear scientific dissemination purpose and gave the young Armando Castro the opportunity to publicise his work. During that same year, he took part in the attempt to make the Sociedade Portuguesa de História da Civilização [Portuguese Society for the History of Civilisation] possible, as shown by a letter from António José Saraiva to Jorge Borges de Macedo dated 22 March 1947, the latter then secretary of this informal structure (Armando Castro case file, ANTT, PIDE/DGS, SC, Series: SR, No. P: 569/46, NT: 2568, sheet 170). This emphasises his inclusion in the small group of historians that criticised political power and wanted to propose a new approach to the History of Portugal.

After his 1940 work on contemporary economics, Armando Castro felt the need to go back in time in order to produce a complete account of the Portuguese economy, i.e., from the country's origins to the present day.

The vast 11-volume work, *A Evolução Económica de Portugal dos Séculos XII a XV* [The economic evolution of Portugal from the 12th to the 15th century], published between 1964 and 1980 and based mainly



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on the information gathered by Henrique da Gama Barros, is a sign of this interest in describing the feudal economy exhaustively. In fact, in 1965, the Portuguese Writers' Society awarded the Grand National Essay Prize to the first volume, acknowledging its scientific value. Parallel to the publication of this work, which was complemented by a sketch of a comparative perspective (*Portugal na Europa do seu tempo...1970* [Portugal in the Europe of its time...1970]), his interest once again focussed on the study of more recent centuries with initial work on the 19th century (*A Revolução Industrial em Portugal no Século XIX*, [The Industrial Revolution in Portugal in the 19th century] 1972) and then another on the 20th century (*Economia Portuguesa do Século XX (1900-1925)* [Portuguese Economy of the 20th century], 1973). The first contribution mentioned was an expanded reprint of the volume published by the Cosmos Library in 1947. In a way, just by looking at the title of the volume, the historian reaffirmed the thesis that Portugal, like other European countries, became industrialised in the 19th century and, in this sense, disagreed with Vitorino Magalhães Godinho's thesis, argued in 1971, that 'despite undeniable progress, the 19th century failed to bring about the industrial revolution in Portugal – and it had not yet brought about the steam engine revolution when electricity and oil were already dawning in Europe to the north of the Pyrenees' (V. Magalhães Godinho, *Estrutura da Antiga Sociedade Portuguesa* [Structure of Ancient Portuguese Society], Lisbon, Arcádia, 2nd edition 1975, p. 145). However, Armando Castro insisted on the importance of chronology and emphasised that 'until around 1875, economic development was very slow [...] then industrial progress accelerated: steam engines appeared, factories began to spring up far from watercourses, new industries were born' (*A Revolução Industrial em Portugal no Século XIX* [The Industrial Revolution in Portugal in the 19th century], 1972, p. 36). Therefore, without denying the existence of the industrial phenomenon in Portugal, he emphasised Portugal's undeniable gap with northern Europe.

When he became a full professor, he continued his work as a researcher and proposed an *Economic History of Portugal*, stressing in the preface 'the need to construct a systematic and totalising economic history' (*História Económica de Portugal* [Economic History of Portugal], vol. 1, 1980, p. 15). Eager to cover the entire Portuguese chronology, Armando Castro planned to synthesise his work on the Middle Ages and the contemporary period and delve into the modern period, which he had not yet developed.

However, he was unable to complete this project, which came to a halt in the third volume and in the 16th century. Lastly, it should also be noted that Armando Castro was not just a solitary author; he contributed to several collective publications. In fact, he took part in the *Dicionário de História de Portugal* [Dictionary of the History of Portugal], directed by Joel Serrão, one of the greatest historiographical milestones of the 1960s, where he wrote 84 articles, and he also wrote several parts of different volumes of the *História de Portugal* [History of Portugal] directed by José Hermano Saraiva in the 1980s. These examples are numerous and show that Armando Castro was certainly a Marxist historian and economist whose contribution was recognised by the Portuguese scientific community both before and after 25 April 1974.

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