

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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Soares, Mário Alberto Nobre Lopes (Lisbon, 1924 – Lisbon, 2017)

Mário Soares was born in Lisbon in 1924, the son of João Lopes Soares, a Civil Governor, MP, and Minister of the Colonies during the First Republic, and Elisa Nobre Baptista. He attended the *Colégio Moderno*, founded and administered by his parents, where many intellectuals opposed to the regime found work as teachers. In addition to his family, the guidance of tutors closely connected to his father played an important role in his education, ranging from followers of António Sérgio's philosophy (*sergianos*) and secular *Seara Nova* intellectuals such as Álvaro Salema and Agostinho da Silva to communists like Álvaro Cunhal. From an early age, Soares recounted the influence of republican values in his environment, which were further reinforced by national and international events. He often highlighted the impact of the Spanish Civil War, referring to the martyrdom of republicans and the threat posed by Nazism and fascism. According to him, it was from this point that he transitioned from being a republican to an anti-fascist "without ceasing to be a die-hard republican" (*Um político assume-se. Ensaio autobiográfico, político e ideológico* [A Politician Comes Forward: An Autobiographical, Political, and Ideological Essay], 2011, pp. 33).

His time at the Faculty of Arts of Lisbon, pursuing a degree in History and Philosophy of Science (1942–1951), was his first university experience. It was also a period defined by intense activism and the assertion of his political ideals. He quickly became acquainted with communists in the faculty, including young figures such as Jorge Borges de Macedo, Fernando Piteira Santos, and Joaquim Barradas de Carvalho, as well as non-communist oppositionists like Joel Serrão and Rui Grácio. These academic interactions allowed him to deepen his political convictions. He also encountered professors who opposed the regime, including José António Ferreira de Almeida and Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, under whom he studied. But he also came into contact with professors opposed to the regime, from whom he was a student, notably José António Ferreira de Almeida and Vitorino Magalhães Godinho. In fact, he even contributed to the payment of the latter's classes at the Ateneu Comercial de Lisboa after his departure from the Faculty, considering him a personal influence as well as a significant figure in the field of historiography (*Portugal Amordaçado...* [Gagged Portugal ...], 1974, pp. 45–47).

Some of the ideals and influences he absorbed during this time likely led him to join the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) in 1942. Soares himself noted that the party deeply appealed to him, particularly its



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"call to action," meaning its emphasis on political activism (Nosty, *Mário Soares. Um combatente do socialismo* [Mário Soares: A Socialist Fighter], 1975, p. 24). He took on academic and political roles aligned with the party's agenda, notably within the University Movement of Communist Youth (1944–45) and the MUD Juvenil [Youth Democratic Movement] (1945–48). He also participated in the 1945 university strike and the demonstrations celebrating the Allied victory in World War II. After his arrest in 1949, Soares claimed he had planned to distance himself from the PCP, citing ideological disagreements during a period when the party labelled certain members as "opportunists." Among them was Soares, marking the moment of his break with the Communist Party (*Memória Viva...* [Living Memory...], 2003, pp. 49–50).

His participation in General Norton de Matos's presidential campaign was, in his view, a turning point. It brought him into contact with prominent opposition figures such as Mário de Azevedo Gomes, António Sérgio (whom he regarded as the great mentor of his generation), Bento de Jesus Caraça, and Jaime Cortesão. He also served as an intermediary between the PCP and the general's campaign. However, after openly disclosing his party affiliation to Norton de Matos, Soares was promptly removed from the campaign amid heightened tensions.

Mário Soares's political journey significantly prolonged his university studies, extending his course to nine years. It was only in 1950 that he presented his first undergraduate dissertation, titled *Teófilo Braga – Tentativa de Determinação do Seu Pensamento Político* [Teófilo Braga – An Attempt to Define his Political Thought]. In this work, he sought to understand and structure the ideas of this historic republican figure. However, Soares himself acknowledged that the study was of a general and introductory nature, not a definitive analysis of Braga's political and ideological thought. He also pointed out the scarcity or complete lack of studies on 19th-century Portugal, encompassing key figures, events, and the ideological currents—both domestic and foreign—that shaped the nation's thinking during that "forbidden century" under the *Estado Novo*.

In this dissertation, Teófilo Braga is portrayed as one of the main drivers of Portugal's national renewal, promoting a republicanism rooted in the "*Vintista* and *Patuleia* traditions". To achieve this renewal, Braga advocated for democracy through administrative decentralisation reforms, transforming municipalities into precursors of republics that would eventually culminate in a federal parliamentary system. From this focus on municipalism emerged Braga's anti-clericalism, as he viewed the Holy Office, from a historical perspective, as an obstacle to local governance (Soares, *Teófilo Braga – Tentativa de Determinação do Seu Pensamento Político*, 1950, pp. 41, 71).

The fight against the monarchy was seen as inseparable from the fight against social and economic injustice, requiring a national cause to achieve these goals: only with republican values, actions, policies, and reforms could Portugal "assert itself". Soares noted Braga's somewhat detached stance on class struggle, arguing that Braga viewed the proletariat and the bourgeoisie as having the same origins and a shared destiny, envisioning social harmony and levelling through mutual coexistence in pursuit of national—thus unitary—objectives (*ibid.*, p. 52).



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However, also of particular interest is Mário Soares's recognition, as a historian, of the inherent subjectivity that confronts a writer striving for objectivity and impartial critical analysis. In this type of work, Soares highlighted the unavoidable influence of personal criteria in compiling texts, admitting this approach to be "(...) always open to debate" (*ibid.*, p. 10). At times, his own political convictions are discernible. For instance, regarding the First Republic, Soares observed that the regime's leaders had demonstrated clarity and patriotism in their vision of national unity. As the son of a prominent republican figure and a committed adherent to the ideology, Soares's political beliefs undoubtedly influenced his choice of topic. He openly acknowledged that his decision to study Teófilo Braga was motivated by Braga's role as the "great 'theorist' of the republican movement," on which Soares based part of his own political and social convictions (Avillez, Soares. *Ditadura e Revolução* [Soares: Dictatorship and Revolution], 1996, p. 106). Thus, certain themes in the dissertation were evidently shaped by personal motivations.

Soares offered a critical assessment of his experience at the Faculty of Arts, denouncing how some professors interfered with students' academic progress based on ideological differences. His personal experience is a clear example of this when, in 1950, during the defence of his first dissertation, he faced hostility from Prof. Délio Nobre Santos, who accused Soares of his political beliefs. This resulted in the candidate leaving the room and the defence coming to an abrupt end. Following the incident, he sent a letter to the Dean of the Faculty outlining the situation and expressing his dissatisfaction, but to no avail.

Following this incident, and with the support of Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, the dissertation was published under the title *As Ideias Políticas e Sociais de Teófilo Braga* [The Political and Social Ideas of Teófilo Braga] (1950), receiving significant recognition from intellectuals in opposition to the regime. Figures such as Mário de Azevedo Gomes, Mário Sacramento, Augusto Casimiro, and Álvaro Salema, among others, acknowledged Soares's effort to deepen the understanding of an important republican figure and his ideas on pressing issues of the time. Perhaps the reception of this book by António Sérgio is of greater note. In a letter to Soares, the essayist dismissed the value of studying Teófilo Braga and his ideas, though this reaction may be attributed to Sérgio's known aversion to the historic republican in question (Gomes and Leitão, "História de um Livro" [The History of a Book], 2022, pp. 42–47, 198–99).

It was in the aftermath of this controversy that Mário Soares presented his second and final dissertation in 1951, titled *Oliveira Martins e o Fontismo: Monografia de História* [Oliveira Martins and Fontismo: A Historical Monograph]. There is speculation that Vitorino Magalhães Godinho may have influenced this choice, as Oliveira Martins was a figure in whom Godinho had a keen scholarly interest (*ibid.*, pp. 203–204). The dissertation tackled the challenge of understanding the economic and social realities and changes that shaped republicanism, focusing on a parallel between the origins and actions of *Fontismo*, on the one hand, and the alternative theorised by Oliveira Martins, on the other. Soares contextualised his study by asserting that the country's principal issue was its quest for and inability to achieve economic independence from other nations.

In Oliveira Martins's view, studying Portugal's national past was one of the best ways to understand the

state of contemporary society and to act in accordance with that reality. Consequently, several of his historically inclined works focused on a past that was relatively close to his time. According to Soares, the foreign influences Oliveira Martins drew upon—German and French—were always interpreted through the lens of Portugal's specific circumstances, adapting them to what Martins described as "our secular decline" (Soares, *Oliveira Martins e o Fontismo: Monografia de História*, 1951, pp. 51–52).

His programme is presented as a clear opposition to *Fontismo*. The main contrast lies in the protectionism advocated by Oliveira Martins versus free trade, with the author linking this protectionism to a form of French-style academic socialism (Émile Laveleye). He criticises the government's inability to foster national industry and the poor financial return for Portugal (*ibidem*, pp. 59–62). However, the monarchy is seen as a means to achieve a stage of national democratisation through the "strengthening of royal power and a firm dictatorship" in the 1880s, as if it were a reform initiated from within the regime (*ibidem*, pp. 66 and 95). Soares thus seeks to contribute to the understanding of something broader: the ideological roots that shaped the emergence of the First Portuguese Republic.

However, Soares's study of Oliveira Martins extended into other mediums. Building on this dissertation, he wrote an article titled *Nota sobre a actuação pública de Oliveira Martins* [Note on Oliveira Martins's Public Actions] for *Vértice* in 1951, reiterating some of the ideas he had already expressed. For instance, he reaffirmed Martins's "utopias of a vague academic socialism," which "has socialism only in name." He also acknowledged that "[Martins's] involvement in public life was overly deliberate, overly tied to his work as a historian," underscoring the link between his political activity and his study of Portugal's past (Soares, *Nota sobre a actuação pública de Oliveira Martins*, 1951, pp. 134–135).

After completing his degree, Mário Soares considered enrolling in a Pedagogical Sciences course to teach history at secondary school level. However, he abandoned this plan and was later appointed administrator of the Colégio Moderno, where he also taught history and philosophy (Vieira, *Mário Soares – Uma vida* [Mário Soares – A Life], 2013, pp. 105, 108). During this period, he published several historically inclined articles in journals and newspapers. One notable example is *A justificação jurídica da Restauração e a teoria da origem popular do poder político* [The Legal Justification of the Restoration and the Theory of the Popular Origin of Political Power], published in *Jornal do Fôro* in 1954. In this article, he examined the legal foundations of documents used by jurists of the time and historiographical works addressing these issues (Soares, *A justificação jurídica da Restauração...*, 1954, pp. 23–24, 29–32). Additionally, he contributed to Joel Serrão's *Dicionário de História de Portugal* [Dictionary of Portuguese History] initiated in 1963, writing several entries with a legal focus. Even during his deportation to São Tomé (1968–1969), he wrote a letter to Vitorino Magalhães Godinho expressing his intention to conduct a socio-economic historical study of the island, although it remains unknown whether he completed this project (ANTT, NT: 1190, fls. 58–60).

In the meantime, Soares earned a second degree from the Faculty of Law at the University of Lisbon (1952–1957), where he encountered figures such as Adelino da Palma Carlos and Marcello Caetano. This period was followed by what Soares described as a "crossing of the desert," during which both his political life



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and the opposition movement against the regime were stagnant. This situation changed with the advent of the "Delgado hurricane" in 1958. Soares became involved in General Humberto Delgado's presidential campaign, signed the *Programa para a Democratização da República* [Programme for the Democratisation of the Republic] in 1961, ran for the National Assembly with the CEUD coalition in 1965, and acted as Delgado's family lawyer following his assassination. Soares was repeatedly arrested by the PIDE, the regime's political police, and was deported to São Tomé between 1968 and 1969. He returned to mainland Portugal later that year but was forced into political exile in 1970.

It was in France that Mário Soares lectured as a visiting professor at the universities of Vincennes, Rennes, and the Sorbonne, covering subjects related to contemporary Portugal, including the *Estado Novo* regime. He also enrolled at the University of Clermont-Ferrand, where he worked on a doctoral thesis on Portugal's participation in the Great War from French and British perspectives, also addressing the emergence of the First Republic. His supervisor was Albert Silbert, with additional support from Vitorino Magalhães Godinho ("Carta de Mário Soares para Nuno Simões," [Letter from Mário Soares to Nuno Simões] 11998.132, 10/02/1971).

However, his research was conducted under significant constraints, dictated by the demands of his activities during exile and interrupted by the revolution of 1974. He sought a grant from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, but despite strong recommendations from academics, the Foundation declined, arguing that Soares had not "demonstrated credentials as a historian." Soares himself suggested political motives behind the refusal (Avillez, *Soares...*, 1996, p. 249). He did, however, benefit from a grant from the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, which supplemented his income as a professor and lawyer ("Carta de Mário Soares para Dr. Grunwald," [Letter from Mário Soares to Dr. Grunwald], 00665.001.065, 27/01/1971). At the same time, he was preparing a book to be titled *História de Portugal do Séc. XX* [History of Portugal in the 20th Century], drawing some inspiration from the work directed by Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, although there is no evidence that he pursued this project further ("Carta de Mário Soares para Vitorino Magalhães Godinho," [Letter from Mário Soares to Vitorino Magalhães Godinho] 00530.072, 26/01/1974).

Beyond his academic pursuits in France, Soares continued writing and giving interviews to the international press, criticising the Portuguese regime in the context of an intense political journey as part of the opposition to the *Estado Novo*. He connected with numerous European and American politicians and intellectuals, building relationships and consolidating his socialist ideology (Barreto, "Soares, Mário," 2000, pp. 450–451). In 1973, in Bad Münstereifel, Germany, he co-founded the Socialist Party and became its first secretary-general, playing a pivotal role in Portuguese political life during the revolution of 25 April 1974.

Like other writers, intellectuals, and historians, Mário Soares did not shy away from using history as a political tool to advocate for values such as freedom, democratisation, and political dialogue as a form of expression. In a 1969 speech commemorating the 31 January 1891 revolution, Soares highlighted a continuity between the issues of that period and those of contemporary Portugal, seeking to preserve this "historical legacy" of resistance and the fight for democratic ideals by critically analysing society and exploring

viable solutions. A clear contrast emerges between a regime devoid of purpose and an alternative capable of advancing the nation—drawing an explicit parallel between Monarchy-Republic and *Estado Novo*-Democracy. As he observed, “the course of history never stops,” and lessons from the past needed to be applied to the present with a view to the future (Soares, *Escritos Políticos* [Political Writings], 1969, pp. 137–138, 142–143).

After the 1974 revolution, Mário Soares maintained a strong interest in history. Several themes can be identified in his public interventions, whether commemorating specific anniversaries or justifying political actions with historical references. His numerous reflections on the First Republic and the 5th of October are emblematic in this regard. Their significance in Portuguese life is evident in the construction of the democratic regime, a point highlighted by the influence of the 1911 Constitution on that of 1976. Central to this are values such as democracy and freedom, which were championed by the 1910 revolution—a culmination of ideas rooted in earlier periods of Portuguese history but realised in the First Republican declaration (Soares, “A democracia moderna e as lições do passado” [Modern Democracy and Lessons from the Past], 1987, pp. 62–63; “Uma República moderna” [A Modern Republic], pp. 147–148). According to Soares, the 25th of April 1974 was a reaffirmation of the 5th of October 1910, preserving the Republican legacy, “another unique moment of the People reconnecting with History” (Soares, “Estudar criticamente a República” [Critically Studying the Republic], 1992, p. 82). Another example lies in his advocacy for administrative decentralisation and regional development—topics that were central to Soares’ political career. In addition to political, social, and economic arguments, Soares frequently referenced historical figures who championed decentralisation. It is unsurprising that he cited José Félix Henriques Nogueira and Alexandre Herculano as emblematic advocates of municipalism, which he saw as part of a long-standing and democratic tradition (Soares, “Descentralizar para desenvolver” [Decentralise to Develop], 1987, p. 91).

Mário Soares also had a tendency to highlight (and occasionally exalt) characteristics of the Portuguese people, portraying them as natural traits shaped by historical experiences. Regarding the Age of Discoveries, he described the Portuguese, at various points in the past, as being “singularly tolerant, sensitive to the right to difference, culturally humanist,” proudly linking these qualities to contemporary times (Soares, “Um testemunho perene” [A Perennial Testimony], 1988, p. 279). He also acknowledged a democratic tradition “dating back to the dawn of nationality,” i.e., the 12th century—an idea present in 19th- and 20th-century liberal and republican historiography, notably advocated by Jaime Cortesão. However, historical deviations from this tradition, such as the Inquisition’s torments or the *Estado Novo*, were seen as historical oscillations. This tradition was fully rediscovered only in 1974, becoming institutionally normalised through democracy (Soares, “Um povo com vocação universalista” [A People with a Universalist Vocation], 1990, pp. 175–176).

Soares argued that the Age of Discoveries, was “the pivotal event in Portuguese history,” which brought about structural changes worldwide. Through these voyages, people from non-European civilisations encountered cultural notions and dynamics prevailing in Portugal at the time (although Soares included concepts such as “race” and “nation” among these ideas), espoused by a collective Portuguese endeavour. In his view, this was a people expressing “their identity and fulfilling their full national vocation” (Soares, “Uma



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aventura que mudou a face da Terra” [An Adventure That Changed the Face of the Earth], 1988, pp. 166–167). Soares thus asserted a historical legacy that conferred a responsibility towards the nations that had emerged from the former Empire. Adapting this to his contemporary context, it carried a forward-looking—and inherently political—connotation, particularly in the context of commemorations and historical anniversaries.

This perspective is evident, for example, in the relationship between Portugal and Brazil, where political aims are partly grounded in a historical aspect. Soares argued that, despite Portugal’s “European choice,” there is a “maritime and Atlantic vocation” that necessitates strengthening ties with Brazil—both historical and contemporary—as if this connection forms the basis for future cooperation between the two countries (*ibidem*, “Uma afirmação do espírito moderno” [An Affirmation of the Modern Spirit], pp. 175–177). Similarly, he framed Portugal within a Europe intrinsically connected to the rest of the world through the Age of Discoveries—“one of the great accomplishments of human history, and naturally a source of national pride for the Portuguese”—which brought the “European spirit” to the farthest reaches of the globe (Soares, “Europa da Cultura” [Europe of Culture], 1989, p. 239). While these reflections undoubtedly contain political ideas and dialogues shaped by the international context and contemporary circumstances, there is an evident effort to transcend them.

Placing Mário Soares within Portuguese historiography is a complex task that cannot be fully explored here. It is undeniable that the influence of Republican historiography, *Seara Nova*, and, in part, Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, permeates his work. His family environment, education, and involvement in the opposition to the *Estado Novo* also undoubtedly shaped his historical writing, both in terms of the themes he chose and the critical, problematising approach he employed. This is particularly evident during his time at the Faculty of Arts in Lisbon, where he alternated between historical research and political activism. These two dimensions were intensely intertwined, allowing us to assert that Soares’ studies of the past were, to a large extent, driven by the issues of his own time.

Later, through contact with other historians—both Portuguese and foreign (particularly French)—there is a discernible alignment with the *Annales* school. Introduced to this approach by Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, his time in France brought him into contact with renowned historians. His narratives primarily rested on political and legal perspectives, without neglecting social and economic aspects, thereby fostering a more comprehensive analysis and a “multidisciplinary dialogue” across the various fields of the humanities to better understand the past as a whole (Soares, “Olhar o passado com os olhos do futuro” [Looking at the Past with the Eyes of the Future], 1987, p. 53). Rather than interpreting events as spontaneous, he situated them within their spatial and temporal contexts. For instance, he argued that the Portuguese Discoveries were possible because of pre-existing knowledge and techniques inherited through contact with other civilisations, which were gradually refined over time (Soares, “Uma aventura...” [An Adventure...], 1988, p. 167).

However, his post-1974 speeches also reveal a tendency to exalt the Portuguese people across time. While this is easily associated with political rhetoric, it reflects a perspective that identifies enduring traits among the Portuguese and a clear connection with their historical predecessors. This suggests a collective

identity and recognition of a shared past, which requires continuation while adapting to global transformations—once again demonstrating the prospective dimension of history.

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