

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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PEREIRA, Miriam Halpern (Carcavelos, 1937)

Miriam Halpern Pereira is a Portuguese historian born in Carcavelos in 1937 into a Jewish and multinational family with diverse cultural backgrounds, to which the study of history provided an even more plural and collective past. Her love of history began early, during her secondary education at the former D. Filipa de Lencastre secondary school, with Professor Maria Emília Cordeiro Ferreira and later with Professor Maria Lucília Estanco Louro. She completed her secondary education in Lisbon and then enrolled at the Faculdade de Letras [School of Arts and Humanities] in that city to study History and Philosophy, graduating in 1962. University education in general disappointed her due to its conservative orientation and scientific obsolescence. Nevertheless, she prepared a degree thesis entitled *A Crise Económica de 1876* [The Economic Crisis of 1876], under the supervision of Jorge Borges de Macedo. However, the thesis was never defended, as its author left for Paris in 1962 to accompany her husband, the journalist Carlos Veiga Pereira, who was forced into exile for political reasons.

She settled there and lived for ten years, in difficult circumstances, especially in the early days. However, leaving Portugal would prove to be a fundamental experience for her career as a historian. In Paris, she attended the École Pratique des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, which opened up new academic horizons, allowing her to rapidly update her scientific knowledge, both through the professors and historians associated with the Annales school and Marxism, whom she met as a student and who left a lasting impression on her, and through her access to good libraries and well-organised archives. Among these historians were such notable figures as Fernand Braudel, Ernest Labrousse, Albert Silbert (with whom she would remain very close even after her return to Portugal) and Pierre Vilar, who would become her doctoral thesis supervisor. She completed her doctorate in 1969, defending her thesis at the University of Paris I-Sorbonne, in the School of Arts and Humanities and Human Sciences. After obtaining her doctorate, she began her career as a researcher at the Marc Bloch Institute of the same university, linked to the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) between 1970 and 1973. During those years, she also taught at the University of Vincennes.

Shortly afterwards, in 1971, she published her book *Livre-Câmbio e desenvolvimento económico Portugal na segunda metade do século XIX* (Free Exchange and Economic Development in Portugal in the Second Half



of the 19th Century) in Portugal, with Editora Cosmos, a translation of the thesis she defended in Paris. The book dealt with the rural world and the agrarian economy from the perspective of economic development problems and was clearly innovative, both in terms of the issues addressed and the methodology used, in line with the then recent French economic and social history. A book with such characteristics and written by a , could only have a major impact on Portuguese academic circles, which, even in the final years of the Estado Novo, remained fairly closed and unaccustomed to innovation. The fact that it dealt with the history of the 1800s, a period so forgotten and ignored by that regime, also weighed heavily on its impact. Due to the various disciplines it covered, the work was not only used by historians, but also by economists, agronomists and geographers, and was included in the bibliographies of university courses for several years. At the time, the publication was reported and commented on in journals and newspapers by historians and non-historians alike, even giving rise to more in-depth debates, such as the one that took place with law professor Vital Moreira in the pages of *Vértice* journal.

In 1972, she returned to Portugal and, at the invitation of Professor Adérito Sedas Nunes, began teaching at the newly created ISCTE in 1973. Sedas Nunes had previously invited her to publish an article in *Análise Social*, which was the first to be published in the country and was the first chapter of her book. At ISCTE, she surrounded herself with a small team of teachers and researchers, focusing on promoting the teaching of history at the institute and helping to extend it as a compulsory subject in the new degree courses that were being created in addition to those already existing: Labour Sciences (later Sociology) and Business Management, in which history was already being taught, demonstrating the interdisciplinary dynamic that ISCTE had sought to instil since its foundation. At the time, the future degree in Modern and Contemporary History had not yet been created.

With this small group, he founded the Centre for Contemporary Portuguese History Studies (CEHCP) in 1975, which developed continuous and fruitful activity under his guidance, organising colloquiums and conferences with national and foreign professors and bringing to Portugal for the first time historians of great international renown such as Eric Hobsbawn, Maurice Agulhon, Albert Silbert, Patrick Joyce and Michel Vovelle, among others. Strongly committed from an early stage to a historiography that transcended the boundaries of national history, she was an early advocate of a comparative history of the 19th century, a period on which other members of the CEHCP were also working. This commitment was evident as early as 1981 with the organisation of a major Iberian colloquium on Liberalism in the Iberian Peninsula in the first half of the 19th century. The colloquium, which took place at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, attracted a large and unexpected audience, demonstrating the widespread interest that existed at the time in this period, which the Estado Novo had practically excluded from the teaching of history, even at university level. The meeting followed another held the previous year by the GIS (later ICS-UL), also dedicated to this century, which had already given a clear sign of the growing interest in this period. The main difference lay in the Iberian and comparative dimension of the colloquium organised by the CEHCP, which was attended by several Spanish historians and also from other countries.



It is worth noting that this Centre, the CEHCP (later simply CEHC), was a dynamic and productive research centre for many years. Its commitment to internal debate contributed to this dynamic, promoting regular meetings between its members to discuss recent historiographical work and research and the theses being written by its doctoral students. Among other activities, the CEHC(P) organised, on its own initiative, several other international meetings, of which the following are particularly noteworthy, many years later the Portuguese-Brazilian colloquium *Linguagens e fronteiras do poder* (Languages and Frontiers of Power), held in conjunction with the Centro de Estudos do Oitocentos (Centre for Nineteenth-Century Studies) in Brazil, which took place in Lisbon in 2010 and was coordinated by Miriam Halpern Pereira with Brazilian historian José Murilo de Carvalho. The CEHC(P) also edited a collection of books entitled *Portugal: Estado, Sociedade e Economia* (Portugal: State, Society and Economy), which published valuable works mainly on the 19th century, with some forays into the 20th century. As the first study centre created at ISCTE, it was closed in 2014.

Miriam Halpern Pereira was also a pioneer in the study of liberal revolutions in Portugal, strongly emphasising their importance and significance, which she sought to convey and disseminate through various channels. One of these arose from the need she saw to provide working tools to students of the history courses of the aforementioned ISCTE degrees, whose Contemporary History programmes, under her impetus, placed particular emphasis on that century. It was in this context that she published her first book on the period in 1979, entitled *Revolução, Finanças e Dependência Externa* (Revolution, Finance and External Dependence). It was an annotated anthology of political, economic and legal texts relating to the establishment of liberalism, essential for understanding the process of rupture with the old regime. The texts ranged from excerpts from the three Constitutions to the most significant trade treaties of the period and the most important liberal reforms, among others, capable of framing the main events of the period, from the revolution of 1820 to the revolution of September 1836, Maria da Fonte and the Patuleia. The texts on Vintism, Cartism and Setembrism were joined by others on Miguelism, thus opening up, for the first time, within the framework of the historiographical modernisation that the country had begun to undergo, the field of analysis to all the relevant political forces of that period. The work was intended to be the first in a trilogy entitled *Portugal no século XIX* (Portugal in the 19th Century), but only the third volume, *Origens do Colonialismo Português Moderno* (Origins of Modern Portuguese Colonialism), by Valentim Alexandre, was ever published. Miriam Halpern Pereira's new book was once again a great success in academic circles, as this annotated compilation of texts on the liberal revolutions, aimed at students, also provided researchers with an easily accessible tool for those working or wishing to work on the first half of the 19th century in Portugal. Shortly afterwards, Miriam Halpern Pereira challenged her closest collaborators to embark on a new project: the creation of a scientific history journal, open to interdisciplinarity and with an international focus. The project came to fruition in 1983 with the publication of the first issue of the journal *Ler História*, of which she was editor until 2008. Focusing mainly on modern and contemporary history, *Ler História* published, over many years, leading Portuguese and foreign historians, as well as young historians, many of whom began their historiographical careers there. It did so without neglecting its original interdisciplinary vocation, supported above all by dialogue with anthropology,



promoted by an anthropologist from ISCTE, Raúl Iturra, who was a member of its editorial board from the first issue. The journal was published continuously from 1983 until 2023, the year in which it celebrated its 40th anniversary, and continues to be published at a steady pace.

In the 1980s, while working as a researcher, Miriam Halpern Pereira also embarked on the ambitious project of gathering and compiling the manuscripts and parliamentary speeches of Mouzinho da Silveira (whom she considered, following in the footsteps of Alexandre Herculano, to have been fundamental in breaking with the old regime and defining a new one) and a large part of his published and unpublished works, thus initiating, with Magda Pinheiro and Valentim Alexandre, a long-term research project with a team of researchers and palaeographers. This project resulted in two large volumes totalling more than 900 pages, published in 1989 by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation with introductory studies by her and the two aforementioned historians. In her presentation, Miriam Halpern Pereira wrote that Mouzinho da Silveira's work, then published, brought together "some of his most important political writings of reflection and intervention, as well as his parliamentary speeches, from which one can gain a concrete idea of the modernity of his legal and political thinking". The book became an indispensable tool for anyone studying the first half of the nineteenth century and liberal reformism.

Throughout this extensive historiographical and archival work, her interest in the complex problem of contemporary history archives in Portugal grew and led her to try to make available to researchers tools that could guide them through the then labyrinthine path of these archives. To this end, she published, with Maria José Silva Leal, under the aegis of Joel Serrão, the *Roteiro de Fontes da História Portuguesa Contemporânea* (Guide to Sources of Contemporary Portuguese History, 3 volumes, INIC, 1985), which for years was the main compass for this orientation.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, he launched yet another important collective project, this time funded by JNICT, entitled *A Crise do Antigo Regime e as Cortes Constituintes de 1821-1822* (The Crisis of the Old Regime and the Constituent Cortes of 1821-1822), following in the footsteps of Albert Sibert's work on the Agriculture Commission of the Cortes in *Le problème agraire portugais au temps des premières "Cortès" libérales*. Its aim was to study and publish a selection of petitions sent to five other Cortes Commissions, from the Arts and Crafts Commission to the Finance and Civil Justice Commission, including the Public Health Commission. During the research, the objective was broadened to include some of the many projects and memoirs sent to the Cortes, including on constitutional matters, which provided a more complete view of the expectations and desire for participation in public life that accompanied the 1820 revolution and the meeting of the "Sovereign Congress". This project resulted in the publication in 1992 by the CEHCP and Edições João Sá da Costa of five books, one of which was written by him.

His work and other works that followed, and above all his vast knowledge of the archives and their precarious situation and difficult access, reflected in the *Roteiro das Fontes de História Contemporânea* (Guide to Contemporary History Sources), as well as in her many public interventions alerting to the need for the preservation and organisation of contemporary history archives, led to her appointment as Director-General of

the National Archives/Torre do Tombo, becoming the first woman in Portugal to hold this high- r position (2001-2004). Her work highlighted the importance she attached to contemporary history document collections, which are generally overshadowed by those related to modern and medieval history, and to the incorporation into the national archive of important collections that were scattered, as well as the publication of the first assessment of some of the intermediate archives of the civil service and the first digitisation plan.

In 2009, shortly after her retirement, celebrating her career as a historian, the book *Economic Development and Social Change. Portugal in the Last Two Centuries: Tribute to Miriam Halpern Pereira* was published. The work featured a wide range of participants from various universities and historiographical trends and was organised around some of the themes on which she worked and produced most: “Economy and economic policies”, “Urban growth and social change”, “Emigration and migratory movements”, “Political and institutional change”, “Concepts, archives, historiography”, which outline four of her chosen themes and highlight important lines of continuity. This category includes his studies on emigration, which he pursued throughout most of his career, his work on the Portuguese economy, particularly on economic development, which also always interested him, historiography, archives, and studies on the projects and social policies of liberalism, from which a deep interest in associativism and mutualism associated with the “social question” and the origins of the welfare state emerges. There was also the complex problem of citizenship, which was almost always present in her works on liberalism and the First Republic, which were oriented towards social history. Her studies in the field of 19th-century economic history were sometimes the subject of controversial criticism from some of her peers, to which she responded in subsequent works. This did not prevent her from being honoured later, in 2005, by the APHES Congress, with some of those same critics also contributing to the aforementioned book in her honour, published in 2009.

After her retirement and her elevation to Professor Emerita at ISCTE-IUL, she remained very active in academia, publishing several books and articles, some of which went beyond the 19th century, as her previous works had already indicated, such as *A Primeira República. Na fronteira do liberalismo e da democracia* (2016). She continued to participate in national and international meetings, favouring her well-established relations with Spain and Brazil.

In 2018/19, she also embarked on a new and very ambitious project: the commemoration of the bicentenary of the 1820 revolution, which she coordinated with colleagues from various Portuguese universities. This commemoration took the form of an important international conference, which was attended by historians from various countries, thus highlighting the supranational dimension of this process and integrating it into the broader context of the Mediterranean and Atlantic revolutions of those years. Planned to take place in 2020, as a result of restrictions resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, the Congress will now be held in 2022. A careful selection of texts from some of the papers presented there was published in book form the following year, under the title *A Revolução de 1820. Leituras e impactos* (The Revolution of 1820. Readings and impacts).

A professor at ISCTE for several decades and supervisor of numerous master’s and doctoral theses, several generations of students have witnessed her rigour and high standards, as well as her vast knowledge

and broad scientific horizons. The latter can also testify that she never imposed topics from a pre-established historiographical agenda on them. Miriam Halpern Pereira was always open to topics and perspectives outside her areas of interest, as long as the proposals seemed meaningful and coherent. She did not, therefore, create a 'school' in the classical sense of the term, marked by an affinity of themes and interpretations, but rather by a demanding practice of constant scientific updating, curiosity and historiographical imagination.

Fifty years after the publication of *Livre-câmbio e Desenvolvimento Económico: Portugal na segunda metade do século XIX* (Free Trade and Economic Development: Portugal in the Second Half of the 19th Century), considered a milestone in Portuguese historiography, the National Library of Portugal marked the date in 2021 with an exhibition dedicated to her. For her career, she was awarded the Medal of Scientific Merit by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education in 2016. On 26 January 2023, she was awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of Infante Dom Henrique. Her selected works, *O Seculo do liberalismo*, are currently in press and will be published in 2024 by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

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Fátima Sá e Melo Ferreira

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