

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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MÚRIAS Jr., Manuel Maria (Carrazeda de Ansiães, 1900–Lisbon, 1960)

Manuel Múrias was born in Carrazeda de Ansiães, in the district of Bragança. He was the son of Manuel Maria Múrias, at the time a clerk and notary in the same district, and Emília Jesus Múrias. At a young age he moved with his family to Lisbon, where, in 1922, he graduated in Romance Philology from the Faculty of Letters. He then began a teaching career as a primary school teacher while also pursuing a career in civic and political intervention. From 1922 he was associated with Lusitanian Integralism, of which he was a second-generation member. He distanced himself from the movement, disassociating himself in 1928 along with other young people such as Pedro Teotónio Pereira, Rodrigues Cavalheiro, and Marcelo Caetano. In the 1930s, he joined the Grand Council of the National Trade Union Movement but gradually drifted towards the conservative solution that would crystallise around Oliveira Salazar, and he became part of the group that decided in 1933 to abandon the "blue shirts" and join the *União Nacional* [National Union]. From then on, he was one of the Estado Novo's unequivocal supporters. In 1939, he said of the new regime that it was the only solution that unequivocally restored "the sense of *continuity that had been lost by returning to the permanence of our centuries-old activity* [...] instead of trying to adapt foreign formulas and norms" (*Portugal: Império*, 1939, pp. 15-16), a view that, despite all else, was still in line with the integralist proposals of his youth. In the structure of the new regime, he held a series of important technical and political positions until the end of his career: secretary and member of the *Junta de Educação Nacional* [National Education Board]; inspector of colonial education; secretary-general of the Congress of Portuguese Expansion in the World; member of the National Commission for the Centenary Commemorations; director of the Colonial Historical Archive and censor of the *Academia das Ciências de Lisboa* [Lisbon Academy of Sciences]. He was also a member of the National Assembly for four terms between 1942 and 1957. Throughout his life he also directed a series of periodicals, most notably *A Revolução Nacional*, *Nação Portuguesa*, *Ocidente* [National Revolution, Portuguese Nation, West] and *Acção*, to which he made the most significant collaborations, and the official organ of the *União Nacional*, the *Diário da Manhã* [Morning Journal]. He also collaborated with other publications, such as *Bandarra*, *A Época* [Epoch], *A Voz* [The Voice], *Brotéria*, *Mundo Português* [Portuguese World], *Revista do Ultramar* [Overseas Magazine], *Gil Vicente*, *Revista da Cultura* [Culture Magazine] and *Pátria* [Homeland].

With the exception of two articles published in *Nação Portuguesa*—the official organ of Lusitanian Integralism—"A língua dos escritores portugueses" [The language of Portuguese writers] in the first issue of the 2nd series and "A língua portuguesa no Brasil" [Portuguese language in Brazil] in issue 11), *O Seiscentismo em Portugal*—which developed his graduation dissertation presented to the Faculty of Letters in



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Lisbon—was his first work to be published in book form, in 1923, and it was soon to have a significant impact in the media. Firstly, it sparked a polemic between António Sérgio (who published a review of Múrias' work in the magazine *Lusitânia*) and António Sardinha (who responded in the same publication, defending the young integralist's work). Later, after a response from Sérgio that was published in *Seara Nova* after Sardinha's death, it was Múrias himself who published a series of articles attacking the *seareiro* in *Nação Portuguesa*, of which he was now the director. Sérgio's criticisms of the work of the young Manuel Múrias were not dissimilar to those he and other intellectuals had been making of the integralist ideology in general: a dogmatism underpinned by excessive (and poorly sustained) eruditeness; a positivist conception of history; a revisionist counter-revolutionary discourse based on the promotion of a supposedly paradigmatic period in Portugal's history (the 17th century); and an anti-rationalist mental attitude, based on tradition as a source of experience. Múrias followed these lines, echoing the works of Sardinha and other integralists in several passages, like his analysis of the Society of Jesus and Pombalism, for example. In any case, in *O Seiscentismo em Portugal* and the polemics surrounding this work also reveal, albeit in a somewhat incipient way, some of the main topics that would guide Manuel Múrias' historical thinking, which was developed in the second half of the 1920s and most of all over the following two decades. Firstly, in *Estudos históricos* [Historical Studies], a series of works published as a separate issue of *Nação Portuguesa* [Portuguese Nation], which he coordinated at the suggestion of António Sardinha in 1925, and in which he published "Cultura peninsular no Renascimento" [Peninsular Culture in the Renaissance] and "A política de África de El-Rei D. Sebastião [King Sebastião's Africa Policy]. Later, in works such as a *História da Expansão Portuguesa no Mundo* [History of Portuguese Expansion in the World] (1937-1940, together with António Baião and Hernâni Cidade), *Portugal: Império* [Portugal: an Empire] (1939) and *História Breve da Colonização Portuguesa* [Brief History of Portuguese Colonisation] (1940). After that, in the 1940s, in various articles published by the *Agência Geral das Colónias* [General Agency for the Colonies] on the history of the expansion and colonisation of overseas territories.

We can see in all of these works the development of a theory of Portuguese history that defies the thesis of an alleged 17th-century decadence influenced by the Inquisition: instead, it highlighted instead the idea of a colonising nation. If there is—at least apparently—an attempt to associate this universalist perspective with a Hispanist theory that was certainly influenced by António Sardinha ("Cultura peninsular no Renascimento", *Nação Portuguesa*, 1925), the truth of the matter is the author soon distanced himself from that theory ("Espanha e Portugal" [Spain and Portugal], *id.*, 1927). The works of Manuel Múrias focused on a broad perspective, especially from the mid-1930s onwards. He attempted to integrate an entire Atlantic axis (Portugal, Brazil and Africa) into a teleological vision in which Portugal plays a central role as a discovering, evangelising, and civilising nation that aimed for the "nation to be fulfilled" (*Portugal: Império* [Portugal: an Empire], pp. 164 and following pages). In fact, in Múrias' view, Portugal was first and foremost an Atlantic country, unlike Spain, that was an essentially European nation with an overseas propensity that was more an exploitation of a specific historical circumstance than a true vocation, the greatest exponents of which always owed a debt to the Portuguese influence (for example, Columbus or Magellan).

Manuel Múrias' historiographical thinking is based on a conservative, nationalist ideology and an anti-modern discourse, largely inherited from his formative period as a disciple of António Sardinha and the Integralism matrix. In the history of Portugal, following Jacques Maritain's reflection for France, Múrias sees



three great revolutionary moments after the Middle Ages: the Reformation, Cartesianism, and the French Revolution (*Idem* pp. 11-13). And even though the author considered the first two moments had no significant impact on Portugal (the Reformation due to the action of the Inquisition and the scientific revolution due to the neo-Thomist dynamic and Jesuitism), the adoption of the ideas of the French Revolution represented the nation's capitulation to a foreign influence that it had resisted on several occasions (at the time of the Restoration, after Pombalism, and after the victory in the Peninsular War) and which materialised in monarchical constitutionalism and the republic. He sees this period—again in line with the majority of traditionalist intellectuals—as one of "denationalisation" which, in his view, only began to be reversed from the second decade of the 20th century onwards by "half a dozen men" (the first integralist generation) trying to "make Portugal Portuguese again" (*Idem*, p. 13).

The use of history was essential to this process of renewal. The author reflected on history at different times—for Múrias, "[...] truly, a nation is its history [...] the history of a nation is its *life*, and not just its life in the past, but its mission: in the past, in the present, in the future; its vocation." (*O Seiscentismo em Portugal*, p. 7). But this vision was, to a large extent, the vision of integralist positivism, that of History as a source of experience, of familiarisation with the problems of the present, of the idea that the past "teaches us to know the present and to clarify the future" and that its observation allows us to extract "the laws to which the nation, as a social body, is subject" (Luís Almeida Braga, "Do espírito da democracia" [The Spirit of Democracy], *Nação Portuguesa*, 1915). And although Manuel Múrias' historiographical work does not assume a uchronic perspective—like other traditionalist and monarchist authors do—it nevertheless takes on a nationalist dimension, with the apologetic aim of presenting events and characters from the past as a model ("Nacionalismo e Catolicismo. Conceito de tradição" [Nationalism and Catholicism. A Concept of Tradition], *Nação Portuguesa*, 1927). In the same way, he targets other characters. We can see this in excerpts which denote a clear anti-Semitism which, although not central to the whole of Múrias' work, is at least particularly present in several of his works (the Jews represented a "constitutional disease [whose] usurious racial character [...] aroused the animosity of the natively born" [*O Seiscentismo em Portugal*, p. 38]; the Inquisition is said to have been "the result of an ancient dissidence between Portuguese and Jews who [...] were ostentatious and petty in their nature and trampled on the natively born" [*idem*, p. 39]; "Even today the Jews are, as they have always been, a cause of disorder and propellers of social disorganisation in many European countries [...] [*Portugal: Império*, p. 40]).

In any case, it should be noted that Manuel Múrias recognises on several occasions that history is never free of intentions, and that there is always "a motive that drives the historian, and even the very choice of the subject to be dealt with already indicates a subjective inclination that points to the demonstration of a thesis." (*O Seiscentismo em Portugal*, p. 78). In the case of Múrias, this thesis begins with the mentality crisis identified with the nationality crisis, for which a "cultural restoration" was needed; with the Estado Novo, this "restoration" had been achieved, and, as he wrote in the 1940s in the weekly newspaper *Acção*, he was "certain that we have a doctrine and firmly believed that we are a force". The thesis became that there was a need to affirm a "national specificity", namely with regard to what he saw as the Portuguese role in the expansion and transmission of civilisational values throughout history, a kind of mission aimed at "fulfilling Portugal".

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João Branco

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