



Revista de História (Lisbon, 1912-1928)

Revista de História was the journal of the Portuguese Society for Historical Studies (1911-1928). Published quarterly (single issue price 300 reis, annual subscription 1\$200), it was later grouped into 16 volumes, each comprising four issues. Fidelino de Figueiredo (1888-1967), who was renowned for his extensive work in the field of history and literary criticism, was its director and main contributor. In fact, Fidelino was a central figure in both the creation and promotion of the SPEH and the RH. This was a personal project, an attempt at historiographical orientation with a certain ideological horizon.

The embryo of what would become RH can be found in one of Fidelino's main early essays, *O Espírito Histórico* (The Historical Spirit, 1910). A programmatic text written a few days after the events of the Republican Revolution of 5 October, it reveals the author's historiographical and ideological foundations, averse to historiographical (and political) positivism and to the 'neophilia' which, in his view, had found a banner in the republican revolution, far removed from Portuguese historical or traditional elements. According to his overall interpretation, it was a period of "general denationalisation" and decline of the Portuguese (and Spanish) people, with a "lack of historical vigour". This essay also contains a clear allusion to the recent revolution, suggesting that the development of a "historical spirit" would bring a more serene view of the problems of the present, giving rise to a moderate stance towards major social and political changes. Thus, two important elements contributed to his clearly nationalist programme: a pedagogy of the nation centred on history and with a scientific basis (in his view, the driving force behind progress in other European countries), which could be achieved through the creation of an institution in : "It is therefore urgent that, in the reform of higher education, a centre for national studies be created or, at least, even if scattered, these are well represented. (...) It was also of the utmost urgency, as it was of the utmost opportunity and effectiveness, to found a history journal, where all the monographs and all the elements that contributed to this sacred task of nationalising the country could be collected" (*O Espírito Histórico*, 1st ed., 1910, p. 12).

The idea of creating a journal was revived the following year, 1911, already within the general framework of the SPEH programme, which had then been made public. The 'programme circular' also called on 'all Portuguese professionals in the historical sciences', with the aim of bringing together "all these scattered efforts and ensuring that each author, for a minimal fee, would receive publicity, an audience and critical



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discussion" (*Boletim da Sociedade de Geografia*, 1911, p. 120). Among the many initiatives planned for this associative undertaking was the creation of what would become the RH.

One cannot fail to note the apparent simplicity of the title of this periodical. In fact, by choosing the name "História" (History), the founders of the SPEH managed, from the outset, to dispel any restrictive concerns. Put in this way, it allowed for the inclusion of any line of research that proposed a historical horizon in its study, be it political, social, military, religious, literary or other. Despite its relatively short life, in the Portuguese context, RH established itself as one of the most significant history journals of its time, a fact well illustrated by the praise it received in a 1914 decree signed by the then Minister of Public Instruction, Sobral Cid. In our view, it assumed a position of relative prominence. For example, in a brief comparison with another contemporary publication, *Arquivo Histórico* (1903-21), and although we understand that the two periodicals had different objectives, RH had a modern, more ambitious, balanced and relatively innovative structure in the Portuguese landscape, consisting of three main sections, "Articles", "Facts and Notes" (a section that was highly original, and which we could call historical journalism) and "Bibliography". It should be noted, however, that this structure was clearly inspired by a foreign model, the *Revue de Synthèse Historique* (1900), then directed by Henri Berr. A reference author in those years for Fidelino de Figueiredo, an attempt was made to guide the RH in this direction, towards an approach based on synthesis in historiographical construction. In an interesting and still useful brochure published by the SPEH itself with the aim of listing the history publications of the time, we note a conspicuous self-assessment: "The *Revista de História* seeks to reconcile the function of archiving materials with that of synthesis, promoting the dissemination of sources and the construction of history. It is also interested in the theoretical problems of historical sciences and the methodology of their teaching" (*Revistas Portuguesas de História e Ciências Correlativas*, 1915, p. 14).

A total of 283 articles were published in RH. The journal enjoyed greater success in its first five years of existence, with a sharp decline from 1915 onwards (Brito, *A Sociedade Portuguesa...*, 2012, p. 67). The last volume, which covers two years (1927-1928), shows an upward counter-cycle, but only because it condensed two years of publication, consisting mainly of texts paying tribute to Manuel Oliveira Lima, Brazilian ambassador and historian, who had recently passed away. Of the 127 members who made up the SPEH (only possible to count up to 1920), 46 contributed at least one article to the RH. Of these, the contributions of Fidelino de Figueiredo (with 36), Pedro de Azevedo (20), Edgar Prestage (12), João Lúcio de Azevedo (12) and Fortunato de Almeida (11) stand out numerically. Others, such as Damião Peres, Anselmo Braamcamp Freire and Paulo Merêa, had limited participation. In the field of contributors, i.e. those who were not members of the society, there were 71 (58 with articles, others with contributions in other sections).

Opening up to the outside world and collaborating with foreign historians was one of the main aims of the SPEH programme. Notable contributions include those by Benedetto Croce, Charles Boxer (with the publication of sources on Nuno Álvares Botelho, vol. 16), Pires de Lima, Ciriaco Pérez Bustamante and Gilberto Freyre, revealing the publication's relative international openness. In addition to the Lisbon Academy of Sciences, there are reports of exchanges with the Academy of History in Madrid, the Historical Institute of



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Rio de Janeiro and the University of Manchester. Nevertheless, in the eyes of its director, foreign openness had been poorly achieved. Fidelino de Figueiredo noted this distance from foreign scientific circles (few responded to the “programme circular”), warning, in the early years, of causes such as mistrust or lack of knowledge of our language. The group of Lusophiles was small, with examples such as Edgar Prestage (with several publications in RH, most of them on diplomatic history, vol. 7, but also on historiography, in which he criticises Oliveira Martins, vol. 5) and Aubrey Bell (essentially a Hispanist, who worked on Gil Vicente in RH, vol. 5). Thus, assuming that the topics that might interest foreign authors were the Portuguese Discoveries or Expansion, he suggested that these articles should have at least a summary in French (Brito, *A Sociedade Portuguesa...*, 2012, p. 43). This is now common practice with the English language, as we know.

In any case, over the years of publication, and as a faithful echo of its self-assessment, we note the publication in RH of sources (official documents, letters, among others) and interpretative articles. With regard to the publication of sources, few contributors failed to do so. Fidelino, on more than one occasion, published unpublished letters by Eça de Queiroz and Alexandre Herculano, which is not surprising, given their literary themes and historiographical references. However, those who most embraced this type of publication were Pedro de Azevedo and António Baião, which is understandable considering their professions (archivists and palaeographers). There are works of a more reflective nature, such as those by Benedetto Croce or the then young Francisco Vieira de Almeida, which dealt with epistemological aspects of historiographical work (vol. 3). New perspectives were presented on much-debated topics, such as João Lúcio de Azevedo’s take on the figure of the Marquis of Pombal. Other works represented a first step towards more brilliant studies, such as João Lúcio de Azevedo’s studies on the new Christians in the “ “ or Fortunato de Almeida’s notes for his History of the Church. There was also room for controversy/criticism among members of the SPEH (although few), which were echoed in the RH, such as between Fidelino de Figueiredo and António Prado Coelho on Balzac (vols. 2 and 3).

In line with a certain trend at the time, the Modern and Contemporary periods were the most recurrent. This can be explained to a large extent by the topics covered, namely political, religious, maritime and literary history. Other areas, such as archaeology and ethnography, occupy a residual space. Mention should also be made of regional and local history studies, which were substantial, in keeping with the nineteenth-century tradition of this type of work. However, in order to understand the volume of the most recurring themes, we must take into account that those who worked hardest on the above-mentioned themes were precisely those figures who produced the most intensively throughout the journal’s existence, such as Fidelino de Figueiredo, Fortunato de Almeida, João Lúcio de Azevedo and Edgar Prestage. Biography was a recurring theme, with almost all the major authors presenting works (Brito, *Idem*, p. 70).

The extinction of SPEH, with the exile of its main founder in 1928, dictated the end of RH, despite the fact that the last two issues already showed signs of a difficult survival. In conclusion, the question is justified: was the historiographical orientation plan suggested by Fidelino de Figueiredo in 1910, with the idea of synthesis, successful? In our view, only to a very limited extent. Many figures with a long track record were associated



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with the SPEH and RH, which, as one might imagine, made it difficult to achieve a certain homogeneity. Undoubtedly, taken as a whole, the articles published illustrate multidisciplinary, in the sense that we see a diversity of topics covered, but, for the most part, the approaches remained within the prevailing historiographical lines, with the exceptions we have presented. In fact, the most frequent contributors with work understood as historiographical participated mainly in an orientation that can be classified as erudite, positive or methodical. It is therefore not surprising that, years later, Fidelino de Figueiredo acknowledged the limited scope of his project (curiously, in the *Revista de História da Universidade de S. Paulo*, which borrowed the name of the Portuguese journal), when he referred to many of the figures who made up the SPEH or contributed to the RH: “Were all these scholars historians, in the sense of builders of great plastic and interpretative syntheses of episodic collections? Not all of them (...) Many of them were merely benevolent and probos carriers of materials, some simple archivists. They all contributed solid and valuable documentary renovations to the historiographical work, but not all of them managed to elevate it. Many fragmented history (...) But this atomistic or anatomical decomposition is only one phase of historiographical work; it must be followed by reconstruction through various difficult operations of synthesis” (*Historiografia Portuguesa no século XX* [Portuguese Historiography in the 20th Century], 1954, pp. 336-337). Although it provides a portrait of Portuguese historiography in the first two decades of the 20th century, the *Revista de História* fell short of its founder’s grand intentions. And it fell short of its inspiring *Revue de Synthèse Historique*.

Fontes e bibliografia: *Boletim da Sociedade de Geografia*, Nº 4, 29ª série, Abril de 1911; BRITO, Ricardo de, *A Sociedade Portuguesa de Estudos Históricos no contexto historiográfico nacional (1911-1928)*, Dissertação de Mestrado, FLUL, Lisboa, 2012; FIGUEIREDO, Fidelino de, *O Espírito Histórico – Introdução à Biblioteca – Noções Preliminares*, 1ª ed., Tipografia da Cooperativa Militar, 1910 (2ª ed. 1915, 3ª ed. 1920);idem, *Historiografia Portuguesa no século XX*, Separata da *Revista de História* da Universidade de S. Paulo, n. 20, [s. l.], [s. e.], 1954, pp. 331-349; *Revista de História*, 16 vols., SPEH, 1912-1928; *Revistas portuguesas de história e ciências correlativas*, Lisboa, SPEH, 1915; MOREIRA, Nuno Bessa, *A Revista de História (1912-1928), Uma proposta de análise histórico historiográfica*, Dissertação de Doutoramento em História, 2 vols, FLUP, 2012; Portaria nº 271, 9 de Dezembro de 1914, in *COLP*, Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional, 1916, p. 707; TORGAL, Luís, MENDES, José Amado, CATROGA, Fernando, *História da História em Portugal, Séculos XIX-XX*, Lisboa, Círculo de Leitores, 1996.

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