

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

<http://dichp.bnportugal.pt/>



TORRES, Flausino Esteves Correia (Almeida, 1906 – Tondela, 1974)

Flausino Torres is among the intellectuals whose aspirations were thwarted by the machinery of the *Estado Novo* regime. On suspicion of being an enemy of the regime, he was barred from holding any academic position, even from teaching at secondary schools. As a result, he found himself consigned to a marginalized life, both intellectually and physically, until he ultimately decided to go into exile. Such was the turbulent journey of this historian.

Born in Beira Alta to an unemployed mother and a father who was a cavalry Sergeant-Major and a staunch monarchist, Flausino Torres completed his primary and secondary education in Viseu, following a brief stint in a seminary, where he ultimately rejected the ecclesiastical path. In 1925, he moved to Coimbra to study at the Faculty of Arts, enrolling in the History and Philosophy programme. Early in his university years, coinciding with the onset of the military dictatorship, Torres became politically active. A republican aligned with leftist ideals, he served as Librarian-Director of the Coimbra Academic Association and was also a member of the Masonic lodge *A Revolta* [The Uprising] until the closure of secret societies in 1935. By 1932, police had identified him as a communist, despite his lack of affiliation with the Portuguese Communist Party. That same year, upon completing his degree, Torres began working at the University Press, but after its closure in 1934 for political reasons, he resumed his teacher training, completing his teaching internship at the *Colégio Portugal* in Coimbra, where he taught History and Philosophy.

In 1937, Torres abruptly left his position in Coimbra to try his luck in Lisbon as a secondary school teacher. It was in Lisbon that he joined the PCP around 1940 and became involved in movements such as the MUD [Movement for Democratic Unity] and the MUNAF [National Movement Against Fascism]. His time in the capital marked a period of close connections with the intellectual circles of the opposition. He contributed to the *Universidade Popular*, directed by Bento de Jesus Caraça, giving lectures from 1939 until its closure in 1944. During his years in Lisbon, Torres also engaged in prolific intellectual activity, collaborating on the "Biblioteca Cosmos" series, also directed by Bento de Jesus Caraça. This popular collection of scientific publications enabled Torres to publish four books, primarily focusing on the study of "primitive" societies (*Civilizações Primitivas* [Primitive Civilisations], 1943; *Religiões Primitivas* [Primitive Religions], 1944; *Sociedades Primitivas* [Primitive Societies], 1946) as well as on antiquity (*O Mundo Mediterrânico do século*



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XII a.C. ao século III d.C. [The Mediterranean World from the 12th Century BC to the 3rd Century AD], 1945). Additionally, he authored four volumes for the “Construindo” series, which centred on the roots of commerce (*Primeiras sociedades comerciais* [First Commercial Societies], 1946; *Primeiro Império Comercial* [The First Commercial Empire], 1946). The history books in both these collections reflect a consistent intellectual framework: a Marxist approach to historiography. Torres used these works to demonstrate how Marxist ideas could serve as an insightful analytical tool, even for studying remote societies. This is evident in the introduction to one of his books, where he states: “Social issues have always held paramount importance. This will become evident through the evolution of Humanity, which will be outlined and begins with this volume. The history of Humankind is shaped by social struggles. The role that the economic and social occupy in daily struggles has, to this day, been almost all-consuming. Scientific, artistic, religious, philosophical, and other concerns have always been conditioned by these factors” (*Civilizações Primitivas*, 1944, p. 6). Flausino Torres himself never denied writing a history that was openly engaged, while still exercising critical judgment.

Torres never denied that his historiography was ideologically engaged, though he consistently sought to apply critical judgment in his work.

Flausino Torres abruptly left Lisbon in 1947 after inheriting an estate in Tondela, where he resumed his work as a secondary school teacher at the *Colégio Tomás Ribeiro* while frequently contributing to opposition journals and newspapers such as *Ver e Crer*, *A República*, and *Independência de Águeda*. He also continued writing for academic journals, where he developed his vision of history, often opposing the perspectives of other Portuguese historians. In the *Revista de Economia* [Journal of Economics], for instance, he published a critical review of *História Económica e Social da Expansão Portuguesa* [Economic and Social History of the Portuguese Expansion] by Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, where he criticised the insufficient focus on the lower classes—particularly for a book that claims to be a social history. He questioned, “Why, when referring to Ceuta, is there no mention of the dominated classes or their condition in relation to the city’s commercial bourgeoisie?” (*Revista de Economia*, Vol. I, Fascicle II, 1948, p. 112). He also asked, “He constantly mentions ‘bourgeoisie,’ ‘knights,’ ‘nobles,’ ‘gentlemen,’ and ‘people’; why not define what is meant by these terms?” (*Ibid.*, p. 113). These comments reflect Torres’s deep commitment to addressing the neglected role of the working classes in history. The Portuguese people, for whom the class struggle was an inescapable reality: in an article in *Vértice* titled “A propósito da história do povo português” [On the History of the Portuguese People], he interprets the Revolution of 1383–1385 as a conflict where, “on one side are the Portuguese fighting for national independence and for the victory of their class – the two struggles intertwine – and on the other, the nobility and the high clergy, while the poor preface writer speaks of Portugal as a unified body” (*Vértice*, Volume XXIV, July-August 1964, p. 416). Here, he criticises the perspective presented in the preface to the *História de Portugal* [History of Portugal], directed by Damião Peres. He aligns himself with Álvaro Cunhal’s view in *As Lutas de Classes em Portugal nos fins da Idade Média* [Class Struggles in Portugal at the End of the Middle Ages], supporting the notion of the importance of social classes in history.



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and the revolutionary dynamics of Portuguese history.

His intellectual and political activities drew increasing attention from the PIDE, leading to his dismissal from the *Colégio Tomás Ribeiro* in 1961 and a brief imprisonment in Aljube in 1962. Prevented from continuing his teaching career and aware of an imminent arrest, he made the difficult decision to go into exile. This marked the beginning of a new chapter in his life in December 1965, one that took him to several countries. After a brief stay in Paris, he travelled to Algiers to join the FPLN nucleus. Disagreements with other members of the FPLN led him to spend a few months in Bucharest in 1967, where his son was also in exile. However, it was in Prague, in November of that same year, that he settled for a few years with his wife. Two significant events occurred during his time in Prague. The first was his debut as a university lecturer, having been invited to serve as a reader in Portuguese Language and Culture at Charles University in Prague. The second was tied to the political climate: he experienced the optimism of the Prague Spring, as well as its violent suppression by Warsaw Pact troops. Already at odds with the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), he could not reconcile how a party that opposed the Salazarist regime's repression could support the Soviet intervention. During a solemn meeting with other Portuguese exiles who shared his position, he was expelled from the PCP by Álvaro Cunhal for refusing to change his stance. Flausino Torres found himself in a precarious position: an opponent of the Salazar regime living in exile, but also ostracised by the PCP.

In this challenging situation, he decided to take advantage of the so-called *Primavera Marcelista* ("Marcellist Spring") to attempt a return to Portugal, which he achieved in June 1970. He returned to Tondela, by then over 64 years of age and suffering from health problems. The PCP's anathema meant that few of his former friends visited him in Tondela. However, this did not deter him from continuing to write history. In fact, those final years were marked by the production of notable works on Portuguese history, such as *História Contemporânea do Povo Português* [Contemporary History of the Portuguese People] (1968–1973) and *Portugal: uma perspectiva da sua História* [Portugal: A Perspective on Its History] (1973). The first demonstrated that, even after being excluded by the PCP, he maintained his commitment to a historical approach centred on the people, dedicating himself once again to this perspective. The latter was a re-edition of a book first published in Prague for his students. Despite limited access to sources, its originality lay in his determination to focus once more on the people as the driving force of history, moving away from the traditional historiography centred solely on kings. Until the twilight of his life, his thinking remained steadfastly left-wing and Marxist, with an enduring commitment to highlighting the role of those often forgotten in history. A few months after the lightning moment of the 25th of April Revolution, he passed away in Tondela, a town that, since May 1974, had already honoured him by naming a street after him.

Primary references: *Civilizações Primitivas*, Lisboa, Edição Cosmos, 1943; *Religiões Primitivas*, Lisboa, Edição Cosmos, 1944; *O Mundo Mediterrânico do séc. XII a.C. ao séc. III.d. C.*, Lisboa, Edição Cosmos, 1945; *Sociedades Primitivas*, Lisboa, Edição Cosmos, 1946; *Primeiras sociedades comerciais*, Lisboa, Empresa Contemporânea de Edições, 1946; *Primeiro Império Comercial*, Lisboa, Empresa Contemporânea



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