

# José Medeiros Ferreira, an undisputable reference in European Studies in Portugal

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For all of those who study and research European Studies in Portugal, the late Professor José Medeiros Ferreira (1942-2014) is an undisputable reference - both as a scholar and as the politician responsible for Portugal's presentation of its request for accession to the European Economic Community (EEC), back in 1977. Thereafter, he never stopped thinking about European affairs and the role that Portugal should play in the European Union (EU).

José Medeiros Ferreira graduated in Social Sciences at the University of Geneva and received a PhD in history at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, which he joined in 1981, and where he became professor and historian, as well as one of the founding members of the Instituto de História Contemporânea back in 1995. As a historian, he cemented his place over the years as one of the most important names in Portuguese historiography, while also devoting his research work to the study of contemporary history and becoming an expert in international relations and international politics.

His first publications date back to the 1980s and include *Elementos para a Política Externa do Portugal Democrático* (1976); *Estudos de Estratégia e Relações Internacionais* (1981); *Portugal, Os Próximos Vinte Anos: A Posição de Portugal no Mundo* (1988); *Um Século de Problemas: As Relações Luso-espanholas da União Ibérica à Comunidade Europeia* (1989), where he outlines the most significant moments of the bilateral relationship between the two peninsular states in the past 100 years; and the essay *Ensaio Histórico sobre a Revolução do 25 de Abril*, dedicated to the military coup of April 25, 1974 and following the pre-constitutional period (1989-1992).

His seminal work on the political behavior of the military (1992), which was his PhD thesis, and the ensuing *O Comportamento Político dos Militares: Forças Armadas e Regimes Políticos em Portugal no Século XX* (2001), are dedicated to the analysis of the behavior of the military in the face of different political regimes in Portugal during the twentieth century. Rather than focusing on the establishment and overthrow of political regimes, the author highlights the relationship between the political power and the military power.

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Another book considered to be one of his best works is the eighth volume of the *História de Portugal*, coordinated by José Mattoso, entitled *Portugal em Transe* (1995), where the author thoroughly analyzes the period between April 25, 1974, and Portugal's accession to the EEC, comprising all sorts of political, economic, social and institutional changes which the country went through. This volume, as well as the whole collection, is still considered to be a major reference in the literature of Portuguese history and demonstrates that Professor Medeiros Ferreira was one of the first historians to research the Portuguese democratic transition in a more academic fashion.

More recently, he had published *Cinco Regimes na Política Internacional* (2006), in which he demonstrated how the five distinct political regimes that ruled Portugal over time from 1890 until after the April 25 military coup - the Constitutional Monarchy, the First Republic, the military dictatorship, the *Estado Novo* and the democratic Republic - influenced Portuguese international relations in the twentieth century, and *Os Açores na Política Internacional* (2011), in which he concentrated on the insertion of the Azores archipelago into the Euro-Atlantic area, its important strategic and military role, mainly in the interwar period, and also the history of the geostrategic developments of the archipelago, projecting its future as well as analyzing its intervention in the field of science and technology. All in all, the book presents a new way of thinking about the region and its place in the contemporary world.

In 2008, when he retired from teaching at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, a special volume (*O Longo Curso: Estudos em Homenagem a José Medeiros Ferreira*, 2011), which included several academic contributions about contemporary Portugal, was published in honor of the great historian and professor and his work.

Indeed, the work of Medeiros Ferreira affords him a prominent position in Portuguese historiography, especially in the fields of international relations and European studies. Although his work primarily reflects the institutionalist bias in his historical analysis, without however neglecting the economic and social aspects, Professor Medeiros Ferreira's research interests were related to the study of foreign policy, security, the military and politics, as well as European integration. In this respect, he even played a pioneering role in the study of Portuguese international relations and foreign policy.

Specifically in the field of European integration, besides his having written several articles and chapters for books, his final publication was *Não Há Mapa Cor-de-Rosa: A História (Mal)Dita da Integração Europeia*. The title itself is both curious and offers a double reading. The title (*Não Há Mapa Cor-de-Rosa*) is a reference to the clear absence of any kind

of overall Portuguese strategy towards the question of European integration, a posture that all governments have repeated. As José Medeiros himself once told<sup>2</sup> the author of this book review, since the First Constitutional Government, in which he himself was involved as the Minister for Foreign Affairs, no government has demonstrated either a clear understanding or a well-prepared plan about the country's EU membership. As for the subtitle (*A História (Mal)Dita da Integração Europeia*), one can but wonder whether the European integration narrative has been well told or if in fact it has become an unfortunate burden.

The book itself is a narrative describing several political and diplomatic maneuvers (both successful and unsuccessful), all aimed at creating understanding between European states, in which it is argued that no one can fully understand the history of European integration without having formed a clear picture of the twentieth century in Europe. In order to do this, the author uses some of his own reflections about the past, to remember World War I, the League of Nations, the Briand Plan and World War II. The final chapter is dedicated solely to the question of Portugal in the EU, in which the author revisits the relationship between Portugal and Europe/European integration from 1890 until the present, focusing on the permanent negotiations taking place in European institutions.

Although José Medeiros Ferreira acknowledged that Portugal became a member state of the EU during its best years, he also believed that it is now time to reconsider the principles of European integration, clearly explaining all his doubts about the path that Portugal is paving for itself, while almost crying out for Portugal to regain its national pride.

Once again he recalls that there still remains the need for a study to be made about shared governance and the major decisions taken by Portugal within the EU. Perhaps one of his pupils will one day embrace this challenge and prove (or not) that the only persistent feature of Portuguese membership has been a “strategic anemia.”

Even though he considered that he “was never a United States of Europe pietist,”<sup>3</sup> the whole book illustrates the intention that had existed since World War I to form a united Europe and, in a sense, this work may be considered as a testimony to the men who were partly responsible for Portugal's accession to the EU, but who recently witnessed the

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<sup>2</sup> Interview, November 26, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> “A União Europeia pode desaparecer sem darmos por ela”, available at <http://www.publico.pt/temas/jornal/a-uniao-europeia-pode-desaparecer-sem-darmos-por-ela-27394081>, accessed on 07/04/2014.

decline in European solidarity with Portugal and the lack of vision on the part of several Portuguese governments regarding the EU.

The professor, historian, politician and intellectual has graciously presented us with this last work, which should definitely be read and savored by students, practitioners, and any audience looking for a good book and an innovative vision from an exceptional historian of renowned merit.