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The *Seara Nova* Group (1921–1926) and The Ambiguities of Portuguese Liberal Elitism*

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The intellectual and political experiment of the *Seara Nova* movement in the early twenties provides an excellent opportunity for a case study on the ambiguities of Liberal elitism in the face of rising social unrest, economic crisis and Authoritarian threats to parliamentary rule. This article concentrates on two main aspects of the movement: (a) the involvement of the group in the politics of the latter period of Portuguese Liberalism, before the advent of Authoritarianism on 28 May 1926; and (b) the contribution of the group to the debate about the 'nature' and 'destiny' of Portuguese society launched fifty years earlier by the *Geração de 1870*.

The two areas are interconnected: they form two different practical and intellectual manifestations of the same set of attitudes which arose among the intelligentsia as a result of the protracted crisis of Liberalism that affected Portugal, as well as several other European countries, throughout the three decades prior to the First World War.¹ Therefore I shall not attempt to deal with them separately. Instead, I will try to draw a chronological picture of the evolution of the group based almost exclusively on the material published by the *Seara Nova* review from October 1921 to August 1926. After that date, although the review resumed publication in April 1927, the increasingly hard repression and censorship that followed the crushing of the Liberal revolt of February made it virtually impossible for the remaining members of the *Seara Nova* group to carry on the tasks the movement had undertaken in 1921.

THE ORIGINS OF THE 'SEARA NOVA' GROUP

The origins of the group can be traced back to several sources.² A number of the future editors and contributors of *Seara Nova* were involved, from the

* This article was initially written, at the kind invitation of Professor Douglas Wheeler, for the 2nd International Conference on Modern Portugal in June 1979 at Durham, New Hampshire, U.S.A. It was later presented, at the invitation of Professor Alan Freeland, as the Gulbenkian Lecture of 1983 at the University of Southampton, England. It subsequently benefited from many conversations with Fernando Farelo Lopes and from the editorial advice of Luís de Sousa Rebelo. I am very thankful to all of these people for having given me the opportunity to express my views on this important and controversial topic of Portuguese political culture.

¹ See my *Portugal na Alvorada do Século XX: Forças Sociais, Poder Político e Crescimento Económico* (Lisbon, 1979).

² There is an extensive bibliography on *Seara Nova* and its members. Particular attention has been given to the origins of the group from the standpoint of political science, by Fernando Farelo Lopes, 'A Revista *Pela Grei* — Doutrina e Prática Políticas', *Análise Social*, 72–73–74 (1982), 759–72; 'António Sérgio na *Renascença Portuguesa*', *Revista de História das Ideias*, 5 (1983), 403–25; 'A *Renascença Portuguesa* e a *Seara Nova*' and 'Cortesão e Proença: Encontros e Desencontros' (forthcoming).



beginnings of the Republican régime in 1910, in *Águia* — the journal of the Republican Nationalist movement of *Renascença Portuguesa* founded by Teixeira de Pascoais. However, some of the *Águia* contributors, namely António Sérgio (1883–1968), Raul Proença (1884–1941) and, to a lesser extent, Jaime Cortesão (1884–1960), challenged Pascoais's attempt to impose his own brand of literary and political ideology — *Saudosismo* — on the grounds of its inability to account for Portugal's social and economic problems and to provide guidelines for political action.

In a letter to Luís Câmara Reis (1885–1961) of early May 1915, Raul Proença was already calling for the foundation of a new journal to oppose the wave of extremely conservative Monarchist ideas which were spreading under the favourable conditions of the brief dictatorship of general Pimenta de Castro.³ The early months of 1915 had in fact witnessed the consolidation of several right-wing groupings, in particular the Portuguese branch of Maurras's Authoritarianism, *Integralismo Lusitano*, and the Italian-inspired journal *Ideia Nacional*, edited by Homem Cristo Filho. On the literary scene, there was the appearance of Portuguese Modernism with the publication of *Orpheu*, and it is worth recalling that *Seara Nova* always remained opposed to Modernist aesthetics.

However, Proença's call did not meet with any immediate response. Only Sérgio did in fact take steps, a few years later, to provide an outlet for the articulation of a coherent ideological alternative to the rise of right-wing Nationalism and Authoritarianism. But Sérgio was then far from a committed Republican. In fact, he clearly took advantage of the new political situation created by the charismatic dictatorship of Sidónio Pais to launch his own review, *Pela Grei*, in 1918. Be that as it may, the future aims of the *Seara Nova* group could be clearly read in *Pela Grei*'s subtitle: 'Revista para o ressurgimento nacional, pela formação e intervenção de uma opinião pública consciente'. Furthermore, we find the very substance of *Seara Nova*'s programme already spelt out in the mildly sidonista *Pela Grei* of 1918:

Sem uma mudança *imediate* de vida . . . a derrocada é inevitável . . . Isto exige imperativamente transformações profundas e imediatas na estrutura social e na do Estado . . . E quem realizaria estas reformas? Especialistas competentes apoiados num governo nacional, o qual se apoiaria por seu turno num movimento de opinião pública.⁴

Among the 'competent specialists' who are being suggested as capable of carrying out a 'coherent plan of reforms . . . totally independent of party

³ Quoted by Gerald Moser, 'The Campaign of *Seara Nova* and its Impact on Portuguese Literature, 1921–1961', *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 2, no. 1 (June 1965), 15–42 (p. 18).

⁴ *Pela Grei*, no. 1 (1918), 1–11 (especially paragraph 3).

politics', one finds Ezequiel de Campos (1874-1965), who never actually became a member of *Seara Nova's* editorial board but wrote extensively in the review about industrial and rural development, before he joined Salazar's *Estado Novo*. More importantly, the contents of the celebrated 'Apelo à Nação' issued by *Seara Nova* in March 1923 were already to be found in the second issue of *Pela Grei*, and one can hardly miss Ezequiel's contribution. In fact, the final version of the 'Apelo' was written jointly by Ezequiel and the Catholic financial expert Quirino de Jesus (1855-1935), also a frequent contributor to *Seara Nova*, who later joined the staff of Salazar and is said to have drafted many of the dictator's early speeches.

In drawing attention to the involvement of Ezequiel de Campos and Quirino de Jesus in the *Seara Nova* group, I want to stress both the elements of continuity between pre-*Seara* and post-*Seara* economic nationalism and the elements of heterogeneity within the group. In other words, the *Seara Nova* group was, in my view, less homogeneous and less opposed to views held outside the group, including among future members of the Authoritarian establishment, than is usually assumed to be the case. Despite its indisputable originality even in international terms the group was nevertheless part and parcel of the dominant Portuguese intellectual framework of the time, which was decisively influenced by the climate of declining Liberalism. It is my aim in this article to illustrate these fundamental ambiguities of *Seara Nova's* reformism and elitism.

While Sérgio and Ezequiel were producing *Pela Grei* and taking advantage of Sidónio's rule, men like Proença and Cortesão found themselves in strong opposition to the dictatorship. In 1919, after the assassination of Sidónio and the revival of Republicanism, Cortesão was appointed Director of the National Library. There he met up again with Proença, who had been working at the Library since 1911 as chief of the technical staff. This was the beginning of the so-called *Grupo da Biblioteca*. Although the members of the *Biblioteca* group were very heterogeneous in professional qualifications, literary tastes and political affiliations, it was the association of Cortesão, Proença, the novelists Aquilino Ribeiro (1885-1963) and Raul Brandão (1867-1930), and the 'men of letters' Câmara Reys and Augusto Casimiro (1889-1967) which eventually brought about the creation of *Seara Nova* — 'uma revista de doutrina e crítica' — on 15 October 1921.

Besides the names already mentioned, the initial editorial board also included two men devoted to the problems of education — Ferreira de Macedo (1887-1959) and Faria de Vasconcelos (1880-1939) — as well as the economists Francisco António Correia (1877-1938) and José Azeredo Perdigão (1896). In the meantime, Sérgio had gone into his second exile in Brazil, where in 1920 he published the first volume of his *Ensaios*. Proença greeted Sérgio's book with enthusiasm, although not uncritically, and actively encouraged him to come back to Portugal and join forces with the

new group.⁵ Sérgio came back only in the Spring of 1923, but one can hardly fail to recognize the influence of his political philosophy in Proença's first editorial for the review. This statement has been quoted many times, but it is worth quoting again:

A *Seara Nova* representa o esforço de alguns intelectuais, alheados dos partidos políticos mas não da vida política, para que se erga, acima do circo onde se debatem os interesses das clientelas e das oligarquias plutocráticas, uma atmosfera mais pura em que se faça ouvir o protesto das mais altas consciências. . . .

Não comunga ela no sofisma de que são os políticos os únicos culpados da situação . . . Todo o país tem de aceitar a responsabilidade que lhe cabe . . . e em especial a sua *élite*. . . .

A *Seara Nova* quer exercer mais do que uma simples acção de crítica e de protesto: quer chamar a atenção de todo o país para as reformas necessárias e contribuir para que se crie, em volta dessas reformas, uma opinião nacional que as exija e apoie . . . Quer, numa palavra, contribuir para a grande e profunda Revolução que deve redimir a nossa Pátria.⁶

THE BASIC AMBIGUITIES OF LIBERAL ELITISM

Many of the ambiguous features of *Seara Nova*'s political stance are present in its inaugural statement. First of all, the belief in 'national salvation' from above, alongside barely disguised contempt for party politics. It is true that the review's editors and contributors made democratic declarations on more than one occasion. However, none of them departed from a highly qualified definition of democracy as distinct from conventional representative democratic rule as well as from that 'democracia majoritária, [esse] despotismo do número, [esse] totalitarismo democrático' to which Proença still referred many years later.⁷ Moreover, the group's editorialists always clung persistently to the hope that a government with 'exceptional powers' could bring about 'national salvation'. As late as July 1926, several weeks after the military takeover, Sérgio was still arguing in favour of some kind of 'liberal dictatorship':

Ninguém mais do que a *Seara* . . . pediu um governo excepcional. Tudo está, porém, no espírito dessa ditadura provisória, preliminar e excepcional. O que desejamos não é a abolição do parlamento: é a sua reforma profundíssima; não é a ditadura como sistema: é a ditadura exercida por espíritos liberais.⁸

These permanent qualifications imposed upon the concept of democracy eventually led the editors of *Seara Nova* to conceive a 'profound reform of parliament' in clearly Corporatist terms, namely, by drawing on Oliveira Martins's conception of 'organic representation' of social groups and corporate interests in a 'technical chamber'. At this point, it is important to

⁵ Raul Proença, 'Um Livro de Claridades e Sombras', *Seara Nova*, no. 3 (20 November 1921), 77-81.

⁶ 'Editorial', *Seara Nova*, no. 1 (15 October 1921).

⁷ Proença, 'Algumas Palavras de Proêmio' in *Páginas de Política*, second series (Lisbon, 1939), p. 30.

⁸ António Sérgio, 'Observação e Ideologia; Produtor e Cidadão', *Seara Nova*, no. 94 (8 July 1926).

emphasize that the Portuguese tradition of political Corporatism was not the outcome of the single 'social doctrine' of the Catholic Church. Indeed, it also drew on an earlier stream of secular Corporatism which cut across the boundaries of the political traditions of the Left and Right. Eventually, secular and Catholic Corporatism proposals were merged under Salazar's *Estado Novo Corporativo*, and again we see the role played by *Seara Nova*, irrespective of its motivations, in paving the way for the institutionalization of Authoritarian Corporatism in Portugal.

Indeed, as late as January 1926, the young *seareiro* José Rodrigues Miguéis (1901-81), who later became a distinguished novelist, proposed to rescue Parliament by means which clearly anticipate Salazar's Corporatist Chamber:

Trata-se, portanto, de reunir no Estado os elementos representativos da organização social. . . . O que se pretende é uma representação funcional da sociedade. . . . As funções sociais . . . que devem estar nas bases da futura organização parlamentar podem reduzir-se às seguintes: funções económicas, de protecção . . . , de cultura intelectual . . . , morais, jurídicas, políticas, administrativas, e ainda de defesa nacional. Em harmonia com esta ordem de funções é que o futuro Conselho ou Câmara Orgânica Nacional terá de ser formado.⁹

It is not surprising, then, that *Seara Nova* was frequently called upon to clarify its ambiguous positions. But often the attempts at clarification only added to the basic ambiguity of the group's political philosophy and practical proposals, as in this late statement by Sarmiento de Beires (1893-1974), an Air Force officer who had recently joined the editorial board of the review:

Neste momento em que, especulando com as nossas palavras, se lhes dão interpretações tendenciosas . . . torna-se necessário definir a nossa atitude . . . A *Seara Nova* entende . . . que o Exército e a Marinha . . . não devem, por princípio, interferir em revoluções. Essa interferência só seria admissível no dia longínquo em que a opinião pública consciente . . . reclamasse com uma definida finalidade . . . uma modificação de governo que circunstâncias políticas e parlamentares impedissem de realizar dentro das normas constitucionais.¹⁰

Ironically, the 'dia longínquo' was not far away at all, and, however reluctantly, Sarmiento de Beires did join the military coup of 28 May 1926. Furthermore, of the numerous coups that had taken place since the creation of the group, the military takeover of 28 May was the only one that *Seara Nova* did not condemn straightaway. The statement issued by the review on 30 May summarizes the (tragic) permanent ambiguities of the group's approach to the Portuguese polity:

⁹ José Rodrigues Miguéis, 'Salvemos o Parlamentarismo', *Seara Nova*, no. 70 (16 January 1926).

¹⁰ Sarmiento de Beires, 'A "Seara Nova" e a Situação', *Seara Nova*, no. 76 (2 February 1926).

O grupo da *Seara Nova*... propõe nesta hora à consciência nacional as seguintes interrogações:

1º. Será uma *ditadura militar*... o sistema governativo que mais convém aos sentimentos liberais do povo português?

2º. Terão os indivíduos apontados para assumir a direcção do governo os requisitos indispensáveis para o bom desempenho desse papel?

Tais interrogações as dirige sobretudo a *Seara Nova* à força armada, no momento em que esta, havendo-se resolvido a uma intervenção decisiva na vida da Nação, acaba de assumir responsabilidades gravíssimas... que a corrupção dominante da política portuguesa acaba de colocar nas suas mãos. Como afirmação de princípio, a *Seara Nova* declara:

Que apoiará um governo excepcional... a fim de preparar a possibilidade de um insofismado regime de instituições democráticas adaptado às necessidades do nosso tempo;

Que reprovará um governo com tendência a firmar um regime anti-liberal. . . .¹¹

It is well known that most, although not all, contributors to *Seara Nova* were quick to realize that the situation created by the coup of 28 May could only lead to an Authoritarian regime similar to the Spanish and Italian dictatorships which the review had recently been attacking. They did not hesitate in taking on the new Portuguese regime. But again, it must be remembered that Sérgio himself had initially welcomed the 'democratic dictatorship' of general Primo de Rivera.¹² *Seara Nova's* involvement in this final episode in the politics of dying Liberalism was symptomatic of the group's lack of sound criteria to make strategic decisions in the face of increasingly stronger attacks on basic liberal values.

However, it is worth going back to the 1921 statement and commenting further on the group's political philosophy. I have already shown how difficult it was for *Seara Nova* to reconcile elitism and democracy. To quote again from Proença's 1921 statement: 'A nossa solução própria consiste na conciliação da inteligência dos melhores com a vontade da maior parte, da competência com a democracia, da elite com o número.' But there were many other fundamental political issues which the group never managed to resolve satisfactorily either in theoretical or in practical terms. For example, most of the group's members can be adequately described as enlightened elitists in the established tradition of critical Liberalism. But their strong belief in education, particularly the education of the elite, was confused by their equally strong belief that Portugal's political troubles were due, in Sérgio's phrase, to a 'crisis of mentality'.¹³ To complicate the matter further, men like Ezequiel and Quirino believed that the solutions for the crisis and

¹¹ 'Editorial', *Seara Nova*, no. 90 (3 June 1926).

¹² Sérgio, 'O Caso de Espanha', *Seara Nova*, no. 27 (October–November 1923), 64–65.

¹³ Proença, 'O Problema da Educação na Crise Actual Portuguesa', *Seara Nova*, no. 1 (15 October 1921): 'A decadência do nosso país não reside apenas na desorganização e incapacidade económica, mas numa profunda degeneração da actividade mental' (p. 12).

for education itself depended rather on pragmatic measures to be taken in the economic and financial area.¹⁴

The obsession of most members of the group with the highly unverifiable notion of 'Portuguese mentality' also accounts for the lack of empirical studies in *Seara Nova*. Throughout its publication the political contents of the review could be divided, for the most part, into two types: on the one hand, a series of constitutional blueprints and abstract formulae to deal with problem areas from education through to industry and farming; and on the other hand, a series of polemics on ideological and literary themes with no reference to any empirical material. Indeed, the group was constantly engaged in political and cultural debates. Proença, in particular, embarked on several important campaigns against *Integralismo Lusitano*, *Cruzada Nun'Álvares* and other groupings of the rising Authoritarian movement, but he tackled them solely on the basis of abstract principles, again with very little reference to social analysis or any of the practical implications of those ideologies. Often the debates turned into no more than discussions of semantics.

Nationalism is a case in point. On the one hand, *Seara Nova* claimed to be anti-Nationalist — a claim hardly supported by most of Cortesão's and Casimiro's contributions, or by the special issue devoted to the successful air flight across the South Atlantic by Gago Coutinho and Sacadura Cabral in 1922.¹⁵ On the other hand, Proença went to a lot of trouble to show that the *Integralistas* were not *true* Nationalists since they had borrowed most of their ideas from *Action Française*.¹⁶ Indeed, Proença tried to draw a distinction between Nationalism, which he claimed to abhor, and patriotism, of which he approved highly. However, one is uncertain as to where the substantive difference lies. Moreover, he did not grasp the distinction drawn by his opponents between patriots, who were ready to fight the foreign enemies of the country, and 'true Nationalists' who also had to fight *l'ennemi de l'intérieur*.¹⁷ This distinction was blurred whenever it came to the colonial question — a topic that levelled all differences between Left and Right as well as between Republicans and Monarchists — and, more surprisingly, whenever it came to the 'struggle against plutocracy'. As late as 1939, Proença admitted that,

Num ponto me encontrava, porém, plenamente com eles [Integralistas]: era no seu combate às plutocracias, na parte em que as potências do Dinheiro pretendiam chamar a elas o poder público, se apossavam da grande imprensa, pervertiam o sufrágio,

¹⁴ Ezequiel de Campos, 'O Problema da Educação na Crise Actual Portuguesa', *Seara Nova*, no. 3 (20 November 1921), 81-84: 'Se fôssemos educar primeiro, faliámos muito antes'.

¹⁵ Jaime Cortesão, 'Os Novos Lusíadas', *Seara Nova*, no. 13 (12 May 1922).

¹⁶ Proença, 'Acerca do Integralismo Lusitano', *Seara Nova*, no. 5 (24 December 1921), and following issues. Also published in book form, with a Preface by Manuel Mendes (Lisbon, 1964).

¹⁷ António Sardinha, 'Almas Republicanas', *Homens Livres*, no. 2 (12 December 1923), 6-7.

enfendavam os políticos aos seus interesses mercantis, estendiam por toda a parte os numerosos tentáculos da corrupção.¹⁸

There was, however, a rationale behind such a tragic naivety. Before exploring this further, I must return again to the group's inaugural statement. In spite of all the inconsistencies shown to pervade the political attitudes of the group, *Seara Nova* is still believed today to have been a sort of Socialist grouping. Indeed, Proença was keen to emphasize in the statement that,

sob o ponto de vista político, a *Seara Nova* enfileira na extrema-esquerda da República. Radical, sem ser jacobina, os seus esforços irão para a transformação do regime no sentido das mais avançadas aspirações . . . Todas as suas simpatias vão, pois, para os que lutam dentro da ordem, dos métodos democráticos e desse espírito de realidades sem o qual são inteiramente ilusórias quaisquer reformas sociais, pelo triunfo do socialismo.

However, these socialistic claims only add to the ambiguities of *Seara Nova*'s political stance. Although many of the social and economic reforms advocated by the group had a progressive content, there is no commitment on the part of the group towards a radical change in the country's social structure and property distribution. It is true that *Seara Nova* consistently welcomed the electoral successes of the British Labour Party and there is a flavour of Fabianism in the group's elitist reformism. But — and this is the salient feature of *Seara Nova*'s peculiar socialism — at no time did the group associate its political proposals with any working-class organization, either parties or trade unions, or any popular movement. The few instances of practical collaboration with the Socialist Party and the trade unions did not lead to any theoretical rationalization on the part of the group. Moreover, such instances of collaboration were contradicted by frequent strong criticism of labour organizations, particularly the Syndicalist trade-unions.

In essence, *Seara Nova*'s politics had much more to do with, for example, Oliveira Martins's 'State Socialism' than with the Socialist organizations of the twenties. Its peculiar socialism was conspicuously class-free. Indeed, the only instance of *Seara Nova*'s support for an alteration in property rights — the mild 'agrarian reform' designed by Ezequiel de Campos when he served in the short-lived left-wing cabinet led by Domingues dos Santos in 1924–25 — was not grounded in any peasant or working-class demands. In fact, the attempted reform was justified in terms of 'national interest', a view shared by many conservatives as the review was careful to point out several times.¹⁹ Thus, from the point of view of the group's overall political stance, 'Socialism' was another name for 'national interest' and, indeed, for 'Nationalism' or, as they would have it, 'patriotism'. Finally, when the review opened its columns to a self-styled revolutionary like the former anarchist

¹⁸ 'Algumas Palavras de Proémio', p. 42.

¹⁹ 'O Problema Agrário Português — Opiniões', *Seara Nova*, no. 42 (15 February 1925), 116–17.

Emílio Costa, his series of articles were published under the significant title: 'Se a Burguesia Quisesse' and Costa argued that 'a revolution à l'anglaise is needed to prevent a revolution à la russe'...²⁰

Drawing together the various aspects of *Seara Nova's* political stance, one cannot avoid the strong impression that despite, or maybe because of, the highly abstract tone of the group's writings, such concepts as democracy and dictatorship, reform and revolution, patriotism and Nationalism, Socialism and Conservatism, technical competence and popular suffrage, parliamentary rule and Corporatist representation, are all conspicuously lacking in clarity. They are confused and frequently overlap. Ultimately, only one feature emerges distinctly from the realm of ambiguity: *Seara Nova's* basic elitism.

THE GROUP'S POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

In an early statement on 'why we are not a political party', Proença expresses the disturbing elitism of his group:

Não somos... um partido político porque a nossa acção não pretende limitar-se à simples esfera da política... Simples função de correlação, a função política não pode ser a única que haja a modificar e corrigir. Há, pois, que agir sobre todos os tecidos do corpo colectivo... E sobretudo... modificar aquele organismo que está destinado a exercer sobre todos os outros uma acção directiva... a forma da mentalidade do escol português... A nossa empresa é, pois... extremamente ambiciosa.²¹

But although resisting the idea of becoming a political party, *Seara Nova* was constantly involved in the complex and often contradictory political moves of the period. Direct political involvement increased with Sérgio's arrival in Portugal in early 1923. He was undeniably influential in issuing the 'Apelo à Nação' in March and in bringing together around a hundred distinguished personalities of the Portuguese intelligentsia under the banner of *União Cívica*, which represented the group's first attempt to expand its influence across the political spectrum. Among the members of the *União Cívica*, were two military men who were to play leading roles in the coup of May 1926 — Filomeno Câmara and Ivens Ferraz —, one future minister — Manuel Rodrigues Júnior, a close associate of Salazar — and the then Chief of Police, Ferreira do Amaral, who was instrumental in curbing labour and social unrest at this time. So much for *Seara Nova's* allies!

Sérgio's arrival also brought about important changes in the editorial board of the review. The board was reduced to five members only, including Sérgio who was greeted enthusiastically by Proença. Once again, the group restated its concept of democratic elitism: 'Democratas — quer dizer...

²⁰ Emílio Costa, 'Se a Burguesia Quisesse', *Seara Nova*, no. 2 (5 November 1921), and following issues.

²¹ Proença, 'Porque Não Somos um Partido Político?', *Seara Nova*, no. 2 (5 November 1921), 48-49.

reconhecer apenas como válidos os actos governativos aceites e impostos por uma opinião pública esclarecida — o que é justamente o contrário da demagogia.²²

For a few months the group was actively involved in promoting the *União Cívica* as a means of overcoming the differences among those committed to 'saving the Motherland'. Proença himself went out of his way to praise the virtues of political compromise and made gestures of peace towards Henrique Trindade Coelho, one of the most prominent right-wing ideologues and organizers, whom he had recently attacked.²³ This period of intense political activity — which coincided with the installation of Primo de Rivera's dictatorship in Spain, following Mussolini's seizure of power in November 1922 — culminated in 1923, in two near-simultaneous actions which illustrate once more the ambiguities of the group's politics. These political moves had the effect of exposing the weaknesses in *Seara Nova's* strategy and eventually led to the failure of the group to influence the political elites of the time — either Liberal or Authoritarian — except in so far as it contributed to undermine the resistance of the former to the latter.

In December 1923, under Sérgio's leadership, the group joined the new cabinet led by Álvaro de Castro, a former minister in Afonso Costa's 1913 cabinet but now engaged in a dramatic shift away from the Democratic Party, and at virtually the same time, joined forces with the *Integralistas Lusitanos* in a joint venture named the *Homens Livres*. While Sérgio and Mário de Azevedo Gomes (1885–1965) entered the cabinet as ministers of Education and Agriculture respectively, the review justified this departure from its previous commitment to stay away from government office in the following terms:

Quando se convencesse de que os seus esforços eram inúteis . . . [*Seara Nova*] deixaria de colaborar e ergueria, ainda mais alto e com maior autoridade, o seu protesto, não para se juntar aos demagogos, aos jacobinos, aos irrequietos, aos ambiciosos, aos comediantes, mas a todos os Homens Livres de Portugal que aspiram a dignificar a Pátria em que vivemos.²⁴

But who were these 'Free Men'? And free from what? As the subtitle of the two issues of the joint journal published by *seareiros* and *integralistas* tells us: 'Free from Finance and free from the Parties.' Among these were António Sardinha, Hipólito Raposo and José Pequito Rebelo, three of the leading *Integralistas Lusitanos*, alongside well-known Monarchist right-wingers such as Carlos Malheiro Dias and Afonso Lopes Vieira, as well as *Seara*

²² 'Editorial', *Seara Nova*, no. 22 (April 1923). From that date, the editorial board included only Raul Proença, António Sérgio, Jaime Cortesão, Câmara Reis and Faria de Vasconcelos.

²³ Proença, 'A União Cívica e a "Seara Nova"', *Seara Nova*, no. 22 (April 1923), 155–57; see also Sérgio, 'A União Cívica, Os Seus Intuítos e Os Seus Métodos', *Seara Nova*, no. 22, 157–61; and Sérgio, 'O Sr. Dr. Bernardino Machado e a "União Cívica"', *Seara Nova*, no. 24 (June 1923), 209–11.

²⁴ 'No Governo', *Seara Nova*, no. 28 (December 1923), p. 71.

Nova's regular editors, contributors and sympathizers. This is an episode that most of *Seara Nova's* current admirers tend to dismiss.²⁵ In my view, however, this temporary convergence between the two movements was not accidental. There was an important area of coincidence between them, namely, the 'struggle against plutocracy'. But there was more to it than this. In June, Sérgio had commented very favourably on a new journal called *Revista Portuguesa* and quoted approvingly some of the editor's remarks. This was Augusto da Costa, a future member of *Homens Livres*:

'Esquerdas e direitas, liberais e conservadores, burgueses e operários, tudo isto constitui já hoje um bazar de raridades arqueológicas. . . . A única destriça que há a fazer na Nação é esta: separar os renovadores, revolucionários ou reaccionários — todos os que querem reagir para construir — dessa enorme massa conservadora, inerte por natureza.'²⁶

Six months later, in his defence of *Homens Livres*, Sérgio would go on to write:

Já escrevi algures que a grande linha divisória . . . não é a que separa as 'direitas' das 'esquerdas'; é, sim, a que distingue na sociedade uma nova orientação, a política nova . . . do espírito velho . . . Pareceu-nos por isso conveniente o haver um órgão dos homens livres para os homens livres; dos homens vivos para os homens vivos de qualquer classe, doutrina política ou religião, afirmador por isso mesmo de uma Ideia Nacional, de uma finalidade portuguesa, anterior e superior às finalidades partidárias.²⁷

Finally, pursuing his dialogue with Sérgio, Augusto da Costa pushed to its logical conclusion the Corporatist and elitist ideology, now with a strong anti-plutocratic overtone, that was to dominate Portugal's political life for the next five decades:

As verdadeiras maiorias, as maiorias activas e dinâmicas, são sempre as minorias. . . . Tudo o mais é a força da inércia . . . é o peso morto da grande massa conservadora e acomodática. . . . A preocupação dos homens livres . . . deve ser exclusivamente a de reorganizar a Nação verticalmente e não horizontalmente. . . . Não estamos na direita nem na esquerda de qualquer exército: devemos estar à cabeça, agindo e dirigindo.²⁸

In the second and final issue of *Homens Livres*, Augusto da Costa elaborated further on 'an exact and organic representation of the nation's economic forces':

Uma representação legítima dos interesses nacionais, expressa pelos representantes directos de todas as actividades económicas do país . . . por todas as forças vivas . . . sob a condição de nessas forças vivas figurarem as mais vivas de todas, que são as do Trabalho.²⁹

²⁵ See for instance João Medina, *O Pelicano e a Seara: Integralistas e Seareiros juntos na Revista Homens Livres* (Lisbon, 1978).

²⁶ *Seara Nova*, no. 24 (June 1923), p. 216. Note that in the same issue Sérgio praises the young fascist leader Augusto da Costa and criticizes the old Liberal leader Bernardino Machado.

²⁷ Sérgio, 'Vivos e Mortos', *Homens Livres*, no. 1 (1 December 1923).

²⁸ Augusto da Costa, 'A Crise Portuguesa e a Reacção dos Homens Livres', *Homens Livres*, no. 1 (1 December 1923).

²⁹ Costa, 'Reflexões sobre Congressos Económicos', *Homens Livres*, no. 2 (12 December 1923).

But these calls for class collaboration did not meet with any success. The working population was at the time struggling desperately to keep pace with furious inflation and to resist unemployment and repression.³⁰ Whether too well-meaning or lacking in vision, the 'Free Men' did not realize that the price to pay for 'restructuring society vertically' was the very suppression of civic and political liberties. As these facts became more and more apparent, even before the military takeover, some of the members of *Seara Nova* realized the need to mark themselves out from the Right Wing. But before I move on to the final stages of the group's political life, I want to point out other structural features of this temporary coming together of *Seareiros* and *Integralistas*.

After Sérgio joined both the editorial board of *Seara Nova* and the staff of the National Library, one notes an increasing effort to present an elaborate account of the Portuguese crisis. Because the *Integralistas* had been putting so much emphasis on tradition as a major factor of political legitimation, Sérgio decided to challenge the reactionary tradition with his own historical lineage. It is in this light that Sérgio's preface to his anthology of Portuguese seventeenth-century economists must today be read, as well as his work on Oliveira Martins, whose *Dispersos* he edited jointly with Faria de Vasconcelos also in 1924.³¹ While in the first anthology Sérgio places himself amongst the critics of the alleged mercantile orientation of the Portuguese economy since the fifteenth century, and takes the side of the national bourgeoisie proper, as distinct from merchants and financiers; the selection of Oliveira Martins's writings is geared towards the legitimation of 'exceptional authoritarian measures' in the cause of 'saving the nation' and establishing a 'true democracy' which, according to Martins's *Dispersos*, can only be described as an 'organic democracy'. A few months later, in a seminal essay written to support Ezequiel de Campos's attempted agrarian reform, Sérgio further elaborated the argument on the 'two national policies' while clearly favouring the *política de fixação* as against the *política de transporte*.³²

In an article in *Seara Nova* of May 1923, Sérgio had already discussed the politics of Oliveira Martins. He argued here that Martins's contribution to a means of overcoming Portugal's protracted crisis should not be abandoned to the 'reactionaries' from whom he wished to disassociate himself. He agreed that:

Oliveira Martins apresenta-nos . . . todas as ideias de que se apropriou o reacçãoarismo do nosso tempo . . . A distinção . . . entre o espírito racionalista e o método científico, positivo, realista. . . O desamor à 'loucura gigantesca que se chamou Revolução

³⁰ See Fernando Medeiros, *Economia e Sociedade nas Origens do Salazarismo* (Lisbon, 1978).

³¹ *Antologia dos Economistas Portugueses do Século XVII*, edited by António Sérgio (Lisbon, 1924); Oliveira Martins, *Dispersos*, edited by António Sérgio and Faria de Vasconcelos, 2 vols (Lisbon, 1924).

³² Sérgio, 'As Duas Políticas Nacionais' (January 1925), in *Ensaio*, II, second edition (Lisbon, 1956), pp. 85-122; see also his Preface to this edition.

Francesa'. ...A repulsa do parlamentarismo. ...A 'teoria' da representação orgânica... A crítica à 'soberania nacional' e ao 'progresso'... bem como à confusão 'liberal' dos processos administrativos com os políticos. A sociedade, diz, não é 'a soma bruta dos indivíduos, mas a Nação organizada'.³³

Whilst acknowledging all this, Sérgio believed that Martins's criticism of Liberalism was justified in as much as 'democracy weakens the competence of governments'. But Sérgio was not an 'historicist'. He borrowed freely from Martins and the seventeenth-century economists in constructing an interpretation of Portugal's pattern of economic and political development which accounted for the crisis of Liberalism from its beginnings, and on the basis of this was able to provide positive ideas as to the ways of solving it. Admittedly, the crisis had reached its peak in the aftermath of the First World War. The essay on 'the two national policies' — trade *v* production — culminates in the diagnosis of 'Portugal's sickness'. Thus, not only did Sérgio and most of the members of *Seara Nova* adhere to the dominant view that the country should make a dramatic shift away from its mercantile past and from nineteenth-century Liberalism, but it can also be said that Sérgio's *política de fixação* represents the most articulate intellectual foundation of the ideology of autarchy that was to prevail, under Authoritarianism, for so many decades. In conclusion, it seems fair to argue that the views reached by the group in the early twenties concerning Portugal's *decadência* and the means of overcoming it were deeply rooted in sentiments which were also shared by the *Integralistas* and most of the far Right.

THE LAST COMBAT

Let me now take up once more the chronological thread of my account. In January 1924 the group of *Homens Livres* split because the *Integralistas* would not accept *Seara Nova's* involvement in government office. A month later, however, the two *Seara Nova* ministers resigned and, notwithstanding Ezequiel's participation in Domingues dos Santos's cabinet later that year, the political impact which the group's direct involvement had had seemed to fade away quickly. It was as though Sérgio's strong influence had not borne fruit in practical terms, allowing for Proença now to come to the fore and lead the group in its final combat against Authoritarianism. As early as March 1924, Proença vehemently cut himself off from the proponents of unqualified dictatorship. But the ambiguities remained till the end. While coming to the rescue of Parliament, Proença was not yet ready to dismiss entirely the possibility of a 'good dictatorship':

Se eu soubesse que o que viria a surgir num dia de nevoeiro, era o bom ditador, a boa ditadura, também eu lhes garanto, palavra, que faria coro com os partidários dela...

³³ Sérgio, 'Problemas Políticos Nacionais — A Política de Oliveira Martins', *Seara Nova*, no. 23 (May 1923), 177-82.

[mas] o mais certo, por mal dos nossos pecados, é que a ditadura que virá não será aquela que deveria vir.³⁴

In adjusting to the new situation, the group bitterly criticized its former ally Filomeno da Câmara for trying to wage a 'nationalist' coup with the help of *Cruzada Nun'Álvares* and claimed that *Seara Nova's* ultimate aim remained that of 'parliamentary democracy'.³⁵ But the group also went on insisting on the need to counter-balance Parliament with Corporatist representation, while Sérgio appealed to 'true Syndicalists' to join forces with the so-called *Forças Vivas* against 'political parasites'.³⁶ However, repression in Spain and Italy, both discussed in *Seara Nova*, seems to have increased the group's awareness of the actual dangers of Authoritarian rule. This may also have helped to push the group once more towards the left of Portugal's political spectrum in the last days of Liberalism. After the fall of the Domingues dos Santos cabinet, Proença launched another strong attack on the far Right, and particularly the *União dos Interesses Económicos*.³⁷

In the face of increasing threats to the Liberal regime, Proença spoke for the first time in *Seara Nova* of the 'pequenas conquistas' and 'pequenos direitos' allowed by Parliamentary rule.³⁸ Finally, when the coup of 18 April 1925 took place, the review, now firmly under the leadership of Proença, moved closer to what was left of the Republican Liberal regime and, indeed, to the working-class movement itself, although never uncritically:

Apenas os dirigentes operários (de ordinário tão estreitos e facciosos) formaram nesta emergência uma atitude que os honra. . . . Em face das ameaças da Direita sem programa . . . o operariado compreendeu que é do seu próprio interesse não exigir medidas catastróficas e é o primeiro a propor um programa mínimo de reformas perfeitamente exequíveis.³⁹

For a short while, the *Seara Nova* group tried to explore these developments, but the left-wing electoral alliance came to nothing when new elections took place in November 1925. In retrospect, one may safely argue that by that time the fate of Liberalism was already sealed and the machinery of the coup d'état well prepared for success. Proença was proved to be right when he forecast, in the wake of another attempt by Emílio Costa to argue in favour of some revolutionary dictatorship,⁴⁰ that the only revolution and the only

³⁴ Proença, 'A Ditadura', *Seara Nova*, no. 32 (1 March 1924), 153-55.

³⁵ 'A "Seara Nova" e a "Acção Nacional"', *Seara Nova*, no. 32 (1 March 1924), 163-66; and no. 33, 182-84.

³⁶ Sérgio, 'O Sindicalismo e o Movimento das "Forças Vivas"', *Seara Nova*, no. 38 (September-October 1924), 38.

³⁷ Proença, 'Combates . . .', *Seara Nova*, no. 43 (15 March 1925), 146-50 (p. 149):

'Ao primeiro semblante de um protesto formulado dentro da ordem, já vos parece ver a hidra da Revolução Social erguer as cem cabeças e pedis alucinados um Musolini que as decepe.'

³⁸ 'Combates . . .', p. 148.

³⁹ Proença, 'O Último Movimento Revolucionário', *Seara Nova*, nos. 45-46 (May 1925), 163-66.

⁴⁰ Emílio Costa, 'Que Devemos Fazer?', *Seara Nova*, no. 52 (1 September 1925), 71-72, and following articles in issues 53-58.

dictatorship to be expected in Portugal would lead to an oppressive rule by the most conservative sections of Portuguese society.⁴¹ However, the inherent ambiguities of *Seara Nova's* political stance persisted and even Proença could not depart completely from the group's recurrent elitism in his final piece opposing Fascism before the military takeover.

In an article of March 1926 on 'Fascism and its Repercussions in Portugal', Proença did not hesitate to condemn the Italian regime, but he went on to argue that 'a liberdade é sobretudo necessária para as elites'. Moreover, although he shared the basic analysis of Fascism developed by the Liberals who blamed Bolshevism for having 'provoked' such a 'moral disease' and such a 'morbid deviation' from 'normal evolution of society', Proença made a point of restating that: 'também nós queremos a Autoridade, mas para que a Liberdade e a Democracia seja(m) um facto. . . . Mais: podemos admitir, em certos casos, a necessidade, muito transitória, da Ditadura.'⁴² In March 1926, with Mussolini, Primo de Rivera and Horthy firmly in power; with Pilsudski and Salazar on the point of seizing it; with the working-class movement crushed and Liberal regimes in disarray in most European countries, these final words show how reluctantly the *Seara Nova* group brought its support to the values of Liberalism. Above all, they show that, irrespective of the unimpeachable ethical standards of *Seara Nova's* regular editors, there remained in 1926 no more intellectual and political obstacles to the Authoritarian takeover: the 'surrender of Liberalism' was complete.⁴³ Portugal was not unique in this respect, and more research is needed in order to place the rise of Authoritarianism in Portugal in a true comparative perspective and to establish how the *Seara Nova* group relates to the European stream of critical Liberalism and elitism throughout the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century.

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⁴¹ Proença, 'Revolução e Ditadura', *Seara Nova*, no. 60 (14 November 1925), 223-24: 'Fazendo a propaganda da Revolução e da Ditadura, estamos a fortificar a causa que deveríamos combater'.

⁴² Proença, 'O Fascismo e as suas Repercussões em Portugal', *Seara Nova*, no. 77 (6 March 1926).

⁴³ The expression is from Umberto Cerroni, *Teoria Política e Socialismo* (Portuguese translation, Lisbon, 1976) and has been applied to the Portuguese context by F. Farello Lopes in *Liberalismo, 'Rendição' e Seara Nova* (an Instituto Superior de Ciências do Trabalho e da Imprensa (ISCTE) working paper) and in 'A "Rendição" da Cultura Liberal', *Análise Social*, no. 64 (1980), 799-809.



