

L1. LECTURE

The Luso-Spanish Society of Neurosurgery (1949-1995): Life, Protagonists and Activities

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ABSTRACT: The Luso-Spanish Society of Neurosurgery (Sociedad Luso-Española de Neurocirugía, SLEN), founded in 1949 and dissolved in 1995, played a decisive role in the development and consolidation of neurosurgery in the Iberian Peninsula during the second half of the twentieth century. This work analyses the historical context that led to its creation, marked by the scientific influence of pioneers such as Harvey Cushing, Egas Moniz, and Santiago Ramón y Cajal, as well as the difficult post-war conditions in Spain and Portugal. The evolution of the Society is examined through three main phases: its formation and expansion (1947–1977), the gradual process of institutional separation (1978–1995), and the emergence of the independent national societies that followed its dissolution. Particular attention is given to the role of key protagonists, the scientific meetings, international collaborations, and the Society's contribution to the professional recognition of neurosurgery, including the creation of specialised services and training opportunities. The SLEN facilitated knowledge exchange between Portuguese and Spanish neurosurgeons and contributed to the integration of Iberian neurosurgery into European and global scientific networks, leaving a lasting legacy in both countries.

KEYWORDS: Neurosurgery history; Luso-Spanish Society of Neurosurgery; Iberian Peninsula; Medical societies; History of medicine

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Interestingly, the first surgical procedure performed by Man on Iberian soil was cranial trepanation (5,000 to 2,000 BC). Therefore, it can be inferred that neurosurgery, in the Iberian Peninsula, is the oldest known medical specialty.^[1]

The 18th and 19th centuries did not bring any significant new developments in neurosurgery, but in the last decades of the 19th century, there was a resurgence of biological and medical sciences, including general surgery. From this resurgence, modern neurosurgery was born.^[2] The history of

neurosurgery begins with Harvey Cushing (1869-1939), who established and developed the surgical technique and is considered the father of the specialty worldwide. As early as 1905, Cushing was referring to the “Special field of Neurological Surgery.”^[3] All the pioneers of the specialty in Europe were, directly or indirectly, his students. While Cushing was giving a lecture on intracapsular and subtotal resection in neuroma surgery, Walter Dandy (1886-1946) was performing the complete excision of an acoustic neuroma in the United States.^[4] In Canada, Wilder Graves Penfield (1891-1976) made the most notable contributions to neurosurgery,

most notably the design of the **Penfield homunculus**. In Europe, cranial and brain surgery began to be practiced at the beginning of the 20th century. Penfield visited Cajal in Spain in 1924 and worked for a time, to his complete satisfaction, in the laboratory of the Residencia de Estudiantes (Student Residence) on the Colina de los Chopos (Hill of the Poplars), with Pío del Río Hortega. He maintained an intense correspondence with Ramón y Cajal. Professor Fernández Santarén documents a total of 17 letters between the two scholars, from September 8, 1924, to January 20, 1933^[3].

In Spain, the origins of modern neurosurgery, as an autonomous specialty separate from general surgery, can be placed between 1890 and 1939, after the end of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). The leading figure in Spanish neuroscience was Santiago Ramón y Cajal, who is the cornerstone upon which all of current neurobiology rests. The period from 1868 to 1936 has been termed “The Silver Age of Spanish Culture” by Laín Entralgo.

In Portugal, in 1898, Sabino Coelho (1853-1938) made an incision in the temporal region of a patient with trigeminal neuralgia, thus performing the first neurosurgical intervention. During the first decades of the 20th century, the intervention of Egas Moniz was decisive; his technique, cerebral angiography, had a revolutionary impact on the diagnosis of surgical pathologies of the nervous system, providing the initial impetus for the development of the specialty in Portugal. The discovery of angiography led Joseph Babinski (1857-1932) to write, in the preface to the book *Diagnostic des tumeurs cérébrales et épreuve de l'encéphalographie artérielle* by Egas Moniz (1931) (Fig. 1): “Still convinced that he would overcome all obstacles and that his thought, if realized, would be beneficial to the sick, (Egas Moniz) resolves to put his project into action, and courageously launches himself into this enterprise, just as his compatriots Bartolomeu Dias and Vasco da Gama once launched themselves across the ocean in search of the route to India.”^[5]

History is not simply a list of people who have lived, with varying degrees of success, throughout time. To understand it better, it is necessary to know the environment in which they lived, their hardships, and their efforts to overcome difficulties—in other words, their personal history.^[6]

In 1947, the situation for neurosurgery was unfavorable, both in Spain and Portugal. Spain had suffered through the uninterrupted Civil War of the

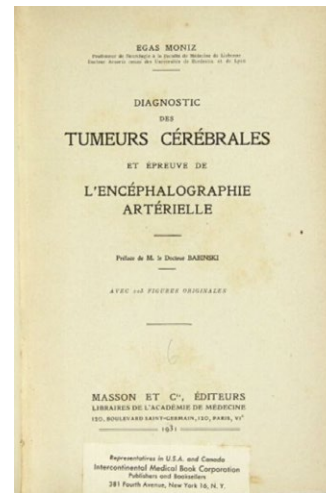


Fig 1. *Diagnostic des tumeurs cérébrales et épreuve de l'encéphalographie artérielle*, Egas Moniz, 1931.

previous decade, followed by the critical postwar period, and further strained by World War II (1939-1945), which also affected Portugal. These were very difficult times for neurosurgery, not only on the Iberian Peninsula but throughout Europe. “In post-war times, material misery and moral shipwreck created an atmosphere of precariousness; for this reason, even more merit is added to the pioneers who continued to progress in such difficult conditions.”^[7]

The main characteristic of this period was not only the absence of well-established specialist services, but also the scarcity of auxiliary resources in hospitals. Neurosurgical services were gradually created over the years. Five years before the formation of the SLEN (Luso-Spanish Society of Neurology), neuroradiology did not exist as a specialty in Spain, and one of the major difficulties for the practice of neurosurgery was the lack of anesthesiologists trained in this field. EEG machines were very scarce, and the use of radioactive isotopes for diagnostic purposes in brain lesions began in 1979.

ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT AND END OF THE SLEN

The Luso-Spanish Society of Neurosurgery (SLEN) was officially founded on February 25, 1949 and dissolved on June 3, 1995. For the purposes of historical clarity and chronological organization, the evolution of the Society can be divided into three periods.

The First Period: **Formation and Development of SLEN**, covers its origins in 1947 (two years before its



official establishment) up to the 1977 meeting in Alvor, where a new structure was proposed for the first time: the separation into two chapters, the Spanish Chapter and the Portuguese Chapter. This section examines the Society's first thirty years, with particular emphasis on the embryonic period, its challenges, and the Society's remarkable growth.

The Second Era: **Beginning of the Separation Process**. It begins with the 30th SLEN meeting in 1978 and ends with the 1995 assembly, where the definitive separation of the Chapters is finalized: *Spanish Chapter*, which becomes known as SENEC (Spanish Society of Neurosurgery) and *Portuguese Chapter*, which is renamed SPNC (Portuguese Society of Neurosurgery).

The Third Era began at the 1996 Meeting and continues to this day. We call it: **End of SLEN, origin of SENEC and SPNC**.

FIRST ERA: FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF SLEN

World War II interrupted the medical congresses and meetings that had been held until then. In the immediate postwar period, Spain and Portugal extended their non-aggression pact, a milestone that would mark the course of history.

In April 1947, when these assemblies resumed, a meeting of the *British Society of Neurological Surgeons* (the only and oldest in Europe) took place in Lisbon. British and Iberian intellectual elites attended this meeting, and in conversations among colleagues, the idea of forming a Lusophone Society to promote the development of neurosurgery on the Iberian Peninsula began to take shape. An exchange of ideas between **Pedro Almeida Lima**, **Antonio de Vasconcellos Marques**, **Adolfo Ley Gracia**¹, and **Sixto Obrador Alcalde** led them to consider the advisability of creating a society that would bring together neurosurgeons from the two peninsular nations. They all considered the creation of a second neurosurgical society in Europe to be highly beneficial and received encouragement and advice

¹ Adolfo Ley Gracia (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 1908 - Barcelona, 1975) studied Medicine in Salamanca, where he met Antonio Trias Pujol, who influenced him to specialize in Neurosurgery before finishing his degree. He graduated in 1931 and traveled abroad, where he had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Cushing. During his trip, he visited several neurosurgical departments. He returned to Barcelona in 1934 and began working at the Hospital Clínico and the Red Cross Hospital. During the Spanish Civil War, he gained extensive experience treating head and spinal cord injuries, which were treated at the Red Cross Hospital. After the war, he continued working at this hospital, sharing the direction of the Neurosurgery Department with Eduardo Tolosa.

from the leading figures in British neurosurgery who were in Lisbon at that time.

Almeida Lima addressed a friendly letter to Juan José Barcia Goyanes², who had not been present in Lisbon, inviting him to join the planned society. A few days later, the first circular appeared, addressed to the interested scientific community. It was signed by Almeida Lima, Vasconcellos Marques, Sixto Obrador, Ley Gracia, and **Barcia Goyanes**.

Eduardo Tolosa³, upset at having been excluded from the organizing committee, expressed his dissatisfaction in a letter to Barcia Goyanes: "(...) regretting being excluded from the organizing committee. The rather long letter set out a series of reasons why he believed he should be included. All the signatories of the first circular acknowledged this. It was, evidently, an unintentional oversight, perhaps due to the haste in implementing the initial idea."¹⁹

Thus, the embryo of the new Lusophone Society of Neurosurgery was formed. The organizing committee – comprised of Barcia, Almeida, Ley Gracia, Obrador, Tolosa, and Vasconcellos – convened the first preliminary meeting, held on April 1, 1948, in Barcelona, under the organization of Ley Gracia and Tolosa. The six conveners considered themselves the founding group of the SLEN.

This first congress was attended by several European neurosurgeons, and the provisional statutes were discussed and approved. The minutes signed at this meeting state: "On April 1, 1948, the first meeting of the Lusophone Society of Neurosurgery took place in Barcelona, at the Casa del Médico (Doctor's House), with the attendance of the following specialists who had responded to the call of the organizing committee:

² Juan José Barcia Goyanes (Santiago de Compostela, 1901 - Valencia, 2003). Professor of Anatomy at Valencia and Neurosurgeon who performed the first intracranial surgery in Spain, the evacuation of a chronic subdural hematoma using the Cushing technique in 1931. On Barcia Goyanes, see: Ponte Hernando, Fernando; Pascual Bueno, J.; González-Castroagudín, Sonia ([2014], "Juan José Barcia Goyanes", in *Álbum da Ciencia. Culturagalega.org. Consello da Cultura Galega*. [last read: 09/01/2019] [URL: <http://www.culturagalega.org/albumdaciencia/detalle.php?id=499>].

³ Eduardo Tolosa i Colomer (Barcelona, 1900-1981) studied Medicine at the University of Barcelona and graduated in 1921. He became interested in neurology, and later, in 1930, began his training in Neurosurgery at a hospital in Paris. He returned to Barcelona, where he began working with Dr. Corachan García, until his death. From 1944 to 1954, he worked as a neurosurgeon at the Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau, and until 1939 as a professor of neurology at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. In 1940, he was appointed director of the Neurosurgery Department at the Municipal Neurological Institute of Barcelona. In 1954, Tolosa published the first case of a patient with pain in the orbital region accompanied by ipsilateral ophthalmoplegia, which he named Tolosa-Hunt Syndrome. Tolosa was a pioneer in stereotactic surgery for the treatment of Parkinson's disease and became an expert in obtaining brain biopsies.

Professor P. Almeida Lima, Professor JJ Barcia Goyanes, Dr. M. Bordes Valls, Dr. E. Díaz Gómez, Dr. M. Gallego, Dr. J. Gama Imaginário, Dr. A. Ley Gracia, Dr. E. Ley Gracia, Dr. S. Obrador Alcalde, Dr. A. Pinto, Dr. J. Pons Tordera, Dr. A. Rodríguez Arias, Dr. P. Urquiza, and Dr. A. Vasconcellos Marques.¹¹⁰

The first Board of Directors was chaired by Almeida as the first president, Barcia as vice-president, Obrador⁴ as secretary⁵, Vasconcellos as deputy secretary, and Tolosa as member. The honorary presidency was granted to Egas Moniz.

Next, Professor Almeida Lima read a greeting message from Professor Egas Moniz, our Honorary President. Dr. Egas was quick to respond to this distinction: *“Neurology and neuro-surgery are only modalities of the same specialty. (...) the creation of the new Portuguese-Spanish Neuro-Surgical Society (...) we look forward to the development of the science we profess. I never know more Medical Societies of this nature especially in a phase of progress in which there are points to be right, techniques to be discussed, cases to be appreciated in their evolution and results.”*

Specifically, the logo or emblem of the Luso-Spanish Society consists of Egas’s angiography, Cajal’s microscope and Andrés Alcázar’s trepan (1490-1585). The *Spanish Journal of Oto-neuro-ophthalmology* was considered the official organ of the SLEN, which we will discuss in more detail later. The Congresses were held every year in May, and took place two years in Spain and one in Portugal.

On February 25, 1949, the Ministry of the Interior authorized the Statutes, and the SLEN (Luso-Spanish Society of Neurosurgery) was officially founded.

Professor Egas Moniz was awarded the Nobel Prize. On April 12, 1949, the founding members met in

Valencia, and foreign neurosurgeons also attended. Obrador explained to those present the steps taken to obtain authorization of the statutes from the Ministry of the Interior. A month later, in May, scientific sessions were held, superbly organized by Barcia. The vast majority of the 20 full members attended. The Society’s membership increased, and a group of young neurosurgeons joined. At this meeting, it was agreed to send greetings to Professor Egas Moniz, the recent Nobel laureate, and that the next meeting would be held in Lisbon.

A year later, in 1950, the third meeting was held in Lisbon (Fig 2.), at the Julio de Mattos and Capuchos Hospitals, where Professor Almeida and Dr. Vasconcellos gave surgical demonstrations. It was the first meeting held outside of Spain. Professor Egas Moniz attends the meeting and invites the Society to a party at his residence.

My memories of the meetings in Portugal, of which there were several, are inextricably linked to the difficulties I faced getting my car to the hotel upon arrival. These difficulties were mainly due to the considerable hills of Portuguese cities, so different from those I was used to in Valencia or A Coruña, and even Madrid and Barcelona. Climbing one of those steep slopes, following a tram that stopped every now and then, in a car as underpowered as my Peugeot 405 was in those years – a stark contrast to the American cars of my Portuguese colleagues – was a true ordeal. (...) And I mustn’t fail to mention the party at the Cruz e

⁴ Sixto Obrador Alcalde (Santander, 1911 – Madrid, 1978) graduated in Medicine from the University of Madrid in 1933. In 1934, he received a grant from the Junta de Ampliación de Estudios (Board for the Extension of Studies) to work at the Physiology Laboratory of the University of Oxford and at the *National Hospital for Nervous Diseases* in London. In 1936, he joined the Physiology Laboratory at Yale University. He completed his training at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore with Walter Dandy. He spent five years in Mexico at the Hospital Español (Spanish Hospital), the Instituto de Enfermedades Mentales (Institute of Mental Diseases), and the Instituto de Neuropsiquiatría de Lafora (Lafora Institute of Neuropsychiatry). In 1946, he returned to Spain and earned his doctorate with a thesis entitled *“Physiopathology of Epileptic Convulsions.”* His Anglo-Saxon approach to neurosurgery had a significant impact when he introduced it to Spain, establishing a team-based organizational system. He argued that neurologists and neurosurgeons should work together, although this was not well received by many neurologists. In 1947, he was elected secretary of the SLEN, a position he held for many years. In total, he authored 387 papers, both individually and as part of a team, which have been published in various national and international scientific and medical journals.

⁵ The document that can be read above was written by him. (Author’s Note)



Fig 2. Meeting of the Luso-Spanish Society of Neurosurgery. Lisbon, 1950.

Silva family's country estate, a truly lavish affair, where Margarida, the matriarch, an obese but kindhearted woman, showered the congress attendees' wives with attention and gifts.^[1]

Until then, the Society had few members and sought to hold joint meetings with other societies, such as the Society of Neuropsychiatry, to publicize their pioneering work. A commitment was made to continue these meetings with the Society of Neuropsychiatry every two years. From April 26 to 29, 1951, the first Joint Meeting with the *British Society of Neurological Surgeons, which had been instrumental in the formation of the SLEN, was held in Madrid (Fig. 3)*. It was in this way that the SLEN began to gain recognition throughout Europe and its activities became appreciated.

During these clinical sessions, visits were made to the neurosurgical departments of the Provincial Hospital, the Red Cross Hospital, and the Olivos Institute of Neurosurgery. A visit was also made to the Cajal Institute.

Surgical sessions were also held at these first four meetings (Barcelona, Valencia, Lisbon, Madrid). The scarcity of neurosurgical services on the Iberian Peninsula sparked the interest of foreign neurosurgeons, who were eager to visit the modest facilities and observe their operation. The surgical sessions proved invaluable, especially for the visiting young surgeons, who were able to witness the procedures firsthand.

From 1952 to 1957 the activity of the SLEN suffered a certain collapse, as the meetings that were initially intended to be joint with the Neuropsychiatry



Fig 3. Joint Meeting of the Luso-Spanish and British Societies of Neurosurgery. Madrid, 1951

and Neurology Societies began to be counterproductive, since they left little time for the discussion of neurosurgical work.

In 1956, the first neurosurgery positions within the Spanish Social Security system were created in Barcelona, Valencia, and Seville. This naturally led to a need for a degree of autonomy between Spaniards and Portuguese, and these were important years for certain administrative matters, such as the separation of the Portuguese and Spanish treasuries.

In the Society's first ten years, membership was limited to no more than 20 full members and 20 associate members. In 1957, at the Salamanca meeting, it was decided to modify the membership regulations. The number of members would be unlimited, but a Board of Directors would have to be created, composed of members who had served on previous Boards of Directors, that is, "the distinguished members." Its main responsibilities were reviewing the credentials of new applicants and selecting the papers that would represent the Society at International Meetings. The Law of Medical Specialties began to take shape, and all members who did not practice neurosurgery began to disperse, unfortunately not without some conflict. It was decided to expel two members who did not attend meetings. All these matters were discussed in the administrative meetings, which were always held in the late afternoon and lasted an hour. These meetings addressed numerous issues related to the statutes, which were amended many times: the Medical Specialties Act, the creation of postgraduate schools, the requirements for the admission of new members, the creation of new neurosurgery positions, sending petitions to social security, and so on. According to Dr. Obrador, "*...and some other more thorny personal or collective problems, which this is not the appropriate time to recall.*" The Society also refined itself and stabilized during its growth and expansion phase, parallel to the development of neurosurgery worldwide.

In 1959, at the Lisbon meeting (Fig. 4), the project to found a European Federation of Neurosurgical Societies was born. "*The problem of organizing European Congresses of Neurosurgery is discussed, and it is decided to send a letter to Prof. Krayenbi, organizer of the first one in Zurich, as well as to the different European Societies.*"

In 1960, in Seville, once again, the regulations were modified, becoming increasingly strict and demanding, and the requirement was approved that applicants for

active membership must possess a minimum of five years' training in a well-known neurosurgical clinic, and that they must have presented two or three papers at scientific sessions in order to be admitted to the SLEN. At the 1961 Meeting, it was proposed to publish an annual volume entitled *Luso-Spanish Neurosurgery*, as a supplement to the *Spanish Journal of Oto-Neuro-Ophthalmology*.

From 1962 to 1967, there are few newsworthy matters in the minutes of the meetings held during these dates; these were years of development, rather political and social, rules were approved regarding the development of the clinical sessions, and the order of the programs and the exposure times were adjusted.

Following the proposal to create a European Federation of Neurosurgery, the First European Congress of Neurosurgery was held in Zurich, organized by the French and German Societies. In 1963, the Second European Congress took place in Rome, organized by the British and Italian Societies. At the latter, it was decided that the Third Congress would be organized by the SLEN (Spanish Society of Neurosurgery), jointly with the Belgian and Dutch Societies, and would be held in Madrid.

Across all borders, the European spirit began to grow among neurosurgeons, and these international congresses would become the embryo of the *European Association of Neurosurgical Societies (EANS)*.

In 1967, twenty years after the founding of the SLEN, the Third European Congress of Neurosurgery was held in Madrid. Attendance was massive, and the number of international SLEN members grew

significantly. It was presided over by Dr. Obrador, at one of the most important moments of his professional life. A year later at the Coimbra meeting, Dr. Obrador donated 300,000 pesetas left over from the European Congress to SLEN.

After a two-year hiatus, in 1971, at the Joint Meeting with the *British Society of Neurological Surgeons*, which welcomed the members of SLEN In Newcastle, Dr. Obrador informs all members that a World Federation Meeting will be held in Prague, where the *European Association of Neurosurgery (EANS)* was to be definitively established, whose statutes had already begun to be drawn up years before, as mentioned earlier. In Prague, he Dr. Obrador was elected vice president, becoming part of the EANS executive committee. It was also established that the *Acta Neurochirurgica* would be the official organ of the EANS.

In 1972, a Joint Meeting was held in Bordeaux with the French-Speaking Neurosurgical Society (Fig. 5), and in 1973, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the SLEN was celebrated in Benalmádena. According to Dr. Obrador "(...) the path traveled by our Society in its first twenty-five years has been firm and brilliant. In previous years, and immediately after the founding of our Society, a small group of pioneering neurosurgeons began developing the thankless specialty of Neurosurgery on our peninsula, in a difficult, harsh, and often hostile environment. These were heroic times, marked by scarce resources and enormous difficulties."

The 1974 meeting was held in Utrecht, but the Portuguese colleagues were unable to attend. Due to the political events and changes that occurred

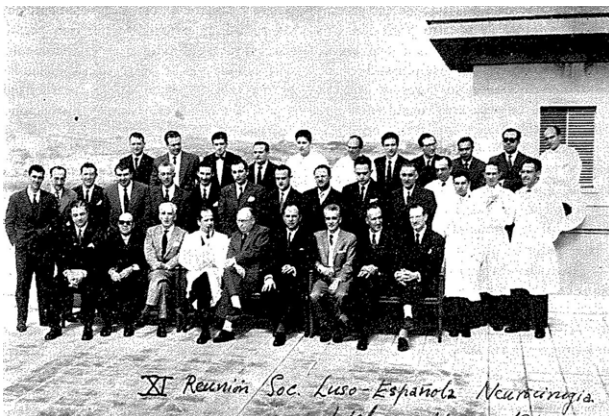


Fig 4. XI Meeting of the Luso-Spanish Society of Neurosurgery. Lisbon, 1959 .

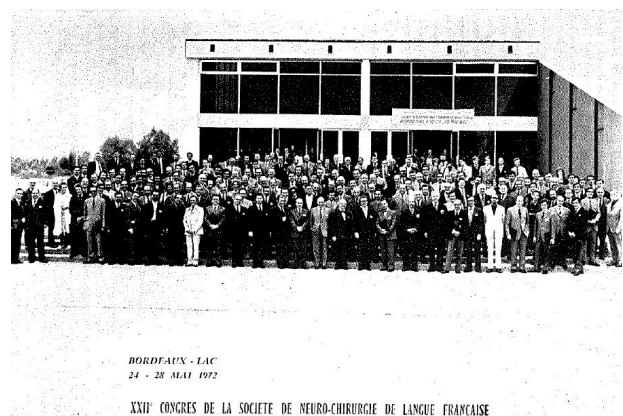


Fig 5. XXIV Meeting of the Luso-Spanish Society of Neurosurgery. Bordeaux, 1972.

in the neighboring country during those days, Dr. Vasconcellos⁶ sent a telegram. In Portugal, the Carnation Revolution, or *Revolução dos Cravos*, also called the April 25 Revolution, was taking place.

Two more years of Joint Meetings, and it is 1977 at the Alvor Meeting, in the Algarve, in which Dr. Obrador *“announced that next year would mark the 30th Anniversary...noting that it was the second neurosurgical society founded in Europe, the first being the British Society. He proposed a new structure for the statutes, which, in general terms, would consist of a Portuguese Section or Chapter and a Spanish Chapter, with their respective Vice-Presidents, Secretary, and Treasurer, with both Chapters under the direction of a common executive body comprised of: the President of the Society, the General Secretary, and the Secretary for International Neurosurgical Relations...”*

The administrative meeting was very long and had to continue the next day. Isaac Papo, an Italian doctor, writes in his work *My Encounters with Spanish Surgery*: *“The transition had begun; different means had to be used. (...) The Alvor meeting in 1977, the last one I (Obrador) took part in, after a stormy administrative meeting from which I left early because I didn’t like what was happening, especially the way it was being done, Obrador confessed to me, “They don’t want me anymore, they’ve sent me to the Senate!”*

The modifications were approved. It was the last meeting attended by Dr. Obrador, who would pass away in 1977. The last minutes he signed were those of the Alvor Meeting.

Thus ends the first era of SLEN. This meeting marks the beginning of a new stage in its history, which would lead to its separation into two independent chapters. The organizing commission was made up

of Juan José Barcia Goyanes, Almeida Lima⁷, Adolfo Ley Gracia, Sixto Obrador mayor, Eduardo Tolosa and Antonio Vasconcellos Marques (Figs 7-12).

SECOND PERIOD: BEGINNING AND COMPLETION OF THE SEPARATION PROCESS

The second phase of the Luso-Spanish Neurosurgical Society spans from the 1978 meeting in La Manga del Mar Menor, Murcia, to the 1995 meeting in the Algarve, where the separation between the two Iberian chapters was definitively established. This process lasted more than seventeen years. While the administrative changes were being implemented, there were some joint meetings, such as those in 1987 and 1988, which we will discuss in more detail.

We began the second phase of SLEN’s history with the Society’s 30th Meeting in Murcia. At this meeting, the recently deceased Dr. Sixto Obrador Alcalde was unanimously named Honorary President of the Luso-Spanish Society of Neurosurgery. The creation of an annual award in his name was proposed. Dr. Alberto Lasiera was elected to succeed Dr. Obrador, who had been SLEN’s Secretary General since its inception. Later, in 1987, the EANS Congress was held in Barcelona. *“...the members of the Portuguese Chapter of the SLEN express their desire to become a Portuguese Society of Neurosurgery.”*

This topic arose at almost every subsequent administrative meeting until 1995. In 1988, a joint assembly was held with the German Society in Zaragoza. That year, separate administrative sessions began to be held with their respective chapters, and eventually all SLEN members came together. In 1992, at the León meeting, the minutes of the Spanish chapter were included for the first time in a book separate from the SLEN’s official records.

⁶ António Jacinto Nunes de Vasconcellos Marques (Lisbon, 1908-1996) graduated in medicine in Lisbon in 1933. After three years as *a resident physician in Internal Medicine*, he enrolled in a residency program in General Surgery, which he completed in 1940. From then on, he dedicated himself entirely to neurosurgery and was sought after by Professor Diogo Furtado, founder of the Neurology Department at the Hospital dos Capuchos. In 1943, he spent almost a year at Johns Hopkins Hospital with Professor Walter Dandy. In 1954, he competed for the position of neurosurgeon at the Lisbon Civil Hospitals, in the first competition for this specialty on the Iberian Peninsula. Vasconcellos Marques’s most famous surgery was the operation performed on Professor Oliveira Salazar, President of the Council of Ministers, who suffered a traumatic brain injury in a fall from a terrace in 1968.

⁷ Pedro Manuel de Almeida Lima (Lisbon, 1903-1985), a collaborator of Egas Moniz, was the founder of neurosurgery in Portugal. He began as an assistant to Professor Egas Moniz, performing the first angiographies and leucotomies when Professor Egas Moniz was unable to operate due to debilitating osteoarthritis. In 1935, Almeida performed his first leucotomy for the treatment of an organic psychiatric syndrome. In 1953, he was elected president of the Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery at the University of Lisbon. Juan José Barcia Goyanes said of him: *“His name, apart from other merits, is linked to two of the most important advances in neurosurgery: cerebral arteriography and leucotomy. And I think it was an injustice that he was not associated with Egas Moniz in the awarding of the Nobel Prize, with which the latter was deservedly honored.”* *If the idea for both procedures came from the great Portuguese neurologist, their execution was the work of his compatriot. In carrying it out, he did not only employ his surgical skill. He had to accept the considerable responsibility of performing them for the first time on human beings, and had he failed, it is certain that he would have borne the brunt of the harshest criticism.”* See *The Saga of the Barcias*, pp. 246-247.



Fig 7. Neurosurgeon Eduardo Tolosa checks his Seat 1500, in 1970.

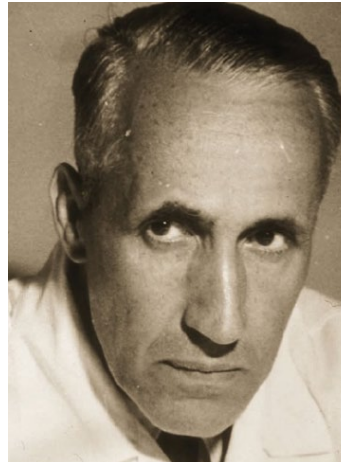


Fig 8. Doctor Sixto Obrador.



Fig 9. Doctor Juan José Barcia Goyanes (n.d.).



Fig 10. Drs. Adolfo Ley Gracia and Adolfo Ley Valle, father and son, at the professional congress in Coimbra, Portugal, 1965.



Fig 11. Doctor Pedro Almeida Lima (n.d.).



Fig 12. Doctor Vasconcellos Marques (n.d.).

in 1977 at the suggestion of Dr. Obrador, is concluded. The last page of the SLEN *Book of Minutes* is signed on June 3, 1995 by "M. Poza, *President of the Spanish Society of Neurosurgery*".

THIRD STAGE: END OF SLEN, ORIGIN OF SENEC AND SPNC:

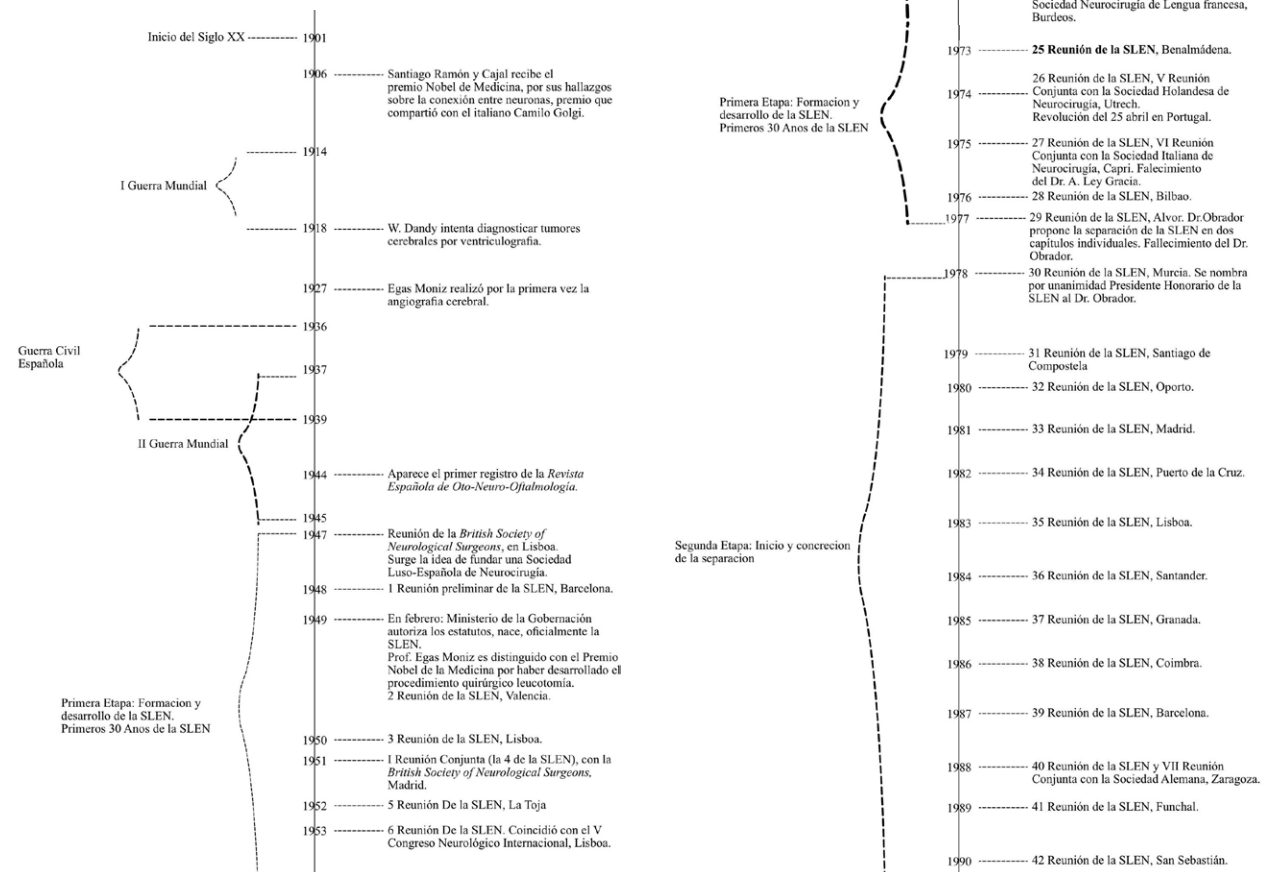
The SLEN had ended. The following year, in 1996, the First Meeting of the Spanish Society of Neurosurgery was held in Salamanca. However, relations with Portuguese neurosurgeons were a priority, and it was decided to invite the members of the Portuguese Society of Neurosurgery, who participated. Interestingly, the meeting program stated: "*Joint Meeting of the Spanish Society of Neurosurgery with the Portuguese Society of Neurosurgery.*"

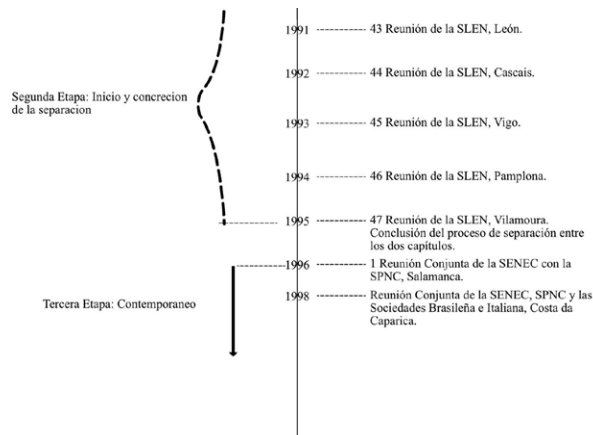
In 1995, in Vilamoura, the new statutes were definitively approved, whereby *the Spanish Chapter* would be called *the Spanish Society of Neurosurgery (SENEC)*, and the *Portuguese Chapter*, *Portuguese Society of Neurosurgery (SPNC)*. The process of separation between the two nations, which had begun

The Spanish Journal of Oto-Neuro-Ophthalmology and Neurosurgery

From the outset, the Society received support from Barcia Goyanes, who offered his *Spanish Journal of Oto-neuro-ophthalmology* to serve as the official, albeit provisional, publication of the SLEN. The title was later amended to include “and Neurosurgery.” It thus became known as “*The Spanish Journal of Oto-neuro-ophthalmology and Neurosurgery*,” where important articles and issues would be published. Espín Herrero, Barcia Goyanes’ successor upon his retirement from the Neurology and Neurosurgery Department of the Provincial Hospital of Valencia, was a key contributor to the Spanish Journal in its early years. Later, beginning in 1961, a regular annual publication (*Luso-Spanish Neurosurgery*) was established. Finally, in 1988 in Zaragoza, the proposal put forward by Drs. Izquierdo Rojo and Reyes Oliveros to publish an independent journal for the SLEN was approved.

TIMELINE





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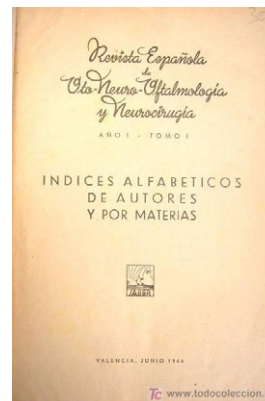
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CONCLUSIONS

The creation of the SLEN was crucial for the growth of neurosurgery not only in the Iberian Peninsula but also throughout Europe. Thanks to the requests made by the Society to Social Security institutions, positions began to be created for the new specialty of neurosurgery. The fraternity and friendship between two neighbouring countries gave rise to a medical society that significantly influenced the course of medicine. The organisers' strong commitment and personal involvement in all activities allowed the Society to grow and survive during very difficult early stages.

The SLEN facilitated the exchange of knowledge among neurosurgeons and progressively contributed to the training of younger specialists. It also played an important role in integrating Luso-Spanish neurosurgery into international and European neurosurgical organisations. Numerous neurosurgical services were created throughout the Iberian Peninsula, providing new professional opportunities and improving clinical practice. Finally, many of the questions currently being addressed had already been raised decades earlier, with technological limitations being the main obstacle to obtaining answers that are available today.



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