

The Day a Portuguese Man Stopped a ‘World War’: Soveral and the 1896 Anglo-German Conflict

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1. Introduction

In 1921, one year before the Marquis de Soveral passed away, the German ambassador Baron von Eckardstein, described in the *Sunday Times* (9 October 1921) how this Portuguese statesman prevented a war between the Germans and the British in Southern Africa in 1896. He revealed to the British readers a part of history that the Baron himself admitted to be completely unknown to the German and the British people – “the peace of the world lay in the hands of a single personality, who was none other than the Marquis de Soveral, then Foreign Minister in Portugal”. (*Ibidem*)

What would this war between Great Britain and Germany have been about? And how did a Portuguese man stop it?

The objective of this article is to answer the two previous questions. Our goal is not only to reconstruct the facts and political actions of the German Empire and Britain in the year 1896, but also to reflect on them. However, our main focus is to analyse the motivations and political and diplomatic actions of Luís de Soveral when faced with the potential of an armed conflict in South Africa, so close to the then Portuguese colony of Mozambique.

This article is based on papers in the Arquivo Histórico Diplomático (Historical and Diplomatic Archive) of the Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Portugal) and the *Diário do Governo* (official Portuguese Government's publication) corresponding to the years Luís Maria Pinto de Soveral held the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs (from 20th September 1895 to 7th February 1897).¹ The article is also supported by some secondary literature on the topic and newspaper reports of the time. Furthermore, glancing at the Portuguese and British historiography, we find this question insufficiently explored. Generally, it is not thought to deserve more than a simple footnote or is even completely forgotten. However, it has been possible, through a close reading of the sources and the bibliography, to uncover the complexities of this case.

2. Luís de Soveral: From the Embassy to the Ministry

The Portuguese Minister of Foreign Affairs was dead. Carlos Lobo d'Ávila died unexpectedly on the 9th of September 1895, (Graça 115) at only 35 years old. The duty to notify the foreign legations of the Kingdom of Portugal was laid on Hintze Ribeiro, President of the Council of Ministers: "It is with great sorrow that I write to you to inform that the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Counselor Carlos Lobo d'Ávila passed away tonight with *angina pectoris*." (Feijó 342) The following day, Hintze Ribeiro became acting Minister of Foreign Affairs,² adding this role to the Presidency and the Ministry of Finance. However, this responsibility would only last ten days. A discussion was held about the need to find a replacement for Carlos Lobo d'Ávila and "according to the newspapers, there were several candidates: António Feijó, Count of Macedo, Nogueira Soares and Bernardo Pindela". (Marques 125) The choice would eventually fall on the Portuguese Minister Plenipotentiary in London, Luís de

1. Cf. *Diário do Governo*, 21 September 1895 and 8 February 1897.

2. Cf. *Diário do Governo*, 11 September 1895.

Soveral, who was nominated by decree on the 20th of September. (*Diário do Governo*, 21 September 1895)

As he was leaving London, Soveral received a letter from the Prince of Wales, with whom he had forged a friendship. The future King Edward VII of Britain congratulated the new Minister, adding: "I deeply regret that it obliges you to leave Britain where you will indeed be missed by your many friends and admirers amongst whom I wish to be counted." (*Apud* Brook-Shepherd 63) In his letter, the Prince told Soveral that he wished his new role were only temporary and that he hoped to see him return soon to the Portuguese legation in London. (63)

In Britain, *The Times* newspaper published the news in a headline: "New Portuguese Foreign Minister", (21 September 1895) but without any significant remarks. In contrast, *Vanity Fair* magazine was more expressive when it came to saying goodbye. This publication's opinion was reported in a North Britain newspaper, *The Leeds Times*:

No doubt the appointment of M. de Soveral to the Secretaryship of the Foreign Office in Lisbon should be a good thing for our diplomatic future, but from a social point of view the ex-Portuguese Minister in London will be very greatly missed. He was a particularly grateful person in London Society, so that no great event was quite complete without him. He was also one of the Prince's [the future Edward VII] real friends. Altogether, it is perhaps hardly too much to say that M. de Soveral owes a good deal of his advancement to the known impression, both diplomatic and social, that he made in Britain. (5 October 1895)

Outside London, *The Devon and Exeter Gazette* newspaper mentioned that: "Senhor de Soveral had represented the interests of Portugal in London for many years and, during that time he gathered round him numerous friends, and when the exigencies of the political situation in Portugal called him to Lisbon he let it be clearly known that it would not be his fault if he was not soon back among us". (17 December 1895)

The importance of the social sphere in Soveral's life was evident and was stressed by the newspapers. However, when discussing

diplomacy *Vanity Fair*, apart from praising his social and diplomatic qualities, curiously suggests that Soveral's new role might be beneficial for Britain. As the magazine saw it, the Portuguese man, besides being friends with the then Prince of Wales, was considered a friend of the British Nation.

Soveral had been in London since 1885 and had led the Portuguese Legation since 1891. After 10 years of living in Britain, Luís Maria now left the capital where he had established strong ties and conquered his own space. According to Rui Ramos's biography *D. Carlos*, the Portuguese monarch "benefited from a special trump card: the friendship of Marquis de Soveral, whom he appointed to the position of Portugal's representative in London on the 12th of January 1891. This nomination that required 'a lot of work' from King Dom Carlos I of Portugal, had been a request from the Prince of Wales". (198) Additionally, in the book *Nova História de Portugal: Portugal e a Regeneração* it is mentioned that the friendship between Luís de Soveral and the Prince of Wales "explains Dom Carlos's suggestion to Hintze Ribeiro, at the end of 1895, reminding him of Soveral for the role of Minister of Foreign Affairs". (Marques 377)

Was it really important for the United Kingdom to have a 'friend' as the Foreign Minister in Portugal? As for Portugal, what benefits could come out of it?

When he arrived at the Ministry, Soveral simply continued the work of his predecessor. He prepared and passed – through the Chamber of Deputies – a Convention of Commerce and Navigation with Russia, already signed by Lobo d'Ávila, and a commercial Declaration with the Netherlands was also approved.³ From Northern Europe, Soveral signed the treaty of commerce and navigation signed between Portugal and Norway, in Lisbon, on the 31st of December 1895.⁴ And, for the first time, "the provision for attaché positions was done through public exams". (Serrão 278) Anyone interested in the position had to show documents with "which they proved to have

3. Cf. *Diário do Governo*, 29 January 1896.

4. Cf. *Diário do Governo*, 20 April 1896.

completed a higher education degree in social sciences in a national or international school, and a document in which they proved to have an income no lower than 1:000\$000 reais." (*Diário do Governo*, 9 May 1896) But to be approved they still had to pass the public exams:

that will consist in a written translation of a French diplomatic memorandum, designated by the jury during the exam, to Portuguese; in a written translation of a Portuguese diplomatic memorandum, designated by the jury during the exam, to French; and in a written translation of a British or German documents, designated by the jury during the exam, to Portuguese. (*Ibidem*)

In this way, Soveral initiated a new generation of diplomats who were approved by public examination, forced to demonstrate their aptitude and to have "a higher education degree in social sciences". It was an attempt to put aside arbitrary choices and to give room for ability in Portuguese diplomacy.

The last months of 1895 and the first months as Minister for Soveral were, without a doubt, dedicated to the accords, treaties and legislation cited above, which were approved in the beginning of the following year. Entertaining foreign diplomats, exchanging correspondence, managing the national diplomatic corps and organising King Dom Carlos's trip to France, Germany and Britain in October 1895, were some of Soveral's other concerns.

In the beginning of the following year, in an opening session for the *Cortes Gerais* (Portuguese parliament), Dom Carlos outlined what the diplomacy of the year 1896 would be: a visit to Italy was put on the table and the commercial treaties were emphasised as a need for the Portuguese economy. According to the Portuguese King, these were possible due to a scenario of cordiality and friendship in Portuguese international relations.⁵

5. Cf. *Diário do Governo*, 3 January 1896.

However, it would be precisely in the first days of that new year that the Minister of Foreign Affairs would be tested with what would have been, on an international level, the biggest crisis that he would face as minister– stopping a war between the British and the German.

3. The Genesis of the Conflict: the Jameson Raid

On the 29th of December 1895, a military column formed by the men of the British South Africa Company – better known as the Chartered Company – crossed the border of the South African Republic (Transvaal) and charged towards the city of Johannesburg. Their goal was to take the city and start a revolution in the Boer republic. In order to do so, the man in charge of the military expedition, Leander Jameson, counted on the support of the uitlanders – name given to the British emigrants living in the Transvaal.

Since 1886, the discovery of gold fields in Johannesburg had attracted many European workers to the region, mostly British. The British community that had settled in the Transvaal had no political expression within the Boer government, but in growing numbers they had begun demanding the right to vote, to parliamentary representation, in sum, equal rights. (Costa 28) If obtained, this could lead to the end of the Transvaal Republic.

With the intention of hastening the end of the Republic, Jameson, a man close to and led by Cecil Rhodes, charged with about 600 men of the Chartered Company towards Johannesburg. To elucidate Soveral on the events, the Portuguese consul in Pretoria, Demétrio Cinatti, wrote to the Foreign Minister in Lisbon:

It was known that, for some years, the foreigners, especially those of British descent, residing in Johannesburg, were instigating independence ideas for that mining city, to ultimately turn it into a separated Republic.

It was discussed without the Government [of Transvaal] taking any preventive measures, which allowed the population to surreptitiously arm themselves. There were whispers that the revolution would burst in the

beginning of January of the current year, but not a lot of thought was put into that.⁶

As Cinatti wrote, the authorities did not pay any attention to the issue until “the man of the Chartered Company had passed the border, and were heading towards Johannesburg to help the rebellious.”⁷ The Jameson Raid, as it would be known in History, ended on the outskirts of Johannesburg, intercepted by the Boer army “where after a light battle”, the British military forces “were forced to surrender with the loss of more than seventy men”.⁸ The Portuguese consul summarised the denouement of the situation: “with the heroes of the Chartered Company arrested, the rebellion that I believed would be easily stopped was even less of a threat, as the victory of the [Boer] military column demoralized the rebels in Johannesburg and made them lose all hope.”⁹

However, even though the outcome was relatively simple and favourable for the Transvaal Republic, the repercussions of the raid were strongly felt in southern Africa and in Europe.

As soon as he learnt about the event, Luís de Soveral telegraphed his consul in Pretoria: “Inform me of the political situation there and if foreign subjects are in danger.”¹⁰ Cinatti replied that in Pretoria, the capital of the Boer republic, there was no danger, only in Johannesburg, in case the uitlanders’ uprising happened, would there be a bigger threat.

From London, the diplomat Cirilo Machado wrote to Soveral, predicting what might have really happened, in a letter where the words ‘Confidential’ and ‘Reserved’ stood out:

Your Honour knows Mr. Cecil Rhodes’s processes better than I. My conviction is that it is him who instigates the current unrest within the

6. Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros/Arquivo Histórico Diplomático (hereafter MNE/AHD), Consulate-General of Portugal in Pretoria, Transvaal (hereafter CGPP), Box 709.

7. *Ibidem.*

8. *Ibidem.*

9. *Ibidem.*

10. *Ibidem.*

uitlanders who up until this day were happy to go to Transvaal to make money and return to Britain without settling there, and who now call out for political rights which they never had nor sought for before. If they are successful, the Transvaal will practically become a dependency of Cape Colony and Rhodes will have taken another big step towards the accomplishment of his plans, which are undoubtedly the unification and ultimately the autonomy of Southern Africa under the supremacy of Cape Colony.¹¹

Cirilo Machado, the replacement for Soveral at the head of the Portuguese Legation in London, concluded adding the statement: "The British government attends to its traditional policy of letting the settlers off the leash while they invade and usurp, but still reserving the right to protect them, as their subjects, when they are down."¹²

The Portuguese consul in Pretoria seemed to share the same opinion, describing the feeling in the South African Republic towards the uprising attempt to Soveral:

The general opinion here is that it [the uprising] has long been prepared and secretly protected by Britain, with the Chartered Company as their instrument of action.

They want to say that Rhodes, and therefore, Great Britain, was clueless about Dr. Jameson's plans, the commandant of the military column that invaded the Republic's territory, seamlessly put together with trains, ambulances and war material.¹³

In fact, Cecil Rhodes, who became "the most powerful man in Africa" (Rotberg 214) and was known as an "empire builder", (3) was quick to deny any relation to Jameson's initiative. However, he would eventually admit to his participation in the Raid and step down from his role as Prime Minister of Cape Colony. According to Demétrio Cinatti, "Rhodes, forced to resign from his position in Cape Colony,

11. MNE/AHD, Legation of Portugal in London, Britain (hereafter LPL), Box 95.

12. *Ibidem*.

13. MNE/AHD, CGPP, Box 709.

received a fatal blow to the power he held in South Africa, and saw his dream of a better territorial union from Cape Colony to Zambezi falling apart."¹⁴

The United Kingdom readily expressed its repudiation and total ignorance of the events. The British Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, was in fact oblivious to the plans to attack the Transvaal. The historian Andrew Roberts defends that even if he knew, he would have never allowed the Jameson Raid to happen. (Roberts e-book n.p.) Although he denied the British government's involvement from the start, Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the Colonies, is generally held as Rhodes's and Jameson's accomplice. Chamberlain may have encouraged the military action, but his involvement would be occulted by Rhodes (Clark e-book n.p.) who, by taking responsibility, would cover up for the Secretary of State. (Costa 29) But the politician did not wait for anyone's protection: "When the news of the *Raid* arrived London on Monday night of the 30th of December, Chamberlain acted quickly", ordering that the Colonial Office repudiated the events and intimating Rhodes that the Chartered Company "would be in danger if it was discovered – as he knew it would – that the Prime Minister of Cape Colony was involved." (Roberts e-book n.p.)

Meanwhile, Cirilo Machado and Demétrio Cinatti did not have any doubts pointing their fingers at Britain for Jameson's Raid. Cinatti stressed: "That Britain has its eyes on the Transvaal, I've had the honour of telling you [...] with the failure of this plan, Great Britain will act like a dedicated guardian to right its wrongs; but the idea will be rooted in the ambitious spirit of the British people and will manifest itself in successive crisis."¹⁵

Diplomats from other countries drew the same conclusions after the event. On the old continent there seemed to be no doubt about who was really responsible. (Clark e-book n.p.) It would be from Germany, however, that the strongest accusations would come – as well as the most dangerous consequences.

14. MNE/AHD, CGPP, Box 709.

15. *Ibidem*.

4. The Lion and the Eagle

Before delving into Berlin's reaction to the Jameson Raid, it is important to briefly understand the relations between England and Germany. About a decade before the Jameson Raid, on January 28, 1885, Luís de Soveral was sworn in as First Secretary of the Portuguese Legation in London. Soveral was arriving at the capital of a global empire, with territories on every continent and unchallenged domination of the seven seas. For England, the other side of the channel, France, was no longer the expansionist terrain of medieval times, and the rest of the world had taken its place, nor was it a danger to the hegemony of the old continent. After France was defeated by Germany in 1870, it was this new country, just over a decade old, that would come to stand shoulder to shoulder with the United Kingdom. In fact, Germany, unified in 1871 and led by Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, held a preponderant position in European politics in 1885, due largely to Bismarck's ability to build alliances. Three years earlier, in 1882, Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Italy had signed the treaty that formed the Triple Alliance, leaving the French Republic in an embarrassing isolation. In fact, this was precisely the German Chancellor's goal. After France defeat by the Prussian army in 1870, Bismarck always tried to ensure that France would never be strong enough to retaliate, whether through his policy of alliances or his benevolent support for French expansionism in Africa. (Milza 49) German policy had hitherto shown no interest in African territories and Bismarck preferred a French government occupied with North Africa rather than nostalgic about Alsace-Lorraine.

For its part, the United Kingdom seemed somewhat oblivious to all this, immersed in its isolationist policy. Not that it was asleep, but its interest in the European continent was limited to trying to preserve a balance between European forces, focusing almost exclusively on its overseas territories. The rivalry between the German eagle and the British lion that would mark the 20th century, and in which Soveral would also play a role, was not yet palpable. The clash of interests would only become apparent with the accession to the

throne of Wilhelm II of Germany and the removal of the historic Iron Chancellor. As a consequence of the deposition of Bismarck's *Realpolitik* and the adoption of Wilhelm II's *Weltpolitik*, in 1890, Germany's interests expanded beyond Europe. The aim was to grow from a European empire to a global one. However, there was one country that already held this status.

The Berlin Conference (1884-1885), which laid the foundations for the race for African territories by the European powers, can be seen as the embryo of Anglo-German rivalry, as since from that moment on Germany officially began its policy of occupying and conquering territories in Africa. However, the rivalry between these two powers does not fully reflect the complex diplomatic relations between them.

In both 1887 and 1889, Bismarck proposed to the British Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, an alliance between the two empires. Although both proposals were rejected by the executive in London, Bismarck is reported to have said: "I see in England an old and traditional ally. No differences exist between England and Germany. I am not using a diplomatic term if I speak of England as our ally. We have no alliance with England. However, I wish to remain in close contact with England." (Massie 121) Between March and April 1898, Joseph Chamberlain, British Secretary of State for the Colonies, also sought an alliance with Germany, but failed (297-300). This did not prevent the British and the Germans from reaching a consensus in August of the same year and secretly signing an agreement stipulating that if Portugal requested a financial loan from England and Germany, the loan would have to be granted by both nations at the same time, and Portuguese colonial customs would be a guarantee for payment. In order to ensure greater control and extend its areas of influence and domination, England would be entitled to the revenues from the areas south of the Zambezi River in Mozambique and north of Angola, while Germany would receive the revenues from northern Mozambique, southern Angola and Timor. (Costa, "A Política" 14)

However, the rivalry existed, and the actions of German Kaiser Wilhelm II, following the Jameson Raid, would last as one of the first sparks of antagonism between England and Germany. This episode,

which we will focus on in the next few pages, was followed by the issue of naval rivalry, which began shortly after the event studied here, with Germany's decision to expand its navy, challenging British naval supremacy and leading to increased tensions between the two nations.

In 1904, the United Kingdom signed the *Entente Cordiale* with France and, in 1907, established the Anglo-Russian *Entente*. These agreements represented a significant change in British foreign policy, as the UK abandoned its historic isolationism and created the Triple *Entente* against the Triple Alliance, which united Germany, Austro-Hungary and Italy. In 1905 and 1911, diplomatic conflicts in which Germany challenged French influence in Morocco led respectively to the First and Second Morocco Crisis, which almost escalated into an armed conflict, and which once again pitted the Reich against England, which defended the French position. The growing alliances and rivalries in Europe would eventually lead these nations into the 1914-1918 conflict.

As the Portuguese writer Eça de Queirós describes, in a Europe in which "France fears Germany; Turkey fears Russia; Austria is contained by both; Italy needs the benevolence of all", (147) the press tempers and opinions were flaring. The events we are about to analyse were the lighting of a fuse. Even if it seems unlikely that the two powers would fight each other in that year of 1896, public opinion was inflamed and hatred and mistrust would remain for many years to come. And for at least one, the British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury, the chance of conflict was real.

5. Germany's Involvement: The Possibility of a War and Soveral's Resolution

On the 31st of December 1895, Eduard von Derenthal, the German Empire's diplomatic representative in Lisbon, received orders from his Government to request Portugal's permission for a German contingent heading to the Transvaal to disembark in Lourenço Marques. (Guevara 145) On the first day of 1896, the Viscount of Pindela, Portuguese

minister plenipotentiary in Berlin, telegraphed Soveral to inform him of the German initiative. He sent him a letter the following day:

As I said yesterday in the telegraph, Baron of Marschall¹⁶ called me to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to disclose the reasons which led the Imperial Government to ask for, through their Minister in Lisbon, passage for a force of 50 men heading to Johannesburg from the warship anchored in Lourenço Marques. He asked me to telegraph you, to which I replied I would telegraph you what you have just heard and that due to the sensitivity of the matter I could not express my opinion, giving the subject the uttermost discretion.¹⁷

Germany justified their request as a necessity to protect the German subjects in the South African Republic. According to the German government, there were 15 thousand subjects and, naturally, financial interests potentially at risk. (Guevara 145) The intention was also to help the Transvaal Republic in case of another British attack. (Ramos 200) In the German press, the matter was exacerbated just as it was in other countries. "For days now newspapers from everywhere worry over Transvaal, condemning the British unrest in Johannesburg",¹⁸ revealed Pindela to Soveral.

In the Transvaal, the Government was preparing for an impending war: "This invasion was an alarm signal. Since then, the Republic has been overreacting, arming themselves with everything they have at their disposal, almost to the point of ridicule."¹⁹ While Marschall talked to Pindela in Berlin so German troops could reach the Boers' country, the Portuguese consul was also called to meet with the President of the Republic – Paul Kruger – in Pretoria:

On day 1 of the current year, President Kruger called me to request my knowledge of any weapons that might be located in Lourenço Marques, he

16. Adolf Marschall von Bieberstein, German Foreign Minister (1890-1897).

17. MNE/AHD, Legation of Portugal in Berlin, Germany (hereafter LPB), Box 11.

18. *Ibidem*.

19. MNE/AHD, CGPP, Box 709.

asked me if the Portuguese Government would oppose to the passage of the German and French troops through Lourenço Marques. My answer was that as far as this crisis was only internal and did not turn into an international conflict, and if the troops were only meant to protect their subjects, I believed my government would not object to it, but if his honor wished, I would telegraph you, which he declined, telling me that it was not necessary for now, but that he would want me to do so in case it became necessary.²⁰

France did not take any initiative to make it happen with Portugal. But Germany insisted, this time also with Cinatti: "The German consul asked me the same question, which I answered in a similar way."²¹

Soveral delayed his decision. Was there a risk in granting the Germans' passage through the Portuguese colony? The consul in Pretoria requested something similar himself when he wrote to Soveral that, "if Germany and France send their seafarers here, it would be appropriate for us to send some too, to defend the consulate that is, still, not in any danger."²² However, in a letter sent a few days later, the diplomat had changed his mind. He revealed to the Portuguese Foreign Minister that he told the German consul in Pretoria "that he thought any demonstration would be dangerous, as it would provoke the British to send more troops in proportional number to their residents, which could increase the growing unrest here against Britain."²³ From Berlin, Viscount of Pindela, although reluctant, communicated his judgement on the matter:

I regard Germany's request and attitude so grave that I do not dare to express my opinion on the subject. His Majesty's Government [of Portugal] knows how to protect the interests of the nation. Transvaal is a country that because of its treaty with Britain in 1884 does not possess a full independence [...] it is subject to Britain's protectorate. No one in Europe will fight

20. *Ibidem.*

21. *Ibidem.*

22. *Ibidem.*

23. *Ibidem.*

over Transvaal, but they can be humiliated in Africa and, if Germany can take control of Johannesburg, it will not hesitate to do it.²⁴

Soveral's position was complicated. His diplomats' opinion was certainly generalised – if a German army entered Transvaal, a British army would follow. Consequently, a war would follow. What if Portugal refused passage to Germany? Would they still disembark regardless of the Government's veto? The Viscount of Pindela warned about Germany's aspirations for Lourenço Marques (or Delagoa Bay, as it was known outside Portugal).²⁵ We can also speculate about the danger it would create for Portugal to have the German military crossing their territory that was so highly coveted by the German Empire. Did the Portuguese Government want to risk that? Britain's ambition was the same and widely known. Therefore, if an armed conflict started in the Transvaal, it could easily extend to the Mozambican lands, with severe losses for Portugal. "Nevertheless, on the 3rd of January, [German emperor] Wilhelm was determined when he met with his ministers where he demanded invasion forces and warships." (Carter e-book n.p.) The German government convinced the monarch not to use brute force, they reached an agreement; Wilhelm II of Germany would send a telegram to congratulate President Kruger:

I express my sincere congratulations that you and your people, without appealing to friendly powers for help, by dint of your own vigour, have been able to restore the peace against the armed hordes that invaded your country as disturbers of the peace, and to preserve the independence of the country against outside attacks. (Lepsius 31-32)

In Britain, where until then the British tried to deny any involvement and appease the relations with the Transvaal, a cry of discontentment arose towards the Kaiser's attitude. Queen Victoria, who during

24. MNE/AHD, LPB, Box 11.

25. Seen in the correspondence between the Legation of Berlin and the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

her speech in the State Opening of Parliament repudiated Jameson's actions saying that "My Ministers, at the earliest possible moment, intervened to prohibit, through the High Commissioner, this hostile action, and to warn all my subjects throughout Southern Africa against taking part in aid thereof".²⁶ Also assured "The origin and circumstances of these proceedings will form the subject of a searching inquiry."²⁷ However, after the telegram that her grandson and Emperor sent to Kruger, Victoria did not hold back on her scolding: "As your grandmother [...] I feel like I cannot help but express my profound regret for the telegram you sent to President Kruger", (Carter e-book n.p.) adding also that it constituted an insult to Great Britain.

As Pindela said, the German press was criticising Britain. After this telegram, it was the turn for the British press to attack Germany. The *Morning Post* asseverated that "the Nation will never forget this telegram and will always have it in mind in the future orientation of its politics". (Carter e-book n.p.)

Salisbury also knew about Germany's request to Portugal (Ramos 200) and the British government decided to act: "Britain is going to send 20.000 men to Southern Africa. And today's newspapers inform that nine British warships from Cape Colony and Zanzibar, received orders to go to Lourenço Marques, after the rumour that German naval forces were being sent there too."²⁸

Soveral was right in the middle of the growing animosity between Great Britain and Germany and had a difficult decision to make. However, with the accusations thrown around between Berlin and London, the perspective that a war could easily deflagrate was increasingly more obvious. Naturally, Portugal did not want that to happen, so Lisbon had to come up with a peaceful solution, and there were no doubts left about what to do about Germany's request.

On the 7th of January 1896, Luís de Soveral announced to Germany's minister plenipotentiary in Lisbon that the Portuguese

26. *Speech of the Crown to Both Houses of The Parliament*, 11 February 1896 (MNE/AHD, LPL, Box 95).

27. *Ibidem*.

28. MNE/AHD, CGPP, Box 709.

government would not authorise the disembark of German troops in Lourenço Marques. (Guevara 147) To appease the German ambassador, Soveral used his diplomatic skills. The Portuguese minister showed Derenthall a telegram from Lord Salisbury in which he declared Chartered Company's defeat and Jameson's arrest, he also disclosed the telegram from Demétrio Cinatti in which he assured there were no more dangers in the South African Republic. It was also argued that "Lisbon was fearful that the request would set a precedent, as a similar request had been made by the British in 1894, which had also been denied". (47)

The German government set the idea aside. But was it only the matter of the precedent that stopped Portugal from authorising the disembark? It seems obvious that it was not. As it was mentioned before, the consequences of an armed conflict could have led to the annexation of Lourenço Marques by one of the powers and Portugal was not prepared to fight a war against Germany or Britain to effectively protect or recover their possessions. On this matter, a British historian, Gordon Brook-Shepherd, said that:

In January of 1896, when relations between Britain and Germany were near breaking-point over the mounting crisis between Britain and the Boers in Southern Africa, Soveral nipped all ideas of German military intervention in the bud by announcing flatly that not one German soldier would be allowed to land at Portuguese Lorenzo Marques, the only sea-base from which a force from German East Africa could march inland. (63)

Brook-Shepherd pinpointed another reason for the Foreign Minister's decision: "Soveral's first thought in this was to help his British friends, but he may as well have prevented a European conflict in the process." (63) According to the historian, it was Soveral's friendship with Britain that made him avoid an armed conflict between them and Germany. As we saw before, Luís de Soveral was in fact a friend of the Prince of Wales and had conquered some admiration and affection in Great Britain, however it does not prove that the decision was taken with this in mind.

Four years later, Soveral told the German diplomat, Eckardstein, that he was in fact protecting both nations: "In regards to the refusal of passage to the German troops to the Transvaal in the year 1896, he [Soveral] thinks he acted both in the German interest as in the British interest, as even today [1900] he doesn't doubt for a second that allowing passage would have certainly led to an Anglo-German conflict." (Guevara 148)

In 1921, Eckardstein published a book with his memoirs from the time he lived in London (Eckardstein 85) and an excerpt about Soveral was published in the *Sunday Times* (9 October 1921). In his book, the German man asserted, as observed in the introduction, that "the peace of the world lay in the hands of a single personality, who was none other than the Marquis de Soveral, then Foreign Minister in Portugal", adding also that "Soveral, who saw clearly the danger to the peace of the world in the passage of German troops in such circumstances, returned a firm and flat refusal." (Eckardstein 84-85)

Eckardstein gives another interesting glimpse of the events, by publishing in the pages of his book, a conversation he had with Lord Salisbury about the incident, three years later. The British Prime-Minister told him: "what your Government was thinking about in wanting to send a few hundred men through Portuguese territory to the Transvaal is a complete puzzle to me. What could and would your Government have done there? At any rate, it was great luck that this coup did not come off, owing to Soveral's determined attitude." (85)

In addition to acknowledging Soveral's merit in this important question, Salisbury added to his opinion a curious point of view, revealing to the German diplomat the inevitability of war, in case Germany had entered the Transvaal, and the possibility of a European confrontation, similar to what would happen in 1914-1918: "War would have been inevitable from the moment that the first German soldier set foot on Transvaal soil. No Government in Britain could have withstood the pressure of public opinion; and, if it had come to a war between us, then a general European war must have developed." (Eckardstein 85) According to Salisbury's words, Soveral stopped what could have been a world war.

5. Conclusion

The war that did not happen, but could have happened, ended the peace that could have remained. The Jameson's Raid and the subsequent 'Kruger's Telegram case' delivered severe blows to the diplomatic relations between Great Britain and the German Empire, fueling public animosity on both sides. The Anglophobia that was germinating in Germany and the Germanophobia that was growing in Britain found its genesis in this episode and ended up having its repercussions in the First World War. (Rüger 587)

Remarkably, the resolution of this confrontation between titans was mediated and appeased by a Portuguese diplomat who held the position of Foreign Minister for only 18 months. While the exact outcome of the conflict is impossible to predict, it is highly likely that Soveral's actions played a pivotal role in preventing an armed conflict.

In this scenario, Salisbury's question seems very pertinent: What was the German government thinking about? Apart from the justifications given, the protection of their subjects and their economic interest, it is also known, as mentioned, their interest in the region and in the enlargement of the Empire. But, apart from that, the Germans had some loyalty to the Boers, a people with Germanic origins that had been attacked by a foreign power. (590) Another factor to take into consideration was Kaiser Wilhelm II's irreparably belligerent spirit, which was supported by the elite of the Empire. Their main goal was to stop Britain from dominating all of that region. However, at the time, Germany did not have enough naval forces to face the British navy (Vale 144) and on land they would come up against, as Demétrio Cinatti's letter described, a Cape Colony armed with men and ready for combat. An envoy from the British newspaper *The Daily News*, in Berlin, wrote some very interesting words about the German stance:

The fruitless attempt to land the famous fifty for the protection of the Consulate at Pretoria showed the German Government that their support of the Boers in case of need would have met with insurmountable difficulties. The speedy termination of the Jameson incident saved Germany from

getting into a very tight place. The Emperor congratulated President Kruger on having repulsed Jameson without appealing to friendly Powers. But what would Germany have done if the President had really asked for help? Platonic sympathy is all very well, but its effect is limited, and Germany has every reason to be glad that circumstances did not painfully impress this fact upon the Boers.

If even weak Portugal, as mistress of Delagoa Bay, was able to prevent Germany landing a force there, it is clear that the port in British hands would command the whole south-east coast of Africa.²⁹

Without a doubt, Germany's best ally was the quick resolution of the Raid and the imprisonment of Jameson, as well as, Portugal's prohibition of the disembarkation of the German contingent. As the reporter said, had President Kruger needed military aid, Germany would have been in a tight situation that could only result in great loss. This loss would extend to Britain too and perhaps Portugal. According to Salisbury, a war in Africa would have consequences in all of Europe. In Eckardstein's opinion, the German Empire put itself in a difficult situation, without even realising it. (86)

When it comes to Britain and their role in this conflict, it does not seem unreasonable to consider the opinion of the Portuguese diplomats. Even though the Prime Minister and the Crown were not aware of Cecil Rhodes and Leander Jameson's plans, had they been successful in instigating the revolution among the British emigrants in the Boer republic, Great Britain would have certainly taken the chance to annex part, if not the whole, of Transvaal. The argument of their subjects' protection and keeping the peace in the region would have probably been used to justify their actions to other powers. As Cirilo Machado wrote, "the British government attends to its traditional policy of letting the settlers off the leash while they invade and usurp, but still reserving the right to protect them, as their subjects, when they are down."³⁰

29. *The Daily News*, 26 February 1896.

30. MNE/AHD, LPL, Box 95.

We wondered before if there were any benefits for the United Kingdom in having a 'friend' as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Portugal. In this situation, as we have shown, the British historian Gordon Brook-Shepherd states that it was precisely that friendship that spared Britain from a war. But was Soveral's anglophilia enough to favour them over Germany? Or was Soveral's decision meant to help both nations, as Soveral himself told Eckardstein?

At least two members of the British court left behind in their diaries testimonies that Luís de Soveral was not only an anglophile, but also a staunch Germanophobe. Princess Daisy Pless remembered him as being particularly revolutionary against Germany. (McLean 136) And Lord Esher, one of Soveral's friends, wrote in his diary about a dinner: "It was very pleasant. No reticences of any sort. Soveral violently hostile to Germany, as usual". (179) Taking this in consideration, the theory of Soveral's friendship with Britain seems more relevant, as on the other side of the trenches was his hated Germany. Also, the Portuguese government claimed they did not grant Germany's request because they did not want to set precedents, this was at least one of the premises given to the Imperial representative. If Portugal had agreed to the Germans' solicitation, similar requests of passage through Lourenço Marques would have certainly followed from Britain. However, it does not seem like this was the biggest problem, because as we would observe, a few years later, Portugal let the British troops pass through during the Second Anglo-Boer War. However, we cannot dismiss the possibility that, at the time, this could have been a compelling argument.

Nonetheless, it seems like Soveral's decision may have indeed been aimed at assisting two nations, but these were, assuredly, Britain and Portugal. If Soveral spared Britain from the struggle of war, he also spared Portugal from possibly losing Lourenço Marques, and, perhaps, the entire colony of Mozambique. Throughout the article, we reflected about the possible consequences that a positive response to Germany's request would have had. We believe that as long as the conflict remained between the Transvaal and Britain and as long as Transvaal was standing, Portugal had relatively little

to fear. For Portugal, the South African Republic worked like a 'wall' that protected Mozambique from the British ambitions of controlling Lourenço Marques. Meaning that as long as the Transvaal was between Cape Colony and Mozambique, the British had to solve that 'problem' first. Which, as we've seen, they tried to do. Nothing stopped the British navy from conquering Lourenço Marques and then heading to the Transvaal, but their military base was on the other side of South Africa and the Boer republic was precisely in the middle between Cape Colony and Mozambique, which forced a division of men and doubled the effort. We do not mean to say, however, with this that Portugal was completely risk free, it never really was.

Later, during the Second Anglo-Boer War, Portugal's support for Britain carried additional implications that were absent in 1896. This included an agreement stipulating that if Portugal decided to sell Lourenço Marques, it would exclusively sell it to Britain and no other power. (Ramos 200)

However, with Germany on the South African board, the war would take on unfathomable dimensions. Even though keeping Mozambique was a possible scenario, in all the other scenarios Portugal would lose the colony to the winning power – whether it was Britain or Germany. There was also the possibility of dividing the colony between both nations in a peace treaty that ended the conflict. But thanks to the Portuguese diplomats, ambassadors and consuls, led by Soveral's sound judgement and practical spirit, Portuguese diplomacy managed to erase all these nefarious options for Portugal.

Ironically, even though he 'saved the world' from a potential war, something Soveral could not predict happened two years after this incident, when, in fact, Germany and Britain celebrated a treaty in which they established the division of the Portuguese colonies between them, (Guevara 191-201) but that is a different story, one that Luís de Soveral and Portugal also had to handle and overcome.

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