

Portugal in the Great War: the African Theatre of Operations (1914-1918)

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At the onset of the Great War, none of the colonial powers were prepared to do battle in Africa. None had stated their intentions to do so and there were no indications that one of them would take the step of attacking its neighbours. The War in Africa has always been considered a secondary theatre of operations by all conflicting nations but, as well shall see, not by the political discourse of the time. This discourse was important, especially in Portugal, but the transition from policy to strategic action was almost the opposite of what was said, as we shall demonstrate in the following chapters.

It is both difficult and deeply simple to understand the opposing interests of the different nations in Africa. It is difficult because they are all quite different from one another. It is also deeply simple because some interests have always been clear and self-evident. But we will return to our initial statement. When war broke out in Europe and in the rest of the World, none of the colonial powers were prepared to fight one another. The forces, the policy, the security forces, the traditions, the strategic practices were focused on domestic conflict, that is, on disturbances of the public order, local and regional upheaval and insurgency by groups or movements (Fendall, 2014: 15). Therefore, when the war began, the warning signs of this lack of preparation were immediately visible. Let us elaborate.

First, each colonial power had more than one policy. All actions and reactions were heavily dependent on the initiatives and reactions of the main political and military representatives of each colonial territory. Germany, with its four territories in Africa, reacted and acted in four different strategic modes, and only one of these territories, German East Africa, chose to maintain a permanent offensive. Belgium reacted according to the developments in Europe, and Portugal hesitated at first, was contradictory and confused during the war, and provoked a political situation of open belligerency without caring whether it had the means to carry it through. France was active in some regions and passive in others, and Great Britain was active, reactive and passive depending on its allies, regions, strategic moments and policy-makers (for a description of the

¹ I would like to thank Professor António Telo for his revision and for his crucial help in completing this article.

huge splits within both the British administration and the government of the Union of South Africa, see the chapter 'The War in London' in Samson, 2013: 187-210).

Second, alliance policies were much clearer in the European theatres of operations, whereas in Africa they were always tense, confusing, or even conflicting. The colonial powers' ambition of acquiring territories and influence in Africa jeopardised any open and declared coordination. The tension between Great-Britain and Belgium in 1914 and 1915 was palpable and would last almost until the end of the war. Great Britain also rejected France's offer of support in British East Africa and the Portuguese offer of help in Nyasaland. The South African governments constantly undermined the relations between Portugal and Great Britain in order to facilitate the expansion of their territories to the south of Beira, in Mozambique (Anderson, 2014).

The Union of South Africa 'will never rest so long as she (Portugal) has Delagoa Bay [Lourenço Marques]' (Eduard Grey, minister of Foreign Affairs, 29 December 1911 - Samson, 2013: 32).

Third, the political stability or instability in the colonial capitals, the coherence and sustainability of support versus incoherence and the severe lack of strategic coordination between the various nations served as justification for rather different regional attitudes as the war unfolded. Great Britain may have been ill-prepared to deal with von Lettow-Vorbeck's (the commander in charge of the war effort) strategic surprise in German East Africa, and the nation's immediate reaction may have had disastrous consequences, which most authors even describe as deeply humiliating, but later the country devised a strong political response which translated into profound changes to strategy, force sustainment, combat organisation, and in the deployment of hundreds of thousands of soldiers. Essentially, this evidenced London's political determination, which translated into the efforts mobilised to allocate resources for force sustainment.

As we shall see, Portugal did precisely the opposite. An early apparent political determination was quickly replaced by lack of definition, contradictory orders, omissions in political clarifications and a clear lack of a genetic and structural strategy for coherent action in the various regions in Africa². Whereas Great Britain, France and Belgium reacted decisively to change the composition and sustainment of their forces in Africa, changing procedures and appointing competent leaders, Portugal reversed its proposals, appointed inexperienced leaders and issued political orders that were wholly unsuitable to the resources allocated and to the proposals made by those on the ground, which were often equally ill-conceived and poorly drafted.

² In the words of General Pimenta de Castro: 'the orders and counter-orders of the Metropolitan politicians', Duarte, 2015: 273.

Finally, large groups of people were silenced during the war. The local populations were hit the hardest, as over two million people were mobilised and about 200,000 were killed (Strachan, 2004: 3), whose needs were seldom considered by those sending them to the front lines. They gained next to nothing, but the loss of lives and the suffering they went through left deep scars in the decades that followed.

We will now present a chronological, compared analysis of Portugal's role in the Great War in Africa by contextualising the Portuguese actions against those of the other colonial powers, both concurrently and in the decades that preceded it.

1. The events of the recent and distant past

There were many events worthy of consideration, but four prior events in particular greatly affected Portugal's policies in Africa.

The first was the consequences of the Berlin Conference of 1884-85, which, by fixing borders and granting sovereignty claims caused Portugal to change the way it had stabilised its presence in those vast regions until then. For Portugal, the decisions made in the Conference forced the country to effectively occupy the coastline and from there secure the great inland regions of the newly delimited African territories. In the traditional historical records, this was followed by the great campaigns for pacification and sovereignty of the 1890s and the two campaigns of the early 20th century. There were reports of great victories and a few failures, brimming with overstatement, from great acts of patriotism to the British insult (the ultimatum), from descriptions of brutal use of force to the humiliations that resulted from ill-organised campaigns. However, the general opinion expressed in these somewhat positive reports was that the campaigns were successful, and that the effects derived from the occupation of territories which had almost never seen a European, an occupation that was ill-prepared and poorly organised by the Lisbon administration, had in the incipient, although by then centuries-old relations between Portugal and the great regional nations.

Up until that point, Portugal had had a presence in several coastal towns but had erected very few structures inland. The country had made more or less formal arrangements with the local leaders of the inland territories, and relations were based on the significant autonomy of the various inland chieftains and their ability to rule over their own populations. The instructions to occupy these territories led to the establishment of inland administrative authorities, who, due to the need to mobilise the human resources for the purpose, made somewhat disastrous choices, particularly with regards to recruitment. Many administrators and private companies contracted to administer the great inland regions had no

respect for the local populations, lacked diplomatic tact and implemented bureaucratic procedures that were often violent and inadequate and, finally, came from international capitals and were barely supervised by a central authority.

The formal and informal arrangements between the King of Portugal and the major regional chieftains were replaced by administrators who courted the ambitions of these local chieftains to obtain a permanent source of income, or even just a cheap and available workforce. The background against which these events unfolded was the increasingly hostile international climate caused by the interest of foreign powers in the vast Portuguese territories, which translated into the partition plans of 1898 and 1912³. In conclusion, this forced shift inland relied on companies from international capitals that hired unscrupulous administrators and led to these regions being occupied, but not developed, resulting in an increasingly hostile climate that strongly influenced the environment which the soldiers sent to defend the 'forgotten' territories would meet in the great regions of sub-Saharan Africa early in the Great War, in 1914.

The territories of the Nyassa Company were a good example of this. The Nyassa region, granted as a concession in 1891, initially belonged to the Portuguese company Bernardo Daupias & Co., which, as we have stated, erected some (very few) isolated strongholds commanded by *sepoys* [native constables or soldiers] and defended by native law enforcement who ruled large areas with an iron fist, most of whom were recruited in the south. In 1897, the Company was acquired by the British Ibo Syndicate, which implemented the *m'soco*, or hut tax, which became a constant source of conflict, as those who failed to pay the tax could be punished with forced labour or with the incarceration of their wives. In 1907, the Company was acquired by British and South African capital and was renamed Nyassa Consolidated Co., that is, by then there was almost no Portuguese capital invested and virtually no Portuguese administrators. The immediate consequence of these changes was the increase in forced recruitment for the Transvaal and Rhodesia mines

³ In 1898, London negotiated a loan of £8,000,000 at 3% interest with Portugal, under the condition that, should Portugal fail to repay it, the arrangement between the German and the British (secret agreement) would, in the first phase, grant Great Britain the taxes collected in the north of Angola and south of Mozambique, and Germany would take control of the customs of the north of Mozambique, south of Angola and Timor. If the payment was not made in full, then these areas would be permanently under British and German control. The agreement was not completed largely because of the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer war and because Great Britain needed the transport routes that crossed the Portuguese (Mozambique railway). There were new attempts to form an agreement between the British and the Germans in 1912 and 1913, with a small change in terms - instead of Timor, Germany would claim the territory of S. Tomé and Príncipe, and all other territories would be partitioned, with the exception of the Nyassa Company and of Cabinda. This arrangement was also effectively 'frozen' by severe international disputes.

(93,000 men were sent to South Africa in 1910) (Costa, 1925: 69-70; Carvalho, 2015: 33-35 and 53).

Thus, when the war started in 1914, the Nyassa Company had not done any construction in the interior of these huge territories, which were under a rule of terror and were, for the most part, administered by German shareholders. According to Massano de Amorim, the first Portuguese expeditionary commander, the Sepoys of the Nyassa Company, 'steal, assault and rape women, and are guilty of all kinds of repeat offences'. General Gomes da Costa spoke clearly of the 'sorry state of the Nyassa forces' and reported that 'the Nyassa Company did not offer any support (...) had no power over the natives and therefore was not even capable of providing porters, and when they did send a few, they ran away as soon as they had the chance' (1925: 69 and 71). Pélissier states that the populations effectively 'welcomed the Germans' during the war in the territories administered by the Nyassa Company because of the 'forced contracts in the region', of the 'recruitment enforced by the British in 1914', and of the 'German propaganda disseminated among the Muslim Ajauas (...) by governor Schnee, the German governor of German East Africa, as part of a 'German plot to destroy the dwellings of white colonists [with their owners still inside] by Muslims willing to die', and if 'north of the Rovuma there were anti-German Macondes', there were also 'anti-Portuguese Ajauas' in the south (Pélissier, 2000, vol. 2, pp. 406 – 409). Pélissier's views, which many readers interpret as a consequence of the Portuguese actions, were in fact that this area was essentially administered by British and German capital and was a target of propaganda campaigns to instigate insurgency against the Portuguese authority. It is also noteworthy that, although true to the times, the Portuguese forces acted almost always less brutally than the German and Belgian forces in nearby territories. The simple explanation is that Portugal managed to remain in and hold on to the vast areas under its control because it had the consent of the local populations, an argument which is seldom accepted by other colonial powers who occupied their territories for much less time and only managed to do so by resorting to the constant use of force and with rather more vigorous sovereignty systems, the case of Belgium, mentioned above, or of Italy.

For Portugal, as we explained above, these specific regions were areas where 'there was no presence of the state [about 25% of Mozambique] (...) by order of a Board of Directors in London where the interests of the Randlords, followed by those of German bankers, reigned supreme' (Marques, 2012, p. 207). At the outset of the war, the British clearly stated that the Germans owned the Company, as we can read in a document from the London archives: 'Mr Pieter Vuyk, of Amsterdam, came forward as the owner of the shares on behalf of German companies'. In the same document, General Smuts (the South African general who commanded the Allied expedition in 1916), declared that Great Britain should acquire the German shares before the war ended so as to control

the wealthy region and the access to the crucial area of Port Amelia. Smuts added that the Company was deliberately 'corrupt and cruel' (NA T1 12131, 1917, pp. 7 and 8).

The Portuguese administration was abusive and brutal, just as the Belgian and German administrations, but, as in the case of the latter, it resulted from the country's initial entry into Africa (late 19th century) and cannot be called a paradigm shift. The Portuguese situation was different, as it consisted of an unusual evolution, a change in the relations established until then, which especially marked the inland regions farther away from the province capitals. It was not a coincidence that the events recorded in the Great War in Africa occurred in areas where authority (Portuguese or otherwise) was discredited both by the actions of the administrators (from several countries) and by the actions of neighbouring countries in an attempt to spread and incite hatred and insurgency, as was evidently the case both in the long permeable border of the south of Angola and in the vast areas of the Nyassa Company in the north of Mozambique. Unfortunately, this argument, which has seldom been heard, provides an explanation for the environment that awaited the combatants during the four years of war.

We also wish to note a second important prior event, the Anglo-Boer wars. Portugal directly and indirectly supported the British, and the Boer leaders had always been aware that support. During the war, it was clear that the Boer leaders harboured animosity towards the Portuguese, and the sentiment not only did not end with the war, it became more aggravated. Many of these leaders answered to the British at the time, which did not prevent them from being demonstrably hostile towards the Portuguese and from coveting the Portuguese territories, both the south of Angola and especially the south of Mozambique. On the other hand, another consequence of the agreements reached at the time was that Lisbon's policy clearly answered to (or coordinated with) London's, and this was confirmed by successive agreements in 1898, 1902, 1908 and 1912 (Telo, 2015a). The relationship with London would condition all Portuguese decisions before, during and after the war and, as such, ignoring this aspect, which became even clearer after 1910, resulted in incomplete interpretations that failed to fully grasp the political implications of these determinations, which were also made clear in the ever-present consequences of the campaigns in Africa.

A third important prior event, and, in our opinion, the most relevant for our analysis, was the destruction of the organisation and cohesion of the Portuguese Armed Forces, especially the Army, between 1910 and 1914. The 1914 Army was no longer the same Army that was victorious in the campaigns in Africa and that was symbolised by the figures of Mouzinho de Albuquerque, Alves Roçadas or Teixeira Pinto. As António Telo explains in his works (see works cited), the Army deployed to the 1914 campaigns lacked a capable

leadership, was politically weakened by the divide in the policy, which spread to the leadership of the Army and to the units and their ranks, and was completely outdated in terms of new doctrines, strategic and organisational innovations, and, what was even more serious, was subjected to constant revisions to the policy and obviously lacked a feasible system to sustain, relieve and replenish the forces deployed.

As for the colonial forces of the time, the situation was even direr, as the few forces stationed in Angola and Mozambique lacked almost everything from personnel to discipline, soldiers and equipment (Moura, 2015). In the battles fought during the Great War, instead of organising expeditions that had been trained and prepared under a common doctrine and system, the Portuguese administration combined on forces on the ground that had not been readied (neither in the homeland nor upon arrival in Africa) and that were unfamiliar with one another, formations that were nothing more than an inexplicable combination of units with different preparation, equipment and origins (at times, these impromptu forces mixed: metropolitan units, units from the occupied territories, native units, police units from the private companies, units from the *Guarda Republicana*, as well as adventurers and local sepoys), The forces arriving from Europe and those already in Africa in 1914 were scarce, deeply undisciplined, disorganised and essentially had no sustainment system, particularly with regards to healthcare and replenishment.

Finally, we must now address the regions where the war would be fought. In the years that preceded it, there were virtually no interventions in the vast and inhospitable regions of the south of Angola and the centre and north of Mozambique. The fighting would take place in a vast, dangerous region with an arid climate and harsh living conditions, practically without lines of communication, logistic support areas, port structures where the forces could disembark, or areas to establish and ready those forces. There were no interventions before the war and, as we shall see, almost no actions were taken during the four years of war, especially in Mozambique - a stark contrast with the huge logistical effort carried out by the other colonial powers immediately after the beginning of hostilities.

All the borders in this vast African region were new, including those delimiting the French, British, Belgian and Portuguese colonial territories, and some of these borders were still unclear while others were contested, a scenario which aggravated the almost complete absence not only of structures, roads and railway, but also of a leadership whose authority was even remotely acknowledged and capable of operating. Furthermore, the entire region of southern Africa had a major European presence in the south as a result of commercial exploitation (the Transvaal or the Catanga, mining or agriculture), which was also occupied by great peoples who were fiercely independent, such as the Zulus, who fought against the British and the Portuguese. A region

where, and it is important to stress this point, a large-scale war between Europeans had taken place, the Anglo-Boer wars mentioned above, which had mobilised hundreds of thousands of combatants and had a huge regional impact on the future of the relations between States, within and outside each territory, for the borders that had been enforced were not the same borders of the native peoples, as we shall see.

2. The War begins and Portugal deploys its first expeditions (1914-1915)

There were four German colonies in Africa: Togo, Cameroon, South-West Africa (also known as Damaraland, present-day Namibia) and East Africa (Tanganyika, which roughly corresponds to present-day Tanzania, Burundi and Rwanda), and the fighting in Africa was conducted either against these colonies, or by these colonies. Major battles were also fought within each territory because under the pretext or in consequence of the war, or simply as a matter of opportunity, large-scale uprisings and infighting broke out in all African colonial regions. We will now look at the two German colonies with borders with the Portuguese territories, Angola and Mozambique, that is, South-West Africa and East Africa.

August 1914 marked the onset of the war and the involvement of people from various nations, from the Germans, the British, the Belgians, the Portuguese, the French, the Indians, and the Boers to the much larger numbers of Africans who were affected by the war, directly and indirectly, with some ethnicities crossing various regions of Africa to fight in rather different ones, such as the Landins, the Catanguenses, and the Askaris to the lowliest of porters and their respective families, who followed the enormous marching columns.

Portugal was initially at peace with Germany, but the incidents in the north of Mozambique early in August and the more serious ones in the south of Angola compelled Lisbon to issue a response, which was seemingly firm and determined, but was in fact deeply confusing and contradictory. The defence of the Portuguese colonies was always consensual in Lisbon and its main future allies also supported this stance, as even London declared it was willing to help Portugal in case of an attack. However, it was clear from the first day of fighting that London advised, and would do so to the end, Portugal to defend its territories but not to deploy any expeditions beyond its borders, that is, that 'Portugal should save its strength for the defence of its territories in Africa' (Telo, 2010: 306). London suggested, in an even clearer statement, that the Portuguese government limit itself to 'a defensive mission, prepare to deal with possible local insurgency and, if necessary, cooperate with the British'

(Anderson, 2014: 49, Samson, 2013: 52). The theme was set early in the conflict and the following years would witness what can be defined as a game of 'deaf ears'. Portugal could, and should defend itself but it was never encouraged to take part in operations outside its territories, only to prepare for that possibility. This was not the message that the Lisbon administrations, and there were many during the war, wanted to hear and, disregarding the country's actual combat power and capabilities, they demanded to conduct expeditionary campaigns against the Germans. As we shall see, the orders we will briefly analyse were contradictory and entirely out of touch with the reality on the ground.

During the first month of the war, in 26 August 1914, the Germans in Togo surrendered after being defeated in Kamina by an Anglo-French joint expedition. On August 30, in the Pacific, German Samoa was occupied by forces from New Zealand, Japanese forces attacked the German city of Tsingtao, China in September, and afterwards attacked the German territories in the Caroline, Marianas and Marshall islands; Australia occupied the Bismarck archipelago and the German territories of New Guinea. By November, there were no German colonies in the Pacific, and after a last unsuccessful attempt to instigate insurgency in India their attention was turned exclusively to Africa. We must also mention a highly relevant detail, the allied action to sever communications between Berlin and its colonies, which resulted in the isolation of the German colonial administrators (Telo, 2015a; Carvalho, 2015: 35-37).

Portugal reinforced its two most exposed territories, Angola and Mozambique, with two forces with similar composition (about 1500 men each). Lieutenant Colonel Alves Roçadas was given the command of the first Portuguese expeditionary force deployed to Angola, which arrived on Moçamedes on 27 September 1914 to secure the defence of the south border. Another force was deployed to Mozambique under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Massano de Amorim, tasked with reinforcing the Rovuma defences on the north border of the colony⁴. The expeditions were reinforced a few days after being formed, which clearly demonstrates the desire to take action in Africa. Alves Roçadas' expedition would also include the following units: a detachment of the Mining Sappers Regiment, a detachment of the Campaign Telegraphers Battalion, the 2nd Battery of the 1st Machine Gun Group, one group of administrative forces, in a total of over 70 men. In Mozambique, Massano de Amorim received

⁴ The two combined detachments were put at the disposal of the Ministry of the Colonies by the War Ministry. 'The military operations conducted in accordance with the orders given will be carried out under the sole and exclusive direction and responsibility of the detachment commanders, and only they will have the power to determine the employment and distribution of the force under their command'. The composition of the combined detachments was as follows: Angola: Men - 1525; Horses - 217; Oxen - 98; Mozambique: Men - 1477; Horses - 225; Oxen - 82 (Telo, 2010).

reinforcements of over 50 men, similar to those deployed to Angola, with the exception of the machine gun battery (Costa, 1925: 57 e 66; Telo, 2010).

The German intentions were unclear at first, but the actions of military commander von Lettow-Vorbeck in Angola and Mozambique were clearly meant to provoke not only Great Britain but also Portugal and Belgium (Samson, 2013: 51). But there was also obvious military and political tension between the German civilian administration and the German military authority, as governor Heinrich Schnee wanted Portugal to remain neutral in order to continue using the Portuguese ports. Portugal and its colony of Mozambique were at the centre of the political disagreements between Schnee and Lettow-Vorbeck on more than one occasion, as well as of the disagreements between the British administration and the main military commanders on the ground - Smuts, Hoskins and Van Deventer. There were successive Portuguese governors and military commanders, such as Massano de Amorim (who replaced Álvaro de Castro as governor during the last expedition), Moura Mendes, Ferreira Gil and Sousa Rosa. As for the opposing policies of Lisbon and Lourenço Marques, or of Lourenço Marques and Port Amelia, we must only recall that 'from 1910 to 1918, Mozambique had eight governors-general and acting governors (...) from 1910 to 1917, Portugal had sixteen Overseas ministers' (Lettow-Vorbeck, 1923, pp. 21-23; Anderson, 2014, pp. 37-41; Pélissier, 2000, vol. 1, pp. 190-191 and 211).

In Angola, it was evident that there were political constraints on the effective use of force. Alves Roçadas was tasked with defending (this objective was reiterated on 25 November 1914 by the Lisbon administration: 'do not conduct any offensive actions', 'maintain neutrality') and was thus unable to elaborate any strategic plans to anticipate or surprise the German forces threatening the south border of the territory. He was also prohibited from accepting help from allies, even if their support was offered directly: 'I offered to help the Portuguese in Angola with a force from Rhodesia, but the Portuguese governor replied that he was not authorised to receive outside help', Wienholt stated (2013: 200). The battle of Naulila was bound by political constraints, and while the Germans suffered with the distance and the difficulties in securing logistical support and the Portuguese suffered with their inability to sustain the forces, both forces were commanded by exceptional officers (Alves Roçadas and Victor Franck), and the Portuguese were eventually forced to withdraw and to follow their retreat with a significant pacification effort.

If the situation was not more serious in Angola, it was only because the German forces of Damaraland were more concerned with possible offensive actions by the Union of South Africa. This resulted in the punitive attack on Naulila in 1914 as a way of securing a connection to the German interests in the area before the South Africans intervened, of restoring their self-respect after the Portuguese provocation, and of demonstrating their authority over the African

populations (according to Barroso, it was: 2015: 151, a 'pre-emptive' strike by the Germans in anticipation of a future simultaneous confrontation with Portugal and with the Union of South Africa; also in Duarte, 2015: 264 and 269). The South Africans, as we know, were forced to delay their entry into action due to internal strife (the Afrikaner revolt led by Maritz against the forces of General Botha, which lasted until January 1915), but, when they were able to do so, the effort engaged was significant and much more impressive in comparison with the few forces led by Roçadas. In 1915, against about 3000 men led by Roçadas, the Union of South Africa deployed a reinforcement brigade for each strategic direction (to Damaraland and to East Africa), with forces on horseback, campaign artillery and infantry, ambulances, field hospitals and auxiliary services. The Botha-led forces that carried out the attack on South-West Africa were organised in four large strategic columns composed by 40,000 men. Within less than a year, still in 1915, with their capital under siege for over six months, the Germans surrendered to the South Africans while the Portuguese were forced to continue fighting so-called 'internal pacification' campaigns until late 1916.

Interestingly, the situation of the native peoples of German South-West Africa after being 'liberated' by the South Africans only reinforces our argument on the other colonial powers' use of force: 'The remains of the Hereros (who had suffered a harsh pacification campaign) were practically reduced to slavery (...) were forbidden from owning cattle, were forced to work and to spend what little money they earned in the German stores (...) many were summarily hanged (...) locked in extremely heavy chains in groups of five (...) whipped and mutilated' (Fendall, 2014: 23 and Walker, 2013: 15, 101 and 103-104). Upon reading the later observations by Lettow-Vorbeck (who had also participated in the campaigns against the Hereros) on the Portuguese treatment of the populations of the north of Mozambique, we are compelled to recall the events in the territories under German rule.

In Mozambique, the Lisbon government had entrusted Massano de Amorim (who was promoted to Colonel in December 1914) with three main objectives: (1) To defend against possible German incursions in the north; (2) to subdue the populations affected by the war between the whites; (3) to prevent the Theatre of Operations from being used in a war between belligerents. As a result, he was tasked with setting up a defence in depth with strong support from the sea (Port Amelia, the only port in the north region of Mozambique with good conditions to disembark and concentrate land forces) and with creating good lines of communication (roads and telegraph) to certain locations, which had to be distant enough apart to allow the concentration of power around the enemy's penetration points, but also needed quick access to the Rovuma border for communications and replenishment. In order to do that, it was necessary to set up a line of posts, which implied: improving the 11 'lost posts of

the Nyassa Company'; effectively occupying the territory; commissioning cartographic and logistics materials, motorised transports and artillery; implementing reconnaissance patrols in the remote posts (Montepuez and Metarica, Maziua, Nagonamo or Mocímboa do Rovuma); establishing lines of communication and sustainment (road to Muirite - and afterwards to Mocímboa do Rovuma); installing a telegraph line along the Rovuma (late 1914 to October 1915); building defensive positions in the Rovuma with 28 'scout' posts (Afonso, 2015): 309ff. and Carvalho, 2015: 59). The plans for Mozambique at the beginning of the campaign were, in our opinion, well-conceived and well designed, and were likely the only realistic way to face a possible German offensive in the territory, but, as we shall see, those plans fell through.

In the meantime, the British had been severely humiliated on two occasions: the failed disembarkation in the port of Tanga, in German East Africa (November 1914), which resulted in 817 casualties and in the capture of the frontier town of Jasin (January 1915), which resulted in 700 casualties. Given that these British operations (even reinforced by more than ten thousand Indian soldiers) had ended in disaster, Massano de Amorim, an officer with experience in the African campaigns, introduced a set of urgent and immediate measures to prevent an eventual confrontation with Lettow-Vorbeck's German Army. For example, and this lends credence to our previous explanation, he proposed that a force composed of 15,000 irregular troops be generated, that the forts be reinforced and improved, that machine guns be installed along the line of defence to allow for a 'defence in depth' system, and the preservation/reinforcement of Port Amelia as a base for the reserves, with 'naval means capable of moving a considerable force' to the various ports in the north. Amorim also proposed that the troops stationed along the Rovuma be scattered and sent to garrison small forts set up at a considerable distance from one another but connected to a central core by a telegraph system. He also advised that the native peoples should be treated fairly and be remunerated for their work, as he believed that it was vital to maintain discipline and morals, as well as to gain the acceptance of the local populations.

Both the Lisbon and the Lourenço Marques administrations not only refused these requests, but also, paradoxically, reduced the number of troops in the colony, in a clear example of the gap between the reality on the ground and the unrealistic policy: 'we received orders to withdraw 500 men to Lisbon, followed by a counter-order' (Gomes da Costa, 1925: 69). Both Massano de Amorim and Governor Joaquim José Machado⁵ were removed from their positions, as the

⁵(Lagos, 24 September 1847, Lisbon, 22 February 1925), Portuguese engineer, officer and politician. He was twice governor of Mozambique, in 1900 and from 1914 to 1915. He had monarchist affiliations and was harshly persecuted by the republican press, and was removed from office 'in May 1915, and replaced by Colonel Alfredo Baptista Coelho, who remained in

first was familiar with the terrain and the latter did not see eye to eye with the current Lisbon administration⁶, but also because the dire health conditions and harsh climate resulted in over half the men being gravely ill. When preparing the second expedition, and especially when choosing a new governor for Mozambique, the Lisbon administration gave precedence to political leanings over experience and effective leadership.

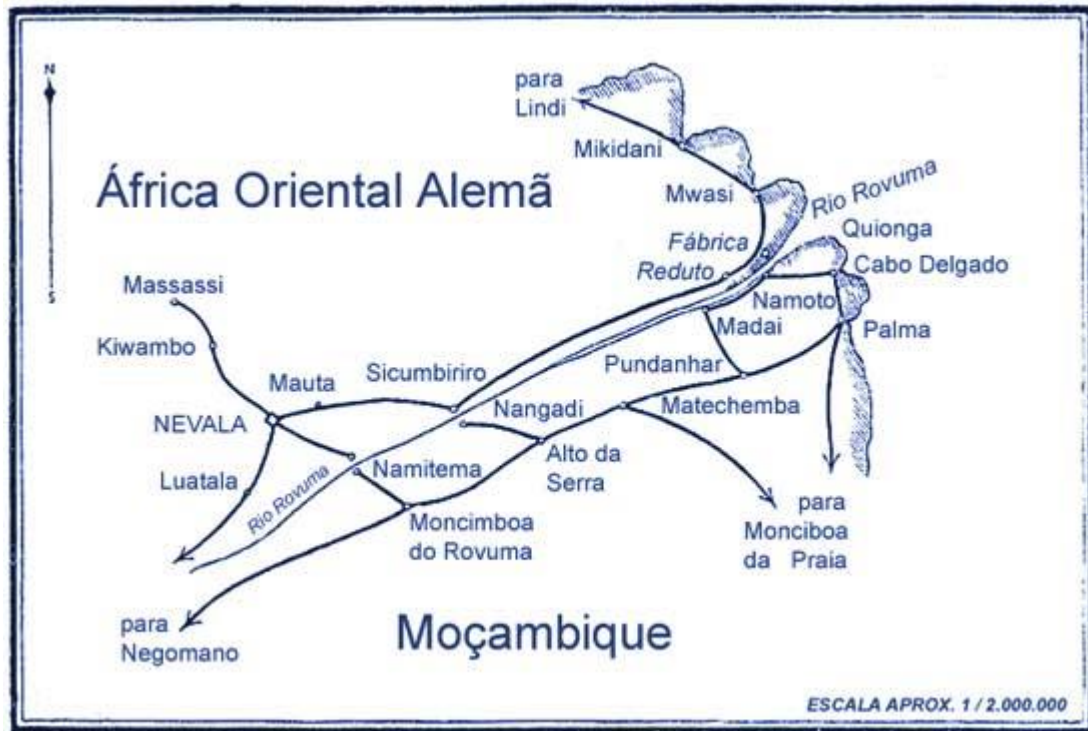
'It was clear that they would not choose the most capable and competent men to command, but would either choose those men prone to instigate the kind of disorder and confusion that fosters financial speculation, or the naive idealists' (Gomes da Costa, 1925: 99).

It can be said that after the second expedition, which arrived in Mozambique in November 1915 (after leaving Lisbon in October), unrealistic policy-making and political-strategic incompetence reached critical levels. The new commander of the second expedition, Major Moura Mendes (1861-1918), was accompanied by Governor Álvaro de Castro (1878-1928), who also had an ambitious and deeply unrealistic agenda⁷. The first objective was to recover what was known as the Kionga triangle (occupied by the Germans since 16 June 1894), after receiving reinforcements of native colonial troops, including the effective mixed force (with European and African soldiers) of the *Guarda Republicana of Lourenço Marques* (Moura, 2015). This objective, while not unfeasible, was only achieved at great cost in 1915.

office for a scarce four months, until October that same year, before being replaced by Álvaro Xavier de Castro' (Moura, 2015: 207)

⁶ 'Massano de Amorim's plan was prudent and flexible, but went against the wishes of the Lisbon administration (...) who wanted the Portuguese troops to perform remarkable feats' (Afonso, 2015: 313)

⁷ The governor, said General Gomes da Costa (the last commander appointed to Mozambique in the Great War): 'wanted to lead the war (...) felt he had the necessary qualities and expertise (...) resulting in the escalation of indiscipline and disorganisation'. On the unrealistic objectives, he added: 'achieving such an objective would take at least one full Division (...) we were also expected to reach Tabora and join forces with the English (...) Unbelievable! What a man's imagination can conjure, even a relatively cultured man, when he decides to meddle in and discuss subjects he knows nothing of' (1925: 79-86).



Map retrieved from: http://www.revistamilitar.pt/artigo.php?art_id=945

But the objective was not simply to occupy Kionga; the complete plans included an offensive into German territory the moment the opportunity arose. The plan had been fraught with ambiguity from the start. The idea was to take advantage of the coast line to sustain the forces and strike at the Mikindani and Lindi from there. When the British were informed of the plan, they immediately said that it could only be accomplished if Portugal was able to provide and sustain reinforcements after conquering the ports, in order to eventually join the British forces in Tabora. It was a completely unrealistic plan because it ignored the massive difficulties in replenishing troops in a profoundly underdeveloped and almost unpopulated terrain, as well as the Portuguese forces' obvious lack of sustainment capability (Anderson, 2014: 100). If it was common knowledge that the Portuguese capabilities were much more limited, especially when it came to force sustainment, why attempt an attack on German territory? It seems clear that the Allies had not requested it and that they were wholly aware that it was an impossible mission to accomplish.

We must expand our analysis and go beyond the fantasies and lack of realism of the Lisbon administration and its intentions to appear warlike and on the attack, and look into the insidious South African politics within British politics. Even though the two seemingly aligned, because they were under a common administration, London's, they were in fact rather different. The South Africans desired to occupy the Portuguese territories south of Beira and, in addition to being openly hostile to Portugal since the Anglo-Boer war, they were marking

their territory and somehow managing to push the Portuguese authorities into committing forces to achieve 'impossible objectives'. The commander of the British forces since the spring of 1916, South African General Smuts, could not have made his intentions any clearer: 'Conquering German East Africa would allow us to trade it for Mozambique and thus expand our borders to include all the territories south of the Zambeze and the Cunene'. The Union would then acquire 'first class ports and definitely neutralise a rival power' (Anderson, 2014: 102) and the populations would be ruled by 'a truly civilizing people' (Samson, 2'13: 180).

Portugal did not listen to London and either the nation ignored the stance of the Union of South Africa or, what was worse, there were Portuguese politicians who, against all the evidence, both national and international (which can be consulted in the numerous documents sent to Lisbon and kept at the Arquivo Histórico Militar: PT AHM-DIV 2/7/10/01 to 13, PT AHM-DIV 2/7/12/02, PT AHM-DIV 2/7/024/01 to 05 and PT AHM-DIV 2/7/151/02), believed in a military power that simply did not exist and threw themselves into the endeavour of invading German East Africa. That implied crossing the border and occupying positions that would enable the sustainment of troops in the ensuing territorial conquest. Thus, in May 1916, the Portuguese conducted reconnaissance operations that immediately elicited a German response on 23 May, and troops from German East Africa, commanded by Lieutenant Leonhard Sprockhoff and composed of 11 Europeans, 113 Askaris and 59 Ruga-rugas, were sent to reinforce the north bank of the Rovuma river. When the Portuguese troops first attempted to cross the river on 24 May, their barges were met by machine gun fire, resulting in 3 soldiers killed and 6 soldiers wounded. It was a poor beginning to the offensive campaign, one which revealed yet another disturbing factor, the lack of coordination between the land and naval forces⁸. On 26 May, the Portuguese forces opened naval artillery fire, which received no response, and on the following day made their second failed attempt to occupy the north bank. No German casualties were recorded, but Portuguese 3 officers were killed, 38 other ranks were wounded and 4 officers and 24 other ranks were captured.

It was time to stop and carefully consider the odds that Portugal could conduct a successful offensive against Lettow-Vorbeck's outstanding fighters, who had effectively already defeated thousands of British and Belgian troops. But the only order from Lisbon and Lourenço Marques, which can be read in numerous telegrams, was 'Advance!'

3. 1916: The attack on German East Africa

⁸ 'The perennial problem in all operations that combine naval and land forces, whenever they are not under a single command' (Costa, 1925: 101).

Some factions in Lisbon had finally understood that conducting an offensive into German territory would take a strong, experienced leader in charge of at the very least a credible force. Thus, one of the best Portuguese officers was appointed to the position, General Garcia Rosado, who was deeply familiar with the territory (he had been stationed in India and knew Mozambique from the 1897-98 campaigns and from his time as governor from 1904 to 1905). General Garcia Rosado immediately made an inventory of the campaign's operational requirements and informed the policy-makers of the minimum conditions he would need to accomplish the objective. He conducted a political and strategic study of all the options, possibilities and modalities, and ascertained the requirements for each of them. His deeply realistic examination demonstrated that it would take a huge logistic effort and an effective system of force maintenance, rotation and sustainment. This was not what those who desired only immediate results wanted to hear. They did not want to hear any talk of difficulties and, providing only the most transparent, superficial excuses, dismissed a renowned general, one of few men who were deeply familiar with the territory, and who may have been able to accomplish Lisbon's gargantuan ambitions had his request been accepted (Telo, 2015b).

The Lisbon administration eventually chose a man with no experience in Africa, who had become famous for mainly political reasons, General Ferreira Gil (1858-1922). The only action that resembled an operational action that this general had been known to take was to quash a mutiny in a regiment, his only command experience was as the director of the *Colégio Militar*. Ferreira Gil was not experienced or familiar with the territory, but proved to be a competent manager and administrator in his previous positions, which would allow him to form his own opinion about what he had been told and 'promised' after seeing the conditions on the ground for himself. Naturally, once there, he conducted a thorough evaluation of the task ahead and he made his thoughts known to Lisbon: there was an urgent need for reinforcements of personnel, assets and infrastructures. But he had to face the fact that Lisbon did not listen to his warnings, and, what was worse, tasked him, to his great surprise, with 'impossible missions'.

This third expedition was not only commanded by a higher ranking officer, a general, but also deployed a considerably larger number of troops (a mixed Engineering company; 3 mountain batteries; 3 battalions of the 23rd, 24th and 28th Infantry Regiments (Coimbra, Aveiro and Figueira da Foz), a total of 4642 men (149 officers) and 1378 horses + 159 vehicles (40 trucks). They embarked in July 1916 without any preparation (Costa, 1925: 107). However, as Massano de Amorim had warned, and Garcia Rosado had confirmed, a campaign of this nature required above all well-trained and well-equipped native troops, as well as a logistic and health sustainment system that would allow the forces to conduct operations both in depth and in width. On the other hand, although

these numbers seem to be significantly higher than those of the first Portuguese expeditions, they were deeply absurd when compared with the number of troops engaged on the theatre of operations by the British and the Belgians.

By way of comparison, against the same enemy the British and the Belgians committed more than one hundred thousand combatants, not counting the porters, in 1916 alone⁹. In 1914, when none of the powers were ready for war, the Belgians already had about 15,000 men¹⁰ and the British had about 10,000 men spread out over several territories, while the Portuguese had no more than 1680 men in the eight companies stationed in Mozambique. As soon as the fighting began in 1914, Great Britain, in addition to mobilising thousands of local soldiers, also deployed three expeditions (B and C) from India, with 8000 and 2000 men, respectively. With the generation of the East African Force in November 1915, by the British, which included forces from the various theatres, by the end of the year the British had a total 36,000 soldiers and the Belgians had an additional 5000 men ready to advance into the Rwanda-Urundi region, while Portugal had the same number of troops as the year before.

The forces committed significantly increased in 1916, as the British reinforced the area of operations of German East Africa with an additional 1500 Indian troops and 13,400 South African troops (the European forces were composed of 15,000 men against the 2200 German soldiers), and later adding two additional reconnaissance regiments, building and expanding the railway lines, intermediate depots, campaign hospitals, and building numerous roads. Maritime support was entirely under the control of the British Navy, and 35 ships had already been committed in the war against German East Africa, with the US, Great Britain, India and the Union of South Africa having sent large shipments of vehicles, health supplies and materials and ammunition (Samson, 2013: 108 and Fendall, 2014: 63-66). For a rough idea of the forces opposing Lettow-Vorbeck's 11,000 Askaris, by Spring 1916 the British had two brigades leading the main attack (with over 7000 men each, with the exception of porters), one brigade from Nigeria and six new battalions of the King's African Rifles, two mounted brigades and one infantry brigade from South Africa, in addition to the ones mentioned above, and the Belgians had almost doubled their troops in German East Africa with their forces from Lago and Rwanda-Urundi. (Anderson, 2014: 23, 98,106, 108 and 131, Fendall, 2014: 25 and 46)

⁹ '100,000 soldiers and 1,000,000 porters (Samson, 2013: 3; '73,000', Strachan, 2001). The numbers vary considerably, but in most of the sources consulted, which seldom mention the total force, the sum of the partial numbers add up to a force between 50,000 and 100,000 men, not counting the porters, who were present in much larger numbers (the total numbers including porters would have been between 1,000,000 and 2,000,000).

¹⁰ The Belgians also coveted the Portuguese territories, specifically the Cabinda region and the region south of the Congo River in Angola (Samson, 2013: 174 e 218).

Once he landed in Africa, General Ferreira Gil was able to state the obvious. No structures had been prepared to receive the forces, no lines of communication had been built and there were no means of transport to secure the logistic flow. The forces were undisciplined, both the European and the local troops. Their training was clearly insufficient and they did not have the support of the local populations, and, as one went further inland, in the areas under the administration of the Nyassa Company, both the environment and the weather were obviously hostile, also for the reasons mentioned above. To Ferreira Gil's utmost dismay, he knew he had been abandoned when he first asked for reinforcements, as even his simple request for a sustenance vessel was rejected by Lisbon, and he was told to submit the request to the 'Companhia Nacional de Navegação'. In the words of Gomes da Costa (1925: 130), Gil became aware of the gravity of the situation too late: 'it was only upon arriving at the base of operations that the General truly understood how outnumbered his expedition was'.

Still, Ferreira Gil believed that an attack from the coast line, supported by a strong naval force would be a feasible manoeuvre, if an extremely difficult one, but one that could work if the British and Belgian forces managed to effectively pin down the Germans. It bears repeating that it would take naval support and manoeuvres along the coast line, complemented by an effective action to pin down the German troops by the allied forces (British and Belgian), to accomplish this highly ambitious and, in the opinion of the British experts, probably impossible strategy. It would not come to be.

When the troops were readying to depart, Ferreira Gil received word that the British had already moved on Minkandani¹¹, which Portugal had defined as a strategic objective. Worse, when the Portuguese troops began crossing the Rovuma, the Allies had already occupied it. It was then suggested to the Portuguese that, if they really wished to conduct an offensive into German East Africa, it was best to pick another objective deep in the German territory, remote, under terrible weather conditions and of no special strategic significance. The Portuguese forces knew they did not have the conditions to attack, but the administrations of both Lisbon and Lourenço Marques refused to listen and, regardless of the warnings and requests, accepted the allied proposal¹².

Because of the distance, the severe lack of logistic resources, the lack of health conditions, and the absence of a suitable evacuation system, the Portuguese forces were depleted and had serious health and discipline problems, and were unable to accomplish this manoeuvre without significant reinforcements of

¹¹ 'the English immediately occupied Mikindani, the port nearest to us, leaving other ports farther north to the enemy' (Costa, 1925: 10).

¹² 'We must press forward, under any conditions', Telegram from the Ministry for the Colonies on 8 September (Costa, 1925: 140).

troops and assets. Ferreira Gil made the request, but Lisbon refused. On the contrary, the order came to attack Nevala and proceed to the north (Massasi), in a first phase, and then to the east, in a second phase. The political aims and the reality on the ground could not have been more at odds. The Nevala campaign proved an enormous and thoroughly fruitless sacrifice, one which many have already recorded (see works cited). It was clear to all the commanders on the ground, Portuguese, British, Belgian, South African, and even German, that it would be impossible to conduct and maintain an offensive in one of the most inhospitable and arid regions of the German territory with those forces, equipment, and with almost no logistic support structures. It seemed to be clear to everyone, except to a few politicians far away in Lisbon and Lourenço Marques, that 'a Portuguese force with virtually no British support' (Wienholt, 2013: 269) would not be able to conquer and hold territory¹³. We need only look at the evidence, for the Belgians and the British only advanced when they had built railway lines and roads and when the logistic convoys, campaign hospitals and rear hospitals were operational. If these conditions were not met, they halted and postponed their attacks until they were. Afterwards they advanced, almost always when they clearly outnumbered their opponent and not until they had cut off all the enemy lines of communication.

Even with all conditions met, the British and the Belgians had only succeeded in 'pushing' the Germans outside their territories. In some cases, they were the ones being 'pushed', as some German troops managed to penetrate their lines and operate freely in the rear, such as Major Wintgens' column of about 600 men, which left Songea (a city near the border with Nyasaland) and headed north, penetrating the Anglo-Belgian defence towards Tabora. The British force that left Nyasaland to pursue the German force was never able to do so, and Wintgens attacked and resupplied wherever it suited him best. It took the combined efforts of the British and Belgian forces to stop the advance of this small German column, which managed to escape the forces, arrived at Muanza, and afterwards headed to Ikoma, where it defeated the Belgians who opposed their advance, and walked freely into British East Africa, before finally choosing to take the Tanga railway. Wintgens eventually surrendered after a few months, but the remains of his force headed south under Nauman's command. The British troops were depleted and did not have the logistic capability to pursue them. This was Lettow-Vorbeck's usual strategy, which saw the Germans almost always defeat the Belgians and the British in open battle, and before they were able to receive reinforcements the Germans either withdrew or penetrated the enemy lines (Fendall, 2014: 61-65).

It might seem like the Allies were attempting to destroy the German forces, at least that was the declared objective, but it was becoming clearer that, after

¹³ 'Only with a resupply post and better storage conditions (...) always reduced to two thirds ration' (Araújo, 2015: 294 e 300).

three years of enormous effort (these events occurred in late 1916), their intent was also to conquer territory for the future, not to capture and destroy forces. That is, if the Germans were to make incursions into Portuguese territory, well, as we see it, it might not be a bad thing. In the opinion of some South African leaders, it might even advance the goal of trading combat effort for territory in Mozambique and, for the London administration, entering Mozambique would mean significant savings in forces and equipment. Better yet, it would leave some forces free to deploy to other theatres of operations where they were most needed.

This idea is reinforced by the stand taken by the British General Hoskins, the military commander who succeeded Smuts and who was highly respected and admired by the Portuguese leaders (unlike his successor, the South African and Boer General Van Deventer), that it would be prudent to adopt an effective defensive posture in several phases. This testimonial by the most renowned and legendary scout in the allied forces, Arnold Wienholt, helps shed some light on the matter: 'I am completely convinced that a campaign in Portuguese East Africa would never have existed had General Hoskins retained his command' (Walther & Wienholt, 2013: 262)¹⁴

The facts are undeniable: when Lettow-Vorbeck advanced into Mozambican territory, the allied forces withdrew most of their troops, saved their strength and drastically reduced their war effort (Samson, 2013: 129). 'The Indian and Nigerian brigades, the *white* regiments, and, later the Gold Coast Regiment were pulled back (...) leaving only the African forces of the KAR (Fendal, 2014: 75).

4. 1917-1918: The German incursion into Mozambique and the end of the campaigns

"It was never Smuts' intention to engage Lettow-Vorbeck but to push him into Portuguese East Africa to further the Union's [the Union of South Africa] aims (...) Smuts and Van Deventer never really tried to catch Lettow-Vorbeck but have deliberately herded him down south into Portuguese East Africa, because the Dutch want to get a footing in Delagoa Bay [Lourenço Marques]", (cited in Samson, 2013: 135 e 214).

Portugal was not alone, but it was becoming clear that it could not count on its allies. The British 'force was so reduced that it was almost ludicrous to have a lieutenant general in charge' (Fendal, 2014: 77). After four expeditions, the Portuguese were only then beginning to change their combat organisation, clearly favouring the use of native forces. But it was too late to learn from the

¹⁴ Even Von Lettow-Vorbeck spoke of Wienholt with admiration (see the letter to his brother in *Walther*, 2013: 150).

experience of the *Guarda Republicana de Lourenço Marques*, the force that performed outstanding in combat during the previous year, proving that the model described above was effective (Moura, 2015). On the other hand, the political priorities in Lisbon were clearly biased against the African theatres. Lisbon's scarce financial resources were first used to feed the metropolitan population, then some (few) resources were sent to the Expeditionary Force in the Flanders, and finally, the lowest and oft-forgotten priority, they were used to support the forces in Africa (Telo, 2015a). Even if there had been a will, the time had run out as the Germans crossed the Rovuma and advanced into Mozambique.

Lettow-Vorbeck, who had never been defeated by the vastly superior combined Belgian and British forces, used his experience of four years of 'guerrilla' warfare to conduct a brilliant manoeuvre in Mozambique. He armed and equipped his forces with any means at his disposal, as usual, and initiated an 'Opera' war (Wienholt, 2013: 270) by conducting an ingenious surprise raid on all enemy forces, avoiding combat as much as possible but fighting whenever the forces needed supplies to continue the campaign. He chose his own way, fought only when he had to, and always maintained the strategic advantage over his opponents.

For the reasons explained above, the German incursion into Portuguese territory was supported, or at least was not opposed by the local populations. Several instances were recorded of the invaders receiving aid from the locals, who had been forgotten and mistreated for decades by the Nyassa Company and were obviously fascinated with the German administration. 'We, English, known as friends of the Portuguese, found the locals were against us (...) the Germans were warned of our movements and had no trouble finding local guides and porters'. As the invaders marched south, the campaign seemed to progress more smoothly each day, for they had access to 'villas and fertile, well-tended fields that provided plenty of quality food' (Wienholt, 2013: 272).

The commander of the fourth expedition and the 'scapegoat' for all the allied failures, which were almost exclusively blamed on the Portuguese, was Colonel Tomás de Sousa Rosa (1867-1929). As he arrived at Mocimboa da Praia on 12 September 1917, without any prior experience in a colonial campaign, he quickly understood the warnings of the commanders who had preceded him: they were attempting to make an omelette without breaking any eggs. Perhaps his inexperience led Sousa Rosa into accepting terms which were obviously not advantageous to the Portuguese operations, such as when he decided to withdraw all Portuguese forces from the only location with decent conditions in the north of Mozambique, Port Amelia, and surrender it to the British 'so that the English troops had full access to the port and its vicinities in order to prevent the native troops that accompanied the English forces from having contact with the native troops in the Portuguese forces (Assis, 2015: 322). The Portuguese

forces were then transferred to Palma, and afterwards to Macimboa do Rovuma (which were completely unsuitable locations for an operational rearguard). This statement taken from the inquiry committee investigating the actions of Colonel Sousa Rosa, highlighted by José Luís Assis, seems to confirm the above: 'The British troops acquired an area with outstanding penetration lines and our troops had to operate in a barren area with extremely poor sanitary conditions, where the lines of communication could only be travelled by car up to a certain point' (AHM PT 2/7/53/60, p. 7).

Without going into much detail, the major moments of the campaign were the battles of Negomano (25 November 1917), when the German first entered into Mozambique after a heavy defeat and where one of the most respected Portuguese commanders, Major Teixeira Pinto, was killed, and Serra Mecula (from 3 to 8 December), a desperate defence where, despite his bravery, another Portuguese officer was killed, Sublieutenant Viriato de Lacerda, and where Captain Francisco Curado was captured and immediately released. It is worth noting that both entering and exiting the British territory, no one was able to defeat Lettow-Vorbeck's forces, not the small detachments of Portuguese troops, not the combined Portuguese and British forces, as was the case in Nhamacurra (from 1 to 3 July 1918, which ended in a sad and regrettable exchange of accusations about who surrendered first, which still persists today), and not the expeditionary forces sent from Port Amelia, the excellent port given to the English. Lettow-Vorbeck entered the territory, manoeuvred, misled, was victorious, lost forces and support but remained unvanquished and did the same thing in the British territory after crossing the Lugenda and the Rovuma, deep inside Rhodesia.

In addition to all campaign-related aspects and to the successes, failures and exchanges of accusations, one fact in particular lends credence to the argument we have defended since the beginning, putting into context the huge gap between the deeply unrealistic decisions by the Lisbon administration and the ability and capabilities of the troops on the ground in Mozambique: when the war ended, Lisbon abandoned the soldiers it had deployed. Lisbon was aware of the huge difficulties facing the Portuguese forces, and, apparently, a renowned commander was even sent for one last effort, but, as we know, he arrived after the war had ended. Upon his arrival at Lourenço Marques on 21 December 1918, General Gomes da Costa was left dumbstruck by the outrageous conditions in which patients were evacuated (when they were evacuated) to Lisbon in overcrowded ships lacking minimal support conditions, which resulted in many dying en route (and being literally dumped 'overboard in those floating stages of horror'). Afterwards, he was faced with the huge delays in repatriating the soldiers who were wasting away in the streets of the capital of Mozambique. Worse, even unimaginable, was his discovery of a camp deliberately set up to hide the combatants, so that the people and the many

foreigners passing through Lourenço Marques did not see the condition of the suffering soldiers of the Rovuma. The Goba Camp was located on the outskirts of Lourenço Marques, and at one point housed 2400 convalescing patients in appalling conditions.

We have looked for other mentions of this in the historiography, but it is almost like it never happened, at least not in the crude, indifferent manner that had been dictated by the Lisbon authorities. If it is true that 'once the war is ended, God is forgotten and soldiers are despised', in the hell of the Mozambique theatre of operations the soldiers were indeed despised, and in our opinion deliberately abandoned and humiliated. Thus, even if we have found, and may yet find, many justifications for these failures which seem reasonable enough, this extreme contempt for the citizens sent to fight in their country's name is definitive proof of an attitude of abandonment and indifference. As this never happened before, and, fortunately, never happened again in the same manner, we as a Nation failed to honour and care for the safety and well-being of our citizens, particularly those from whom the ultimate sacrifice was demanded, that of laying down their own life.

Brief final reflection

Of all the colonial powers in the fray, Portugal was the one with the least potential and capabilities on the ground to fight the German forces. With little over 3000 men, Portugal tried to defeat the Germans in the south of Angola, while South Africa sent four large military columns with over 40,000 men, extremely well-equipped and well-sustained, and conducted a phased, unhurried campaign, taking cautious, careful steps until the final defeat. The British were initially reckless in their actions against German East Africa, and, when caught by surprise by the German attack, hit them in multiple fronts with expeditionary forces comprising over 20,000 men, and the end result was profound humiliation and heavy material and human losses. The campaign was halted until the conditions were created to advance on the Germans, and, when the time came for the general offensive in 1916, which committed British, South African and Indian forces from various regions in Africa with foreign and native troops, the forces had reached hundreds of thousands of men, plus one million porters, sustained by a thorough system of logistic posts, support columns, new roads and railway lines, in addition to a policy of rotating the front line personnel and an effective system in the rear to treat the wounded and the ill. During this period, the offensives were also halted when the conditions for sustained progress were not met. Calmly, in phases, the advance was made with a deeply changed organisation now based on native forces, always sustained by land and by sea. As we were able to see, the Portuguese had the opposite attitude, and only a few of the good ideas and initiatives proposed by the first

commanders were put into practice, and when a solid, sustainable campaign plan was presented (by Garcia Rosado), the commander was immediately replaced.

The policy dictated the strategy and, while there was some occasional ambiguity in the orders emanated from London and Pretoria, especially in 1914 and 1915, with many hesitations regarding the level of effort to be committed, that is, whether the posture adopted would be offensive or defensive depending on the personnel needed in other theatres of operations (especially in Europe), it was also clear from 1916 onwards that there was a policy of support and coordination with the other powers, especially with Belgium, with the goal of conquering German territory, or even when the forces were obviously depleted and the opportunity arose to push the German forces into Portuguese territory. Portugal never behaved in this manner. The administration hesitated at first, and the situation worsened until, by 1916, the policy was entirely at odds with the reality on the ground. Rampant, deeply unrealistic ambitions and a huge difficulty in dealing with the Allies led to the abandonment of the forces on the front line. This political 'limbo' was worsened by the targeting of the Mozambican territory by different and somewhat contradictory South African and British ambitions, as the changes in command implied changes in coordination and changes of plans regarding the Portuguese forces.

The armed forces of the different colonial powers had severe shortcomings and flaws before the onset of the war. However, as time went on, they knew to adapt, change, build structures and overhaul their way of conducting warfare. Initially, Portugal was no different, although the Army was severely weakened for the reasons explained above, but, as we could see, it was probably the only power to remain virtually unchanged, to deliberately ignore the recommendations of the commanders of the first expeditions, and to never create a genetic, structural or operational strategy that could be put into practice or even adjusted. All this was aggravated by the different organisations that formed the contingents (sometimes a single force combined metropolitan units, local units, *Guarda Republicana*, native companies and local law enforcement, with completely different levels of training, equipment and discipline). That is, while the other powers acted and reacted in the face of unforeseen challenges, Portugal failed to act and neglected the political dimension of force sustainment and force adaptation to the strategic objectives¹⁵.

The choice of commanders for the Mozambique campaigns demonstrates that the political choices were not innocent, nor were they accidental. There were undoubtedly three great commanders appointed for the position, all of whom had experience, a solid background and viable ideas of combat organisation and leadership. Those commanders were: Massano de Amorim, Garcia Rosado

¹⁵ See, by the author, 'O Exército de Portugal no início da Guerra: Ação, Reação e Omissão'.

and Gomes da Costa. The first never led the campaign against the German forces, the second was dismissed from his position before taking command of the forces, and the last only arrived in Mozambique after the war had ended. The other three, while they were good servicemen, well-trained and well-intentioned, clearly had no experience either in Africa or in campaign, and it was not surprising that their initial naiveté changed drastically as they were confronted by the reality on the ground. That is, the three commanders who were chosen lacked the necessary background and, on the other hand, the commanders who did have it were never allowed to command an action during the Great War in Africa. But, as we know, this was neither ironic nor coincidental; it was a political choice, a deliberate, well-thought-out choice to force the execution of 'impossible', inadequate missions without the proper support.

In summation, the African theatre of operations during the Great War produced heavy losses in life and assets and involved a prolonged effort which resulted in a precarious balance between positive and negative outcomes. Both the British and the Belgians gained territories but lost lives, resources and many new areas to insurgency. The Germans lost all their territories, and, after considerable effort managed to pin down and mobilise thousands of opposing forces in one territory, German East Africa. That objective may have been achieved, but all the others related to sovereignty and consolidation of power in Africa failed. All belligerents lost, and some gained a little. The pawns of this policy, the soldiers and porters (2,000,000?) who came from Europe and Asia, and especially from Africa, won next to nothing and lost much, very much indeed, and for their sake we are obliged to raise our heads and acknowledge their sacrifice.

Portugal won a small portion of land (Kionga), kept its territorial borders and earned a seat at the victors' table when the war was over, which was apparently the main objective. But the country had to endure humiliation with the invasion of Angola and Mozambique, was forced to listen to the constant criticism of both enemies and allies, and part of its territory was left, or remained, in upheaval. Later, it came to light that the British planned to cede German East Africa to the US and possibly expand the territory to Mozambique, while South Africa insisted on claiming the south part of that territory for themselves (Samson, 2013: 206-208 and 212-213). Portugal had gained a seat at the winners' table, but it did not participate in all conversations concerning its own territories.

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