

## Aubrey Bell and *Portugal of the Portuguese* (1915): a Preview of the Future of Portugal in the Political Turmoil of the First Republic\*

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Rightly considered one of the most distinguished of all British lusophiles and hispanists of the twentieth century, Aubrey Fitz Gerald Bell (1881-1950) produced a vast and diversified oeuvre spanning many decades. His works spread knowledge of Portuguese letters and culture ranging as they did from the translation and publication of classic texts to monographs and critical studies, all of which reflect his particular predilection for the medieval and Renaissance periods.

With regard to his distinguished literary activity that was instrumental in spreading knowledge of Portuguese letters, it is important to underline from the beginning that Bell's output is unusually vast, totalling over a hundred titles. Among the works he translated, those which stand out are his versions of four "autos" by Gil Vicente (*Four Plays of Gil Vicente*, 1920), Oliveira Martins' *História da Civilização Ibérica* (1930) and lastly Eça de Queiroz's *A Relíquia* (1930). Equally noteworthy is his anthology of Portuguese poetry, *The Oxford Book*

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of *Portuguese Verse, XIIIth Century - XXth Century*, dating from 1925, which was a significant publishing success and re-edited in 1952 and again in 1962. In the 1920s, Aubrey Bell produced a series of monographs for the collection "Hispanic Notes and Monographs", published by the Hispanic Society of America, which aimed at spreading knowledge of the great figures of Portuguese literature. Among his monographs are texts devoted to Fernão Lopes, Gil Vicente, Luís de Camões, Diogo do Couto and Gaspar Correia. In his career as a lusophile, the publication of his *History of Portuguese Literature* (1922) was of particular importance. Although incomplete and already out of date at the time of publication, it was in fact the only history of Portuguese literature written in English in the whole of the twentieth century. (Rebelo 635, Vakil 50)

At the same time, Bell, who throughout his life voluntarily maintained a prudent distance from the academic community, wrote works on the life, character and culture of the Portuguese that reflect a profound knowledge of the country and its people. This was the fruit of decades of direct contact with the national reality (1911-1940), his numerous travels around mainland Portugal and, naturally, his own thorough research. In this particular context, the works that are worth highlighting are *In Portugal* (1912), a detailed description of the Portuguese nation which in a certain way comes close in its essence to travel literature, and *Portugal of the Portuguese* (1915), a mixture of travel guide and historiographical essay in which the author provides a detailed account of the Portuguese political panorama between the *Ultimatum* and the first years of the Republican regime. (Silva 233-236) This volume, part of the "Countries and Peoples Series" published by the London publisher Isaac Pitman & Sons, is the one that will be dealt with briefly in this essay. This work provides us with a direct testimony to a critical moment in our history when Portugal was plunged into the turmoil of constant political instability. It documents Portuguese life during the early phase of the republican regime, which was between 1910 and 1916. (Ramos 577-603) In the work, the Lusophile Bell reflects extensively on the most important political events that occurred in the years following the

establishment of the First Republic that preceded Portugal's entry into the First World War on the side of Great Britain and the Allies.

Repeated readings and a close examination of *Portugal of the Portuguese* lead us to see we are dealing with a work that is somewhat unbalanced in its conception and in the purpose behind its writing, and was perhaps written in stages over a relatively long period of time. This hypothesis springs from the fact that the topics of the first nine chapters make it seem in every way like a guide book aimed at potential British travellers since quite a detailed picture of a wide variety of aspects of the national reality are to be found there. (These include references to the temperament and character of the Portuguese people, statistical data of a demographic and economic nature, a description of the main urban centres and rural areas as well as references to geography, religion, history, ethnography and literature.) These chapters differ greatly in their essence and in their scope from the other five chapters (X-XIV) where an abrupt change of direction can be noted. Thus, from chapter X on, the author suddenly starts to provide a detailed account of Portuguese social and political life in the period between the *Ultimatum* and 1915. Besides its eminently historiographical nature, this could appear at first glance to be a "narrative" of a propaganda nature or an authentic anti-republican and counter-revolutionary manifesto, similar in every way to the pamphlets that proliferated in Great Britain in the period following the establishment of the republic and especially up until December 1917 when Sidónio Pais took power. The numerous texts of this type that appeared in England at that time included short monographs, pamphlets and newspaper articles through which various ultra-conservative and right-wing British personalities (Adeline Marie Russell, Duchess of Bedford,<sup>1</sup> Philip Gibbs,<sup>2</sup> E. M. Tenison,<sup>3</sup> the

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1 *Political Prisoners in Portugal*. Some Press Opinions and Letters, reprinted from *The Times* of April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1913, and the *Daily Mail* of April 7<sup>th</sup>. London: L. Upcott Gill & Son, Ltd., 1913.

2 *The Tragedy of Portugal, as shown in the sufferings of the Portuguese political prisoners, royalists, republicans, socialists and syndicalists*. Introd. and notes E. M. Tenison. London: L. Upcott Gill & Son, Ltd., 1914.

3 *Will England Save Portugal?: our hereditary obligations (1373-1914)*. London: L. Upcott Gill & Son, Ltd., 1914.

Earl of Lytton<sup>4</sup> and A. G. Loraine<sup>5</sup>), who were all members of the British Protest Committee, an organization that allegedly fought for the liberation of Portuguese political prisoners, sought to condemn the Regicide and the political and religious persecutions instigated by the new regime.<sup>6</sup> They called explicitly or implicitly for the restoration of the order prior to the 1910 Revolution and defended a return to the Monarchy. (Canaveira 309-319) By way of example, see the following passage from A. G. Loraine's pamphlet *Portugal and the Allies* in which he comments on Sidónio Pais' rise to power following the military coup of December 1917:

Portugal has at last freed herself from the band of "White Ants and Carbonario conspirators which after murdering King Carlos and the most promising young Crown Prince Luís Filipe in 1908, seized control of affairs in 1910, and till December 1917 retained it in the teeth of the nation.

The Revolution of December 1917 was not international or political, it was purely national. Its object was to dislodge the Professional politicians who had been bullying the Portuguese internally and discrediting Portugal abroad.

The extraordinarily enthusiastic and spontaneous demonstrations which have greeted its author, President Sidónia Paes (*sic*), both in the North and South of Portugal, prove beyond doubt its national character and

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4 *The Portuguese Amnesty*. With some account of the British National Protest, compiled for the Committee by the Honorary Secretary; and a Verbatim Report of the Protest Meeting of February 6<sup>th</sup>, 1914. London: L. Upcott Gill & Son, Ltd., 1914.

5 *Portugal and the Allies. A Message to Great Britain*. With a foreword by E. M. Tenison and a note on the treaties between England and Portugal. London and Aylesbury: Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ltd., 1918.

6 On this particular subject see also Douglas Wheeler, *Republican Portugal. A Political History, 1910-1926*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978. 97-100:

During 1913 and into early 1914, severe pressures were put on the Costa government by a lurid British press and humanitarian campaign concerned with the political prisoners. Initiated by the critical writing of Aubrey Bell in the London *Morning Post* in 1911-12, the campaign reached a peak with the revelations of the duchess of Bedford in her articles in *The Times* (5 April 1913), and the *Daily Mail* (7 April), based on visits to Portuguese prisons, and with a memorable protest meeting on 22 April in London. At the meeting, even so sympathetic a friend as the African authority Sir Harry Johnston admitted in a speech: "All this is doing vast harm to the position of Portugal among European nations." Widely distributed books and pamphlets demanded an early amnesty. Prominent among these were booklets written by E. M. Tenison (which went into at least five editions) and by Philip Gibbs, the correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*. (Wheeler 98)

relief of the Portuguese people on regaining their freedom. Nor is it likely that the Portuguese will dishonour the cheque thus drawn in Paes' name.

This revolution against revolution is, however, looked at askance not only by the "Democrats," but by some other Parties who had shown themselves willing to dance to the Democrats' piping – by those who found their profit fishing in troubled waters, – and by the Professional politicians in other countries. (...)

Even the foreign Radicals who supported the "Democrats" must have convinced themselves by now that the "Democrat" party in Portugal had nothing to do with true Democracy or with the interests of the Portuguese people. They represented demagoguery in its acutest form. Their name "Democrat" covered a Carbonario reality, as their specious mark of "Constitutionalism" veiled an uncontrolled despotism. They were a small minority set on the neck of the Portuguese people; and their bombs and assassinations had raised such a clamour in Europe that the long-suffering Portuguese nation was obscured and forgotten.

The Carbonario-Democrats aimed at extirpating religion from Portugal, and reckless legislation also cut at the roots of agriculture, the great national industry. (Lorraine 8-11)

The obvious difference in tone between the first nine chapters of *Portugal of the Portuguese* and the final sections of the work is also reflected in the strong ideological markers found in them. His reflections on the Portuguese history of this period reflect unequivocally his extremely conservative political orientation and ideological stance as well as his aversion to the republican regime. In the last five chapters of the book, Bell claims that his desire is to elucidate the British reader about the nature and character of the Portuguese people, for whom he shows a particular fascination, exempting them from any responsibility for the critical situation in which the country has been plunged and, conversely, laying all the blame on the more radical factions of republicanism (namely the *Partido Democrata* [the Democrat Party] and its leader Afonso Costa) and the *Carbonários*.

Bell reveals a certain curious affinity with the British authors mentioned above (among whom could probably be counted Catholics,

members of the Conservative Party's right wing and the High Church faction of the Anglican Church), who commented on the national political situation at the time or even travelled to Portugal as part of a mission organised by the British Protest Committee whose purpose was to verify the conditions in which political prisoners were in fact being held. Nevertheless, he does not believe that the restoration of the Monarchy is the only solution for Portugal. In this respect, he shows he has, like his fellow-countrymen, a curious fascination for authoritarian statesmen, *caudillos* or dictators, like João Franco or General Pimenta de Castro, and in all probability welcomed Sidónio Pais' rise to power. (Silva 235-236) In line with this, the profoundly negative image of the First Republic that Bell transmitted to his British readers would seem to be in complete consonance with the feelings of the British conservative elite and the prevailing current of opinion in the English media of the time, which ever since the Regicide had described the Portuguese republicans as radicals, extremists and criminals (with the exception being *The Manchester Guardian*, a daily newspaper close to the liberal sector and the Labour Party<sup>7</sup>). Bell came to live in Portugal in 1911 and curiously during the first few years of his sojourn here held the post of correspondent for the influential London newspaper *The Morning Post*, known for its conservative positions and its anti-republican stance (but being equally in favour of the Braganza dynasty).<sup>8</sup> This fact together with the content of the chronicles he sent from Lisbon to the newspaper led the Portuguese authorities to arrest him and he was held for some time on a charge of engaging in subversive activity and complicity with the monarchist reactionary forces, later being kept under close surveillance. (Silva 229)

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7 Joaquim Vieira, *Mataram o Rei. O Regicídio na Imprensa Internacional*. Almoçagem: Pedra da Lua, 2006. 118, 129, 194.

8. *Apud* M. A. Buchanan. "Aubrey Fitz Gerald Bell." *Portugal and Brazil, An Introduction*. Eds. H. V. Livermore and W. J. Entwistle Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1970. 18.

"Sometime about 1912, possibly because of this association with the *Morning Post*, he was accused of aiding and abetting Monarchical reaction and summarily imprisoned as a political offender. Characteristically he baited his goolers by refusing to pay for his meals and hunger-struck for twenty-four hours, after which the police transferred him to a military barracks. There he was very well treated and had all the food he wanted. Indeed after the Commandant had allowed him to have some books sent in he settled down to a quiet period of study (...). He was eventually persuaded to leave prison by the personal intervention of Mr. (now Sir) Charles Wingfield, then a Secretary at Legation. (...)"

Among the arguments Bell uses throughout this work are some obvious, flagrant and significant contradictions especially in relation to the comments made apropos the political future of the Portuguese nation. In this Lusophile's opinion, the chaos, political instability and endless fighting among the different political parties and factions did not start with the First Republic but had its origin in the "nefarious" rotativism that had marked national political life during the period of Liberalism and the constitutional monarchy. (Bell 173, 191-192) In this regard, Bell considers that the Republic inherited all the faults it had criticised the previous regime for having. He condemns the entire Portuguese political class who, for seventy-five years, had shown with their unbridled ambition for power a total incapacity to resolve the country's problems, governing corruptly and incompetently and ignoring the real interests of the population. (Bell 173-175, 196-198, 243-244)

Thus, the failings attributed to the new political class that grew out of the revolution of 5<sup>th</sup> October 1910 are, in his view, precisely the same as those that had weakened Liberalism's governing elite. According to Bell, in the final days of the Monarchy there was a manifest falling out of the two majority political parties who alternated in power (*Regenerador* and *Progressista*) and there were successive schisms and dissidences within those parties giving rise to a multiplicity of political factions, all imbued with their own egoistic purposes and incapable of reaching any consensus. (Bell 183-188) It is a noticeably similar picture to that which Aubrey Bell had encountered on his arrival in Portugal shortly after the Republic had been proclaimed, more precisely at the moment when the *Partido Republicano Português* (PRP) [Portuguese Republican Party], the hegemonic political formation that had been at the origin of the revolution, split into different factions – the *Partido Democrata* [Democrat Party] led by Afonso Costa on the left wing of the political spectrum, the *Evolucionistas* [Evolutionists] of António José de Almeida, the *Unionistas* [Unionists], headed by Manuel Brito Camacho, and the *Independentes* [Independents] of Machado dos Santos (the latter representing more moderate currents within the scope of republican thinking). Besides these four parties, smaller groups co-existed on the Portuguese political scene such as

the *Radicais* [Radicals], the *Sindicalistas* [Syndicalists], the *Socialistas* [Socialists] and the different monarchist factions (the *Manuelistas* [Manuelists] and the *Miguelistas* [Miguelists]). However, the overwhelming majority of the parties existing at that time did not have, in his opinion, much support on a national level (with their sphere of influence being in some cases limited to the large population centres) and were far from corresponding to the genuine aspirations of the Portuguese people in terms of their programmes (Leal 287-338):

Each political group counts as many real adherents as may fit into a not very large hall, and each politician who takes office is the target at which all the other political groups aim the shafts of their ridicule. (...) The parties are in fact small personal groups collecting round any politician of intelligence or energy, or who knows the political ropes and the art of placing or promising to place his friends, and as a consequence they are too much inclined to give prominence to small personal questions and storms in the Lisbon teacup. (...) These groups bicker with all the venom of personal hatred amid the most profound indifference of the country. (Bell 168-170)

In Bell's opinion, the great drama of the First Republic lies in the fact that the new ruling class represented only the interests of a minority – the urban middle class and an elite made up primarily of academics, self-employed professionals and military officers. In addition, it was mainly the capital that had been the stage for the revolutionary successes of the 5<sup>th</sup> October Revolution, with the political changes only reaching the rest of the country by decree. Thus, from the very beginning of the whole process, the provinces had only assisted passively at the change of regime and the political transformations this brought. Only echoes of these reached them without their having played any decisive or active role in them:

At eleven o'clock on the morning of the 5th of October the Republic was formally proclaimed at Lisbon, and Dr. Teophilo Braga installed as President of the Provisional Government. The provinces followed suit without a murmur. "If Lisbon turns Turk to-morrow," Eça de Queiroz had written,



“all Portugal will wear the turban.” Lisbon had now turned Turk, and the three other towns of Portugal, Oporto, almost exclusively Royalist, conservative Coimbra and clerical Braga, proceeded to don the turban. The rest of the country docilely did as it was bidden, and its ignorance was as much affected by the recent change from Monarchy to Republic as it had been by recent changes of Ministry. (...) The field lay open to the Republicans – professors who dreamed that they would soon see their doctrines become realities, professional politicians, who had waited long for their turn, *Carbonarios* who had been skilfully trained as spies. (...) Had the revolution been a proof that the Portuguese nation was alive, it might have been welcomed at whatever cost, but unfortunately it was the outcome of the nation’s apathy, which gave a free hand to a comparatively small body of politicians with foreign ideas. (Bell 195-197)

Bell also underlines the fact that the republican regime was not a true representative democracy since universal suffrage was not envisaged by the Constitution. Only literate males (the majority of whom lived in the cities) had the right to vote and participate in civic life. This meant that only 15% to 20% of Portugal’s population, around six million at the time, could take part in elections, a fact that Bell alludes to at one point in the text:

It must be remembered that there are but a million and a half Portuguese who can read and write, and that the Republic has disfranchised the remaining 4,500,000. But even of the 1,500,000 the majority take no active part in politics. (Bell 169)

The statistics put forward by Bell are fully confirmed by the majority of contemporary historians who have addressed this period of our history. On this subject, Rui Ramos says in *História de Portugal*:

The electoral law of 14 March 1911 for the Constituent Assembly maintained restricted suffrage, the majority system and the large plurinominal circles of liberal “rotativism”. (...) In parliament on 12 June, Afonso Costa, then head of the government, proclaimed that “individuals who do not have clear

and accurate ideas about anything, nor about any person, should not go to the urns so that it cannot be said that the republic was confirmed by sheep." The number of people registered fell 53%, from 846 801 to 397 038, the lowest proportion since 1860. The writer António Sérgio noted "the fact unique in history" of "a republic which restricts the vote compared to the monarchy which it overthrew in the name of democratic principles!" Not only did the electorate decrease: it was sociologically reconstructed in favour of urban centres and those working in the services sector. (...) All these restrictions allowed the republican governments to win elections by mobilizing about 150 000 votes, which was not difficult with the State machine.<sup>9</sup> (Ramos 588-589)<sup>10</sup>

Among the Anglo-Saxon historians Douglas Wheeler also comments briefly on the same subject, in the volume entitled *Republican Portugal. A Political History 1910-1926*:

The majority of assembly delegates owed their May 1911 election victories to a combination of election-rigging by the PRP Directorate, abstention by numbers of independent and liberal monarchists, and a restricted suffrage which eliminated large numbers of illiterate voters (the Electoral Law of 1911). Fear of monarchist counteraction in the elections had prompted the delay in holding them (...) moreover, the Republican leaders, as some later admitted, distrusted the provincial (potential) electorate, and arranged the list of candidates in order to assure a complete PRP victory. (...)

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9 "A lei eleitoral de 14 de Março de 1911 para a Assembleia Constituinte conservou o sufrágio restrito, o sistema maioritário e os grandes círculos plurinominais do "rotativismo" liberal. (...) No parlamento, a 12 de Junho, Afonso Costa, então chefe do governo, proclamara que "indivíduos que não têm ideias nítidas e exactas de coisa nenhuma, nem de nenhuma pessoa, não devem ir à urna, para não se dizer que foi com carneiros que confirmámos a república." O número de recenseados desceu 53%, de 846 801 para 397 038 – a mais baixa proporção desde 1860. O escritor António Sérgio notou "o facto único na História" de "uma república que restringe o voto em relação à monarquia que deitou abaixo em nome de princípios democráticos!". O eleitorado não diminuiu apenas: foi sociologicamente reconstruído a favor dos centros urbanos e dos empregados no sector dos serviços. (...) Todas estas restrições permitiram aos governos republicanos ganharem eleições mobilizando cerca de 150 000 votos, o que com a máquina do Estado não era difícil." (Ramos 588-589)

10 The following two authors have commented along the same lines but using a more moderate tone and more clearly favourable to the republican regime: A. H. de Oliveira Marques, *Ensaios de História da I República Portuguesa*. Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 1988. 51-52; and João B. Serra, "A Evolução Política (1910-1917). *História da Primeira República Portuguesa*. Eds. Fernando Rosas e Maria Fernanda Rollo. Lisboa: Tinta-da-China, 2009. 100.

This law required voters to be literate, male and twenty-one or over, thus excluding women from the suffrage. Also excluded were all soldiers and sailors on active duty. All armed-forces personnel, except those on leave, were deprived of eligibility for the Congress, and all military personnel were made ineligible for the civil service. (Wheeler 78, 96)

Consequently, the overwhelming majority of the conservative, Catholic population favourable to the Monarchy and who were concentrated in the rural areas found themselves prevented from freely expressing their views and making their position known. Such a fact could not but help cause Bell to feel greatly perturbed although, taking into account his own ideological position, he himself would have had difficulty in accepting the adoption of universal suffrage in his own country of origin.

We do, however, find ourselves agreeing with Bell when he says that the noticeable divorce between the institutions of power and the vast majority of the population as well as the poor representativity of the legislative power contributed decisively to the republican regime's isolation and to the drastic reduction in its social support base, inevitably leading to the indifference of the Portuguese people. Something similar had happened with the political parties that came into being after the establishment of the Republic; acceptance of them was notoriously weak and limited to the middle class and to the highly politicized urban elite. (Bell 168-170)

Nevertheless, in Aubrey Bell's opinion, Portugal was still not ready to adopt a political system similar to Britain's and he was utterly convinced that the Portuguese people found themselves at the beginning of the twentieth century unprepared to live in a democracy. He therefore envisages the dissolution of the republican regime and suggests it be replaced by a "strong" government capable of uniting the Portuguese. Any eventual refounding of national political institutions in a democratic form and similar in every way to the model that had been in force in Great Britain for so long with two parties alternating in power would be impossible and undesirable in Portugal at that time. He leads us to understand that such an objective could only be

attained in the still distant future when the majority of the population were fully literate and duly politicized and a real transformation had taken place at the level of education:

A Liberal and a Conservative Government succeeding one another at long intervals, and really making some effort to interest the people and base their authority in the will of the people, must be the aim of Portuguese politics for the present. Then in a century or two, when education has become general and communications have improved, it will be discovered that Portugal is an excellent country for government by referendum.

But for the present the Lisbon politicians continue to pipe to the country, and the country refuses to dance to their piping. (Bell 176)

In this precise respect, Bell's argumentation becomes clearly contradictory. If on one hand he condemns Portugal for importing foreign political, constitutional and ideological models (citing in relation to this the example of the 1826 Constitutional Charter, considered a mere copy of the British constitutional system) and condemns outright the "nefarious" rotativism, (Bell 173, 191-192) he then ends up advocating as a future, albeit distant, solution for Portugal the political model that was in effect in the United Kingdom, with the founding of new political parties similar in every respect to the English ones. (Bell 176)

However (as he lets us understand in the final chapter of *Portugal of the Portuguese*, entitled "Portugal and the Future"), for the immediate moment, Bell sees the abolition of political parties as the only effective solution for the chronic problems that Portugal was suffering, followed by the establishment of an autocratic system of government (which could equally well be monarchic or republican, leaving all possible options open) made up of true patriots whose main objective would be to promote the well-being of the population:

Yet it becomes increasingly evident that the only problem for all Portuguese who love their country is the rooting out of that kind of party politics which has infested and ruined the country for three-quarters of a century.

The remedy is for all such true patriots to club together and found a party and a Press which will have nothing to say to clericalism and anti-clericalism and other such questions, never for a moment discuss them – what have they to do with the government of a State? – will not concern itself with personal ambitions, merely looking upon the State as a public department of police and civil servants, implying hard work, and pay far less than would be earned by men of similar intelligence devoted to industry. (...)

These real patriots would be so undignified politicians that they would not in their speeches mention a single “ism,” but they would tell the people what one village had gained in health by a good sanitation, what another had gained in wealth by having roads well built and well repaired. They would not inveigh against the Capitalist or the Conservative or the Anarchist, but they would attack and, if possible, bring to book those who palm off on the people sandals made of blotting paper and bread made of sawdust. In a word, they would be concerned with the concrete, leaving abstract problems for philosophers of the study. And since most other parties are engaged in importing high-sounding programmes from abroad, this new party might well call itself the Portuguese Party, and its newspaper the Portuguese People. (Bell 243-244)

On the whole, the work we are analysing here reveals a clear contempt for the Portuguese people’s legitimate aspirations to democracy, belittling the people and denying them the opportunity to prosper in freedom at that particular time. Aubrey Bell’s arrogant, ethnocentric attitude, linked to his extreme and notorious conservatism, would lead the more uninformed British reader to the conclusion that democracy was an unsatisfactory system for the vast majority of nations. It was the privilege of a small number of countries that had reached a certain level of social and economic development, but difficult to adapt to the reality, character and traditions of less advanced nations such as Portugal.

The comments Bell makes not only about the domestic Portuguese situation but also about the relations between Portugal and Great Britain in a chapter that is, incidentally, wholly devoted to the centuries-old friendship linking the two nations reflect, albeit implicitly, the

growing apprehension and anxiety he felt at a critical moment when the world was plunged into its first conflict on a global scale and the future of Europe and naturally Great Britain was at stake. (Bell 216-220, 227-228) Aubrey Bell thus ends, although indirectly, by attributing an important role to Portugal and the Anglo-Portuguese Alliance in the complex context of the European and world geostrategic chess game. Thus, in the chapter entitled "Great Britain and Portugal", (Bell 216-228) the author warns the British reader of the decisive nature of the Alliance, especially in regard to the defence and strengthening of Portuguese colonial interests, alleging that the efficient exploitation and management of the resources of the vast Portuguese overseas territories would suit the plans of the United Kingdom by forming a natural obstacle to Germany's expansionist ambitions in Southern Africa. Although Portugal was a small nation and a much smaller colonial power than Great Britain, France or Holland, Aubrey Bell still asserts that it is in England's best interests to keep the Old Alliance alive and to keep Portugal within the British sphere of influence. This period of uncertainty and political indecision in which Portugal found herself immersed seems to make Bell feel very concerned as perhaps he feared that if the conflict developed in Germany's favour, then this might overturn the current balance of power and eliminate once and for all British hegemony in the Iberian Peninsula and in Africa.

Knowing the domestic Portuguese situation as well as he did, Bell would certainly have been aware of the existence of Germanophile factions among both the republicans and the monarchists as well of a pacifist current against Portugal's intervention in the First World War. The possible neutrality of Portugal or its hypothetical alignment with the German Empire would certainly have had the gravest implications for the outcome of the conflict, a fact that would have increased his fear for the future of Great Britain and Europe. It should also be mentioned that in one of the book's early chapters Bell alludes to an increase in commercial trade between Portugal and Germany, subsequently making some interesting observations about this. The author of *Portugal of the Portuguese* does not forego levelling serious accusations at some republican sectors for their open and traditional

resentment towards Great Britain and her imperial policy, denouncing at one and the same time the ambiguity of their stance towards the Alliance and the way in which they openly favour a rapprochement between Portugal and Germany:

The Republicans after the Revolution were obliged to modify their attitude, but it would have been wiser had they frankly accepted the British Alliance, frankly without *arrière-pensée*, instead of exerting themselves to stand well with Great Britain officially while at the same time indulging in petty slights and insinuations, and doing their utmost to encourage German at the expense of British trade in Portugal. German exports to Portugal before the War, although they had not yet equalled the British, were gaining ground very rapidly (*avance à pas de géants*, said M. Marvaud). (...) It was certainly significant and, partly, the natural outcome of the commercial treaty of 1908, that the Lisbon shopkeepers, the most devoted of the Republic's supporters, filled their shops as never before with German wares. Germany methodically set herself to undermine the British Alliance by peaceful penetration. She offered Portuguese tradesmen cheaper (if less lasting) goods than did Great Britain, and made great reductions for large orders, and generally studied and consulted the needs and the character of her Portuguese customers. Her advances were so well received as to give a misleading impression. A German observer, Dr. Gustav Dierks, for instance, writing in 1911, guilelessly remarked that Germans were perhaps of all foreigners the most agreeable to the Portuguese at the present time, "because they have nothing to fear from them, and have learnt to know them as pleasant business men, whose aim is not the systematic exploitation of Portugal." (Bell 219-220)

Equally curious is the wise and prudent way in which the author talks about the Alliance. He avoids any allusion to the very tense moments between the two allied nations (namely the Berlin Conference and the *Ultimatum*) and ends the long history of Anglo-Portuguese relations at the period of the Peninsular War. In this way, Bell omits details that would certainly compromise the flawless image of the faithful ally that he seeks at all costs to convey of the United Kingdom. He also avoids confessing to his readers that Great Britain maintained her secret

ambition to expand her colonial domain to the Portuguese overseas territories. This was fully confirmed by the Anglo-German agreement to share these territories signed by the two potential rivals in 1913, already well into the twentieth century. (Martínez 123-132)

Bell curiously makes use of the passage where he provides a summary description of the Portuguese colonies (233-238) to allude to the extremely high cost these represent to the public treasury at a time of deep economic crisis. In his opinion, they were rich territories with huge potential but the metropole did not know how to colonise or develop them, and Portugal gained no benefit<sup>11</sup> from them since her economy had a huge deficit. Here Bell suggests, as an eventual solution to balance the public finances and the most effective way for the country to pay off its external debt, that some of its less lucrative territories (Portuguese Guinea, Macau and Timor) be sold. (Bell 234-235, 237-238) On the other hand, though, he suggests the Portuguese government should focus its attention and its efforts on the development of Angola and Mozambique, territories adjacent to the British colonies of Rhodesia and South Africa and also to the German possessions of Namibia and Tanganyika. However, he does suggest that a hypothetical Portuguese withdrawal from some colonies would immediately be taken advantage of by other European powers interested in expanding their spheres of political and economic influence, mentioning in this regard both Germany and Belgium but deliberately omitting reference to Great Britain:

[M]uch as Portugal may dislike the British alliance, "it is that which suits Portugal more than any other," since Great Britain is the only power which can effectively support Portugal against the encroachment of Germany and the Congo Free State. (Bell 218-219)

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11 According to Bell, who in this respect corroborates the opinion expressed by Oliveira Martins in *História de Portugal*, our country was a nation of navigators and not of conquerors. Portugal, who had played a pioneering role in the Discoveries and in the colonisation of three continents, did not in fact have (unlike Great Britain) either a vocation or an imperial policy: "But despite their obstinate resolution to part with no inch of territory, the Portuguese have by no means learnt to think imperially; indeed, the interest in the colonies seems only to flicker into life when there is thought to be some danger of losing them. (...) Many observers have thus come to the conclusion that Portugal would be well advised to sell a part of her enormous overseas possessions." (238)



Although *Portugal of the Portuguese* has undeniable merit from the cultural, ethnographic, historical and literary point of view, it is important to stress that the analysis it contains of the political events following the Regicide and the establishment of the Republic is far from being an impartial and reliable document of Portuguese life in the first decades of the twentieth century. For ideological and perhaps personal reasons, Aubrey Bell launches a violent attack on the republican government and on the political class in general. Most of the reforms brought in by the new regime as well as the political directives adopted at the time are subjected to a thorough and systematic scrutiny, inspected globally through a “black magnifying glass”, one that covers the whole of the national reality in a distinctly sombre tone. In fact, at no time does the author seem to see anything positive in the political decisions taken at the time, with his arguments being so tendentious and his vituperative criticisms so violent that, paradoxically, they end up making the reader feel somewhat incredulous. We can say without any doubt that Aubrey Bell’s ultra-conservative arguments result in the systematic demonisation of the First Republic, something very characteristic of most of the authors ideologically positioned on the right wing of the political spectrum.

In the final chapter, entitled “Portugal and the Future”, Bell envisages a wide variety of solutions for the Portuguese crisis, including the dissolution of the republican regime and the return to what he considers to be the natural form of government – monarchy (although he repudiates the backward-looking and reactionary nature of the *Miguelista/Legitimista* faction and clearly shows his disenchantment with D. Manuel II’s inexperience and inability to govern) – or, as an alternative, the establishment of a semi-authoritarian government resulting from moderate republicans and monarchists joining forces. His final appeal for a strengthening of the ties with the Holy See accompanied by an invitation to repeal the Law of Separation between the Church and the State, and the emphasis he places on family values and on re-valuing the rural world, linked to references to *Integralismo*, all allow us to catch a glimpse of the motives that years later would lead Bell to show the greatest sympathy for and

give his whole-hearted support to the authoritarian and corporatist regime of the *Estado Novo*, which would in its turn show its unequivocal appreciation of Bell's efforts to spread knowledge of Portugal in Great Britain.

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