

Science and Diplomacy: The National Education Board and the League of Nations. Portugal in the 1930s

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Abstract

Funded by the Junta de Educação Nacional (JEN—National Education Board), a State institution that aimed to europeanize scientific activity in Portugal in the 1930s, Fernando Silva obtained a PhD at the University of Geneva and became a *privatdozent* at the Faculty of Law. The authoritarian nationalist *Estado Novo*, seeking to avoid upsetting the status quo in Portuguese academia, appointed Silva, a specialist in international law, to a post in the Secretariat of the League of Nations, where international interests were assumed to take precedence over national interests. Embodying the ‘Spirit of Geneva,’ he influenced international diplomacy between the wars while acting against the interests of the Portuguese State. This makes interpretation of the actions of a regime that is traditionally seen as having turned its back on the rest of continental Europe even more complex.

Keywords

League of Nations; *Estado Novo*; National Education Board; Diplomacy; Fernando Correia Pereira da Silva

Resumo

Financiado pela Junta de Educação Nacional (JEN), instituição estatal que procura europeizar a actividade científica em Portugal nos anos 30 do século XX, Fernando Silva doutora-se em Genebra e torna-se *privat-docent* da sua Faculdade de Direito. Ao não confrontar poderes instituídos no meio académico português, o regime autoritário e nacionalista do Estado Novo indica este especialista em Direito Internacional para o Secretariado da SDN, onde era expectável a sobreposição dos interesses internacionais aos nacionais. Encarnando o espírito de Genebra, Fernando Silva influencia a diplomacia internacional entre guerras e decide contrariamente aos interesses do Estado português, complexificando o entendimento de um regime supostamente negligente das questões continentais europeias.

Palavras-chave

Sociedade das Nações; Estado Novo; Junta de Educação Nacional; Diplomacia; Fernando Correia Pereira da Silva

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Introduction

In 2005, Alexandru Grigorescu asked the question, “Are there still lessons to be learned from the League [of Nations]?” (Grigorescu, 2005: 25-42). Although this date does not mark the beginning of renewed historiographical interest in the body, in contrast with the traditional approach which highlighted the failure of the organization, culminating in the outbreak of the Second World War (Carr, 1940; Bendiner, 1975; Kissinger, 1996), historians have since produced a number of studies that examine its role, actions, and *modus operandi* (Pedersen, 2015; 2006: 560-82; 2007: 1091-117; Clavin and Wessels, 2005: 465-92; Sluglett, 2014: 413-27; Laqua, 2015: 159-82; Clavin, 2013).

This paper makes a contribution to the recent move to rehabilitate the role of the League, focusing on its international civil servants, against the background of a different agenda: science and diplomacy (Weiss, 2005: 4-31; Westad, 2000: 551-65; Doel, 1997: 215-44). Focusing on the case of an international civil servant from Portugal, Fernando Correia Pereira da Silva, a scholarship recipient from the Junta de Educação Nacional (JEN—National Education Board) at the University of Geneva and subsequently a member of the Secretariat of the League of Nations, I seek to gauge the influence on his career of the former body, which was responsible for promoting the scientific Europeanization of the country in the 1930s (Lopes, 2017). This study will also examine the links between the recognition Fernando Correia Pereira da Silva received in academia at the international level and the pressure exerted by JEN on central government power in connection with his appointment to the League’s Secretariat. I also seek to identify the reasons why his training was not put to good use in Portugal and to examine the paradox inherent in his role in serving the international community while disregarding the national interest.

My first aim is to examine events prior to Silva’s appointment to a post at the hub of world diplomacy and the consequent benefit that would derive from the use of his skills by serving a transnational organization.² At the same time, I will study the role of JEN, a Portuguese scientific body that operated as part of an authoritarian State with a nationalist discourse but which nevertheless provided support for Silva’s action abroad. Thus, I seek to portray the role of JEN and the *Estado Novo* in a new light.

Although recent studies have focused on JEN, following decades of almost total neglect of the institution in the field of historiography, its role in international relations has not been examined (Rollo, Queiroz, Brandão and Salgueiro, 2012; Fitas, Príncipe, Nunes

² On transnationalism, see Clavin (2005: 421-439).

and Bustamante, 2012; 2013). This study of Silva and JEN provides a new perspective for understanding the role of Portugal at the League of Nations in contrast with the relatively small number of existing studies that mostly examine relations with the League from the perspective of Portuguese foreign relations and tend to focus on individual political figures (Pereira, 2013; Teixeira, 2000: 116-22; Oliveira, 2000; 2017: 129-52; Ferreira, 1992).³

Silva's Specialist Academic Training: The Story behind his Achievements

In a speech proffered at the Lisbon Geography Society on April 27, 1934, the vice-president of JEN, Augusto Pires Celestino da Costa (1884-1956), said:

Many scholars from arts faculties, mainly philologists, have been awarded scholarships, but so far only three scholarships have been awarded to students of law. Despite the board being confident of these scholarship-holders' academic achievements, the powers that be have ignored what they have accomplished. One of these is now a *privatdozent* at the Law Faculty of the University of Geneva, where he has obtained a PhD, but the Superior Council of Public Instruction has not recognized this qualification.⁴

A few months later, the scholarship-holder whom Costa referred to in his speech, Fernando Correia Pereira da Silva, joined the Secretariat of the League of Nations as an international civil servant following four years spent at the University of Geneva and the nearby *Institut Universitaire de Hautes Études Internationales*.⁵ His appointment to the League of Nations (where he was expected to assume a position that was contrary to the interests of the Portuguese State) occurred as the result of a decision made within the *Estado Novo*

³ Excluded from this general framework, as they deal exclusively with the presence of Portuguese civil servants at the League of Nations, are Pacheco (1999) and Branco (2013).

⁴ "As Faculdades de Letras têm fornecido bastantes bolsiros, principalmente filólogos, mas em Direito só foram até hoje concedidas três bolsas. Apesar de a Junta ter a certeza do bom aproveitamento dos pensionistas nenhum caso se fez deles por parte das entidades competentes. Um destes bolsiros é *privat-docent* da Faculdade de Direito da Universidade de Genebra onde se doutorou, mas o nosso Conselho Superior da Instrução Pública não homologou esse doutoramento" (Costa 1934: 21). On the significance of the *privatdozent*, an academic title conferred on someone who holds formal qualifications that denote a temporary teaching status at university level without holding a professorship, see Ben-David and Zloczower (1962: 45-84).

⁵ Fernando Correia Pereira da Silva was born in Lisbon in 1905. His father, Fernando Augusto Pereira da Silva, was an officer in the *Armada Real* (Royal Navy), and his mother was Izaura da Conceição Pereira da Silva. He trained as a lawyer, served as an international civil servant at the Secretariat of the League of Nations from 1934 to 1940, and then, on his return to Portugal, as a *Supremo Tribunal Administrativo* (Administrative High Court Judge) (Camões Institute Archive, Lisbon, Box 0454, File 4, Documents 1 and 173).

itself. Given the opposition in Portugal to his appointment both from within the academic world and government, this appointment was understood as representing the ‘best possible use’ that could be made of his specialist expertise and international prestige.

Silva first applied to JEN—the institution that would support him in his career in the 1930s—as a young Lisbon lawyer. After graduating in 1926 with a final mark of seventeen (out of a maximum of twenty) and having published several articles and a monograph on the League of Nations and international law (Silva, 1928a; 1928b; 1928c; 1928d), the field in which he intended to specialize, he applied for a grant to study abroad in September, 1929.

In his application, Silva suggested that he might attend either the Institute of International Studies in Paris or alternatively the one in Geneva, where he believed the most eminent teachers in his specialist field were to be found. While both institutes represented an attractive proposition, he regarded a move to Geneva, the headquarters of the League of Nations, as liable to provide him with greater opportunities for contact with specialists from all over the world. Unsurprisingly, this idea was accompanied by his desire to complete his internship with this body and one day possibly work for the League’s Portuguese delegation, which would finally enable his home country to be represented at international meetings by a specialist in international law, as was the case with other countries.⁶

On September 30, 1929, he received news of the success of his application, approved by Professors Manuel Rodrigues Júnior (1889-1946), António de Abranches Ferrão (1883-1932), and José Lobo d’Ávila Lima (1885-1956), who chose Geneva over Paris, and he was dispatched by JEN to Switzerland to study for his PhD, ultimately with a view to his taking up a senior professorship back home.⁷

Besides granting a scholarship, JEN also provided diplomatic support, requesting the head of the institution to arrange help for Silva on his arrival.⁸ Evidence of this is provided in a letter dated November 15, 1929 and addressed to the first secretary of JEN, Luís Robertes Simões Raposo (1898-1934), in which he says:

The day after I arrived, I met the director of the *Institut Universitaire de Hautes Études Internationales* and gave him the letter of recommendation that Your

⁶ Camões Institute Archive, Lisbon, Box 0454, File 4, Document 1.

⁷ Camões Institute Archive, Box 0454, File 4, Documents 1, 4, 5, 6 and 99.

⁸ University of Geneva Archive, Dossier Etudiant, CH UNIGE AUG 410f226.

Excellency had furnished me with. It had the desired effect, and he waived the requirement for presenting my diplomas, as the letter provided proof of my academic degree.⁹

Silva also used this document to ask the rector of the University of Geneva if he might be exempted from payment of a number of items included in the fees for the summer semester of the 1929-30 academic year.¹⁰ In his studies in Geneva from November, 1929 to October, 1933, Silva achieved a great deal of success, as shown by the quarterly progress reports sent to Lisbon and, as a result, his scholarship was successively renewed. As early as March, 1930, he presented his first conference paper at the *Institut Universitaire de Hautes Études Internationales* on the decision of the Permanent Court of International Justice with regard to the “Lotus Case.” This paper was regarded as a work of excellence by the Professor of Public Law, Paul Guggenheim (1899-1977), who, a few months later, considered Silva to be eminently well-qualified for dealing with international problems of a juridical nature and predicted that he would go on to produce important work in this field.¹¹

Silva’s research work brought him great prestige on the international stage. He presented further papers at international events during his internship, publishing two articles on international law in the *China Law Review* as well as his PhD dissertation—*La réforme de la cour permanente de justice internationale*—in 1931 (Silva, 1931). On the recommendation of one of the leading international law theorists of the time, Georges Scelle (1878-1961), the dissertation was published in Paris by Librairie du Recueil Sirey. In a letter addressed to Raposo on July 16, 1931, Silva stated that “on recommending me to the director of the Sirey publishing house in Paris, Professor Scelle declared that my thesis is excellent.”¹² This opinion was shared by Manley O. Hudson (1886-1960), a Professor of International Law at the University of Harvard, who, in a critical review in *The American Journal of International Law*, referred to the excellent standard of the study (Hudson, 1932: 450).

⁹ “No dia seguinte à minha chegada, avistei-me com o director do Instituto Universitário de Altos Estudos Internacionais, a quem entreguei o ofício que Vossa Excelência me havia confiado. Produziu o efeito desejado e dispensou a apresentação de qualquer diploma, visto fazer a prova da minha licenciatura” (Camões Institute Archive, Box 0454, File 4, Document 12).

¹⁰ University of Geneva Archive, Dossier Etudiant, CH UNIGE AUG 410f226.

¹¹ Camões Institute Archive, Box 0454, File 4, Documents 25 and 36. On Guggenheim, see <http://www.oxfordreference.com/search?siteToSearch=aup&q=Paul+Guggenheim+&searchBtn=Search&isQuickSearch=true> (last visited February 7, 2014). Regarding the “Lotus Case” see McCarthy (1989: 298-327).

¹² Camões Institute Archive, Box 0454, File 4, Document 43. (underlined in the original). On Scelle, see Diggelmann 2012: 1162-1166.

After he had successfully obtained a PhD in Law from the University of Geneva, Silva's name was put forward for the post of *privatdozent* at the Faculty of Law by the above-mentioned Scelle, the Professor of International Public Law both at the faculty and at the *Institut Universitaire de Hautes Études Internationales*. Scelle informed Silva that on July 15, 1931, he had suggested to the Executive Board of the Faculty of Law that Silva should be awarded the temporary leadership of a course at the faculty. His appointment was confirmed following the approval of his application in accordance with legal requirements, and, "besides a stateless Jew," Silva became the only foreign *privatdozent* at the Faculty, responsible for the running of a course in international criminal law, which was specially created for him from 1931 to 1935¹³.

The fact that this was "the first time that an international criminal law course (had) been offered in Geneva" explains the interest shown by several Swiss newspapers, for example the *Journal de Genève*, which published an article on the subject on December 1, 1931.¹⁴ According to Silva, there was only one other course like this, at the *Institut des Hautes Études Internationales* in Paris, which led him to seek JEN's permission to attend the course in the French capital for a semester in order to be able to compare it with his own course in Geneva.¹⁵

Despite the board authorizing this suggestion, Silva's work prevented him from carrying out his plan. Projects that engaged his full attention included making a start on a collaborative work with Jesús María Yepes (1892-1962), a Professor at the Academy of International Law at the Hague and the University of Bogotá, with whom he published the first of the three volumes of *Commentaire théorique et pratique du Pacte de la Société des Nations et des statuts de l'Union panaméricaine* in 1934 (Yepes and Silva, 1934). Its publication in French by A. Pedone helped to increase Silva's prestige on the international stage and was commented on in various journals on both sides of the Atlantic, including the American review, *Foreign Affairs*. An article by William L. Langer (1896-1977), a Professor at the University of Harvard, dealt with the detailed comparative legal analysis of the organization and the affairs of the League of Nations and the Pan-American Union carried out by Silva and Yepes (Langer, 1934: 524).

¹³ Camões Institute Archive, Box 0454, File 4, Documents 43, 88, 141, and 145; University of Geneva Archive, CH GE AUG Programme des cours, 1931/1934, 1934/1937.

¹⁴ *Journal de Genève*, December 1, 1931, 4, available at

<http://www.letempsarchives.ch/Default/Skins/LeTempsFr/Client.asp?Skin=LeTempsFr&enter=true&AppName=2&AW=1391768365085> (last visited 7 February 2014); Camões Institute Archive, Box 0454, File 4, Document 115.

¹⁵ Camões Institute Archive, Box 0454, File 4, Documents 133 and 139.

Before completing his work on *Commentaire théorique et pratique*, following an application that he had presented to JEN, Silva was given the go-ahead to study international relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science from April to June, 1934. With the end of his current scholarship in October, 1933, following a stay in Portugal, he was awarded an *equiparação de bolsheiro* for study abroad, which enabled him to receive the benefits enjoyed by a regular scholarship-holder without receiving a grant. Thus, he was able to attend the courses and use the library of an institution which was “currently regarded as the best place for studying international relations in English in the whole world,” thereby gathering the material essential for the completion of a work which he would use when teaching the new course at the Faculty of Law in Geneva: *La Société des Nations et l’Union Panaméricaine*.¹⁶

In London, he was able to extend his network of contacts in the world of science. The contact that he established with Hersch Lauterpacht (1897-1960), the editor of the *Annual Digest of Public International Law Cases*, published by the Department of International Studies at the London School of Economics and Political Science, led to his being invited to edit a section of the edition published in 1935.¹⁷

Resistance from within the Academic World to the Dynamic Performance of JEN: Appointment to the Secretariat of the League of Nations as a Response by the Government

Assuming that the implications of the developments in the career of a single academic can be applied to the broader context, thus providing us with a greater understanding of the mechanisms of knowledge production and society in general (Shortland and Yeo, 1996: 1-39), the examination of the case of Silva shows the *Estado Novo* to have been a regime that did not encourage change within the academic and ministerial worlds, such as those proposed by the forward-looking JEN.

An example of this is the fact that Silva’s PhD was refused recognition in February, 1932, despite the pressure exerted by JEN on the Ministry of Public Instruction for recognition to be granted. The Superior Council of the Ministry based its decision on a

¹⁶ The sentence reproduced here comes from a letter sent by Silva to Raposo on June 12, 1933 (Camões Institute Archive, Box 0454, File 4, Document 145. See also University of Geneva Archive, CH GE AUG *Programme des cours*, 1931/1934, 1934/1937).

¹⁷ *Annual Digest of Public International Law Cases: years 1929-1930*, 1935. See also Camões Institute Archive, Box 0454, File 4, Document 163.

provision in the law which stated that a PhD in Law from a Portuguese university must be concerned exclusively or principally with Portuguese law, which was not the case in the circumstances in question. The Minister of Public Instruction then formalized this decision. Silva's ambition to obtain a professorship at a Portuguese university, supported by JEN, was thus thwarted, signaling the point where it could be argued from the domestic standpoint that the investment in Silva's academic training at the doctorate level was wasted.¹⁸

Thus, excluded from a teaching post in higher education in Portugal, Silva asked the board to contact the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to nominate him as head of the Portuguese Chancellery at the League of Nations or to the post of juridical consultant at the ministry. Either of these positions would involve challenging established practices within the framework of the existing power-structure; however, this request was denied. Despite appeals to the successive ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Secretary-General of the ministry regarding Silva's "excellence," citing the overriding need for the State to take full advantage of his training, the post of head of the Portuguese Chancellery at the League of Nations continued to be occupied by career civil servants, rather than by a specialist in international law, and access to the post of juridical consultant at the ministry remained restricted to full professors at the University of Lisbon.¹⁹

Similar difficulties were encountered with the Ministry of Justice and Cults. As a delegate of the public prosecutor in Mogadouro, an isolated district in the interior of northern Portugal completely cut off from the mainstream of national and international life, Silva was regularly faced with the specter of being forced to return there and suffer what he regarded as exile. JEN therefore lobbied the ministry on his behalf and although the board managed to have his return to Mogadouro delayed, ensuring that the investment in his education was not wasted, it did not manage to circumvent the exceptional circumstances in which, during part of his stay in Geneva, he was to become the only scholarship-holder abroad not to receive remuneration as a public servant.²⁰

The government's concern that the investment in Silva's qualifications might be wasted is also demonstrated by the solution adopted. Ironically, the search for an alternative solution led to the nationalist *Estado Novo* recommending "the only Portuguese

¹⁸ Camões Institute Archive, Box 0454, File 4, Documents 1, 96, 110 and 171.

¹⁹ Camões Institute Archive, Box 0454, File 4, Documents 72, 76, 103, 141, 142, 162, 163, 165, 169, and 171.

²⁰ Camões Institute Archive, Box 0454, File 4, Documents 84, 85, 86, 92, 102, 109, 126, and 127.

expert in international studies at the highest level²¹ for a post with a transnational organization—the Secretariat of the League of Nations—thus placing his skills at the disposal of the international community.

For the League of Nations, Silva's profile certainly fit the bill. The League sought to attract experts of an extremely high caliber, with solid experience, who had published important papers or carried out public service, thus demonstrating their solidarity with the League's mission (Ranshofen-Wertheimer, 1943: 878; Branco, 2013: 10). As for Silva, his ability was widely recognized: he had gained experience in the Information Section of the Secretariat in September, 1930 and had taught a number of courses as a *privatdozent*, as well as publishing the papers mentioned above, in which he argued in favor of the primacy of international law and the League's principles and operations.

Being admitted as a member of the Mandates Section of the Secretariat²² not only implied recognition of his merit by the League of Nations—signaling the value it assigned to his expertise in international law, which was essential for work in the field of mandates (Anghie, 2006: 739-753)—but also involved the interference of the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ranshofen-Wertheimer (1894-1957) explains that nomination to the Secretariat not only required that nominees had excellent qualifications for the post but also that they had gained the respect and goodwill of their national government. The Secretary General of the League therefore sought to recruit international civil servants who enjoyed the endorsement of their respective governments (Ranshofen-Wertheimer, 1943: 878-879).

In the case of Silva, this blessing derived from JEN's actions. In November, 1929, Raposo requested the help of the Minister of Foreign Affairs with the aim to Silva securing an internship at the Secretariat of the League of Nations. Contacts established by the ministry, through the Portuguese Chancellery at the League, with José Plà (1897-1981), the head of the Information Section at the Secretariat, resulted in a joint effort that culminated in a communication being sent from the Secretary General of the League of Nations to Silva, inviting him to take up the internship in September, 1930.²³

When Silva had obtained his PhD, the board's pressure on the ministry intensified and although this did not allow him to be appointed as a member of the ministry's staff, it

²¹ Camões Institute Archive, Box 0454, File 4, Document 163.

²² With the mandates system, a solution was sought that reflected President Woodrow Wilson's determination to avoid an annexationist peace and his allies' desire to retain control of the captured Ottoman and German possessions, ensuring administrative control, but not formal sovereignty, for these victorious powers over the territories in question (Pedersen, 2007: 1103).

²³ Camões Institute Archive, Box 0454, File 4, Documents 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 48.

resulted in his name being put forward to the Secretary General of the League of Nations in order to replace Narciso Freire d'Andrade (1898-1968) at the Mandates Section.²⁴ A telegram sent by Augusto de Vasconcelos (1867-1951), Portugal's representative at the League, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Lisbon on April 14, 1934, shows the importance of political intervention in relation to the acceptance of Silva for this position:

A decree has been published in the *Diário do Governo* nominating secretary Freire d'Andrade to this Chancellery and I have consulted the Secretary-General with regard to his replacement. Pereira da Silva's nomination has been very well received and has been accepted by the Secretary-General. There is no doubt that he will be appointed. The Secretary-General has asked us to send him a list of three candidates in order to formally comply with the regulations. [. . .] The Secretary-General will appoint the candidate nominated by the government.²⁵

The efforts made by the board in support of Silva, from September, 1929 onwards, finally led to full benefit being derived from the investment that had been made in his academic career—albeit accruing to the international community rather than at the national level, as might have been expected in the case of an authoritarian nationalist regime such as that of Portugal.

The “Spirit of Geneva” Embodied by Silva: The Precedence of International Interest over Supposed National Interest

International civil servants were supposedly charged by the representatives or the representative body of different States with acting in their name and serving their respective interests continuously and exclusively (Basdevant, 1930). The staff of the Secretariat of the League of Nations were thus international civil servants discharging their

²⁴ It should be noted that Narciso Freire d'Andrade is not Alfredo Freire d'Andrade (1859-1929), who was the Portuguese representative at the Permanent Mandates Commission from 1921 to 1928 (Pedersen, 2015: XII-XIII).

²⁵ “Tendo-se publicado no Diário do Governo decreto promovendo secretário Freire d'Andrade para esta chancelaria fui tratar com Secretário Geral sua substituição. Candidatura Pereira da Silva é muito bem acolhida aceite pelo Secretário Geral. Não haverá concurso. Secretário Geral pede que lhe mandemos lista tríplice para se conformar regulamento. [. . .] Secretário Geral nomeará candidato designado pelo Governo” (Diplomatic Historical Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lisbon, 3rd Floor, Cabinet 1, 539, File 17, Personal).

duties in the international, rather than the domestic, arena. Being answerable to the Secretary General of the League, they were not allowed to seek or receive instructions from any government authority and were required to act exclusively in the interests of the international community, which were those of the organization itself (Piiparinen, 2016: 840-2; Siotis, 1963; Branco, 2013: 111-2; and Kott, 2015: 131-58).

The transnational nature of the League of Nations, one of its greatest pioneering qualities and one of its most important legacies, nevertheless raised doubts as to its feasibility as an organization. Some would argue that no man is neutral, so that no international civil servant can be neutral; in contrast, Dag Hammarskjöld (1905-1961) argued that international civil servants can be neutral, or at least perform neutral acts, and that in order to do so they must obey the law and remain truthful (Hammarskjöld, 1961: 329-53). Such a standard of integrity was essential for those engaged in fulfilling the League's mission.

The three key organs of the League of Nations were the Assembly, the Council, and the Secretariat, the first two being subject to the influence of the third. The power of the Secretariat lay in its privileged access to intelligence and its capacity for constructing information (Branco, 2013: 130, 133). It was the members of the different sections of the Secretariat who, on the assembly's instructions, gathered and organized data and produced draft intelligence reports, supporting data, and even policy recommendations, although, in the latter case, this was not part of their official functions. All this was then presented to the Council and the Assembly by consultative committees, responsible for producing reports based on the intelligence provided by the Secretariat, which was crucial in shaping deliberations within these organs and the resolutions they produced (Clavin and Wessels, 2005: 465-92; Branco, 2013: 37, 102; 108; Pedersen, 2007: 1112-3). This is how those in the Secretariat, working behind the scenes, influenced international diplomacy in the period between the wars.

From December, 1934 to 1940, when he announced his intention to return to Portugal, Silva was part of this dynamic. Documentary sources from his period in office include a number of letters, reports, and notes addressed to the Secretariat, in particular to Edouard de Haller (1897-1982), the director of the Mandates Section from 1938 onwards. These documents are predominately concerned with the administration of the Ottoman Middle East under the French mandate, for example: a report on a request made to the Mandates Section regarding juridical conflicts involving Syria and Lebanon; the proposal presented regarding the procedures to be adopted so that the terms of the 1937 treaty

between France and Turkey ensuring the territorial integrity of the future Sanjak of Alexandretta in French-controlled Syria could be implemented; and the problem of the conservation of electoral lists in the first elections in this territory.²⁶ In November, 1938, following the letter in which the plenipotentiary minister of Japan announced the end of his government's cooperation with the League of Nations, Silva wrote of the proposal drawn up with Joseph Nisot (1894-1978), a member of the Juridical Section, dealing with the diplomatic course to be taken in relation to the Japanese mandate in the Pacific islands north of the equator.²⁷

A number of studies produced by Silva also examined the organization of the League of Nations, including a paper containing proposals for the reorganization of the Slavery Commission, another paper on the appropriate procedure for calling the seventeenth extraordinary session of the Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC), and one on the appointment of temporary administrators to replace members of the PMC, as well as a study dealing with issues raised by its permanent staff in 1939.²⁸

On October 4, 1927, Portugal ratified the Slavery Convention signed in Geneva on September 25, 1926 with a commitment by the signatories to working for the abolition of slavery in the territories that they controlled and safeguarding against the reappearance of slavery under the guise of forced labor (Redman, 1994: 759-800, Jerónimo, 2015: 242-9).²⁹ However, in practice, Portugal did not collaborate actively with the other signatories and even opposed the implementation of some measures proposed at the League's Assembly, with a view to ensuring that the convention would achieve effective results (Redman, 1994: 759-800; Pedersen, 2015: 130-3, 237-43; Oliveira, 2017: 129-52). The proposal made by Silva in February, 1936 for the reorganization of the Slavery Commission is therefore especially significant.

Silva argued that only by preserving the character of the commission, exclusively composed of international civil servants rather than including national delegates whose dependence on their governments might compromise their opposition to its policies, could

²⁶ League of Nations Archives, Geneva, 6A/34960/11469; 6A/30616/29162; 6A/34884/29161. On the French mandate in Syria and Lebanon, see also Fieldhouse (2006: 245-334) and Longrigg (1958).

²⁷ League of Nations Archives, 6A/3192/3192. On the participation of Japan in the League of Nations, see also Burkman (2008).

²⁸ League of Nations Archives, 6B/21563/2663; 6A/15953/486; 6A/35968/761; 6A/18470/5459. It should be noted that Silva did not serve on the Permanent Mandates Commission. A recent study on the Permanent Mandates Commission was produced by Pedersen (2015). See also Dimier (2002: 333-60).

²⁹ League of Nations (1927). *Treaty Series. Publication of Treaties and International Engagements registered with the Secretariat of the League of Nations*, LX, 1, 2, 3, 4. Lausanne: Imprimeries Réunies S. A., 253-70.

effective practical measures be implemented to counter slavery.³⁰ Consequently, he adopted a clear stance in opposition to the interests of the *Estado Novo*, which staunchly defended national sovereignty and expressed its opposition in the Assembly to the adoption of measures that might reduce the work carried out in its colonial territories which was tantamount to slavery (Redman 1994: 759-800; Campina and Tomás, 2016: 77-93).

Unlike his predecessor in the Mandates Section, d'Andrade, who was attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was thus bound to pass on to the government all intelligence that was likely to be of use, Silva did not play the role of an informant of the Portuguese State. Such was the usefulness of the intelligence provided by Silva's predecessor that special funds were provided for what was termed "Expenses essential for national defense" (Branco, 2013: 120-8). In contrast, on the rare occasions that Silva sent intelligence to the government, it was not classified as either "confidential" or "highly confidential" in nature.

One of the few such contributions made by Silva was the information sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on January 13, 1937, which would be discussed by the Council at its next meeting, renewing the mandates of the members of the Slavery Commission.³¹ In 1940, he also wrote two letters to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Oliveira Salazar (1889-1970): in the first, dated May 4, he mentioned that the League of Nations wanted the vacant seat on the Permanent Mandates Commission that had arisen as a result of the death of Count Penha Garcia (1872-1940) to be filled by another Portuguese and sought the government's nomination for a candidate, listing the qualities he should possess;³² in the second, dated May 18, Silva stated that, in the event of an invasion of Switzerland, the League of Nations would be evacuated. If this happened, knowing that the League would seek to set up operations in a neutral country, he asked the chairman of the Council of Ministers if Portugal could host all or some international departments, such as those concerned with hygiene, social and child welfare, combating drugs, and economic and fiscal studies.³³

The Secretariat no doubt had its "spies and time-servers" (Pedersen, 2007: 1112), but Silva was an exemplary international civil servant: one who sought to promote a particular blend of pragmatism and hope that became known as the "spirit of Geneva" (Pedersen, 2007: 1112-3).

³⁰ League of Nations Archives, 6B/21563/2663.

³¹ Diplomatic Historical Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 3rd Floor, Cabinet 2, Folder 980, File 14, Slavery.

³² Torre do Tombo National Archive, Salazar Archive, Lisbon, NE, 5B, Box 450, File 12, 751-754.

³³ Diplomatic Historical Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2nd Floor, Cabinet 47, Folder 53, File 60.

Conclusion

In the interwar period, working as an international civil servant at the Secretariat of the League of Nations involved serving behind the scenes at the hub of international diplomacy and exerting an influence on the content of resolutions of a political nature produced by the League through reports, memoranda, notes, and recommendations. Thus, “Nothing the League produced was more quietly revolutionary than the International Secretariat” (Pedersen, 2015: 46).

This study examined the reasons behind the nomination of Silva to the Secretariat and found them to be bound up with the action of a scientific body, the National Education Board. It was this institution’s provision of funding and contacts, through which the nationalist State aimed to Europeanize scientific research in Portugal, that allowed Silva to study and work for an extended period in Geneva at the university and the *Institut Universitaire de Hautes Études Internationales*, where he obtained his PhD and pursued advanced studies in international law. The combination of the merit and recognition he received in the international sphere and the board’s actions in influencing the Portuguese authorities enabled him to be appointed to the Mandates Section of the League of Nations.

As far as the *Estado Novo* is concerned—regarded by historians of politics and international relations as having sought to strengthen Portugal’s ties with the overseas colonies and cultivating the notion of an “Atlantic role” while deliberately turning away from the rest of continental Europe and remaining critical of the League of Nations (Pereira, 2013; Teixeira, 2000: 116-22; Oliveira, 2000)—the appointment of Silva to this body sheds new light on the relationship between Portugal and the League. What I present here is a new response to Grigorescu’s question as to whether there were still any lessons to be learned from the League of Nations. Answering this question renders gaining an understanding of the portrayal of the *Estado Novo* more complex than was previously thought. While recognizing the decline in the prestige of the League of Nations, which was already evident in 1934, we see how the regime, although it still remained authoritarian and nationalistic, responded to the internal resistance demonstrated by the academic world by abandoning its supposed interest in Portugal in favor of the interests of the international community, thereby contributing towards the mission of the League of Nations pursued between the wars through the Secretariat and its pioneering transnational approach.

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