



Afonso Costa: Portugal (Makers of the Modern World)

Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses

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Portugal's poor military performance in the First World War, notably in Africa, restricted Afonso Costa's (1871-1937) ability to secure his diplomatic aims which, in any case, were highly unrealistic. Nevertheless, his loyal press in Portugal described him as the 'leader of the small nations', and reported his every statement as a major triumph. Afonso Costa's most important intervention took place in May 1919, when he denounced the Allies' unwillingness to make Germany pay for all the damage she had caused during the conflict; this speech led to a number of newspaper interviews in which Costa restated his position. The final draft of the Treaty was a complete shock to Portuguese public opinion: It effectively spelt the end of Costa's political career. This book considers the political implications of Portugal's participation in the First World War and of the 'defeat' in Paris. Reconciliation between the rival parties – and between factions within parties – became impossible, as did, as a result, the formation of a stable cabinet.

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