

Luís Adão da Fonseca: From the CNCDP to the IC, an Awareness of Himself

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Abstract

Luís Adão da Fonseca held two positions of the utmost interest for his career. With different profiles, but still with various affinities, both roles allowed him to experience new skills, and to carry out—especially at CNCDP—some initiatives that he had been desiring to accomplish for a long time. This is a personal testimony about those years that truly offered him several challenges, which to a certain extent shaped his way of being, proving to be priceless experiences for his later career.

Keywords

CNCDP, Instituto Camões, Projects, Research, Culture

Resumo

Luís Adão da Fonseca ocupou dois cargos com imenso interesse para a sua carreira. Com perfil diferente, mas, ainda assim, com muitas afinidades, ambos os cargos lhe permitiram experimentar novos desafios e realizar, sobretudo na CNCDP, algumas iniciativas que desejava colocar em prática há muito tempo. Este é um testemunho pessoal sobre esses anos que, em boa verdade, lhe ofereceram diversos reptos que, em certa medida, moldaram a sua maneira de ser, revelando-se inestimáveis para o seu percurso posterior.

Palavras-chave

CNCDP, Instituto Camões, Projectos, Investigação, Cultura

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“We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind.”

William Wordsworth

In the mid-1980s, Luís Adão da Fonseca, professor at the University of Porto, usually arrived at his office at 9:30 in the morning and returned home at 8:00 in the evening. His daily routine was spent teaching undergraduate and master’s degree students, attending meetings of the scientific board, and dealing with all kinds of administrative commitments, in many ways a very similar list of tasks to those of other teachers at the faculty. After he had completed these obligations, but still in his office, a new phase of his day would begin. It was time to think—standing by his office window, his hands behind his back, looking at the garden around the Burmester mansion, he would stay in that position for a long time. Most of the time, he would return to his chair, knowing that I was still there and begin to tell me about some of the ideas he wished to develop in the future.

As he wrote later about his experience at the University of Navarra, “there I learned that the university only flourishes in a climate of dialogue and intellectual humility; I learned that it is important to leave the comfort of the city we live in; I learned that we don’t know everything, that we have to listen to the opinion of the others (also the youngest), that science always results from a work program. In fact, science is an essential dimension of the university.”²

He expected that he would still have enough time to develop some of the ideas he very much wanted to put in place, primarily relating to the further projection and promotion of his department, with the dissemination and publication of its ongoing research being considered a major priority. On a more collaborative level, he had plans for a summer university (for which the statutes had already been drawn up) as well as a very thorough scheme for cooperation with other institutions, namely Spanish and Italian universities, which would involve joint research projects and the exchange of teachers.

The expected outcome of such an appealing set of objectives was indeed quite ambitious, or, at least, so it seemed to a young student, such as I was then. Whenever he shared these ideas with me, he could not possibly have failed to notice how amazed I was to hear his views on what he considered a suitable performance for universities and for academic policies in general. He did not need any comments from me (nor did he get any, at

² Unpublished speech. Porto, Fundação Eng. António de Almeida, 6 January 2010.

least at that time), but he needed someone he could trust. Day after day, he understood that he could do so, just as he still can, more than thirty years later.

As was to be expected, on several occasions when he shared his ideas with other members of his department, he came up against a number of obstacles. Nevertheless, his persistence and determination led him to never abandon his convictions, and the strong reputation that the group of medievalists at the faculty achieved during those years (a status that would continue for many years) is undeniable proof of their expressive adherence to at least some of his plans.

However, perhaps the most challenging of his ideas were, at that time, still being reflected upon during those late afternoons, from where, even today, I find it difficult to get out.



Fig. 1: CNCDP logo.³

Towards the end of 1986,⁴ the Portuguese government decided to establish the Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimientos Portugueses (CNCDP—National Commission for the Commemoration of the Portuguese Discoveries). The framework for its organization was to be defined shortly afterwards and, in the spring of 1988, “Vasco Graça Moura was then appointed Commissioner-General . . . and in April of the following year, he was also appointed coordinator of the Executive Committee, remaining in both positions until the end of 1995” (Oliveira 2003: 1).

Adão da Fonseca knew Graça Moura. In the world of culture, to which they both belonged, it was expected that this would happen. But there was a specific episode that favored this proximity between them and that gave rise to their prolonged and fruitful relationship. Before his appointment as the head of the CNCDP, Vasco Graça Moura had been the director of Imprensa Nacional/Casa da Moeda throughout the 1980s (Queiroz 2020: 11), and, at that time, he had invited Luís Adão da Fonseca to write a book about the medieval Treaty of Windsor (Fonseca 1986). He desperately needed a name that would guarantee him scientific rigor and, furthermore, someone who would agree to write such a

³ <https://seeklogo.com/vector-logo/32661/cncdp>.

⁴ Decree-Law No. 391, of 22 November 1986.

book in a very short time. Luís Adão da Fonseca accepted and, during the brief period in which the book was being prepared, they had time to initiate a friendship that was based on great personal and intellectual respect.

In March 1989,⁵ Graça Moura suggested that Luís Adão da Fonseca should be appointed as a member of the Scientific Council and then as his “Assistant Coordinator” until 1992, when he succeeded Professor Luís de Albuquerque as President of the Scientific Council of that same institution.⁶ Until his resignation, at his own request, in January 1996, Luís Adão da Fonseca found himself working in an entirely new universe, where he would be able to put into practice some of his most cherished projects. Besides his lengthy stays in Lisbon, the CNCDP also had an office in Porto (Fundação Eng. António de Almeida), where Luís Adão da Fonseca worked, with the collaboration of Maria da Conceição Osório and me.

Some years later, referring to that period, he wrote: “Vasco Graça Moura . . . is, for me, the face of one of the most important phases of my life, between 1989 and 1996 . . . Until then I had experienced the university and history from the inside, but now I was given the opportunity to view them from an outside perspective.” Shortly afterwards, in the same text, he went on to say: “I realized that when great projects are well thought out and well structured, they almost always turn out well, provided that we put in the necessary time and effort. I should like to highlight two of them: the setting up of a summer university (Estudos Gerais da Arrábida) and the organization of the commemorations of the birth of Prince Henry the Navigator, held in 1994 in Porto.”⁷

It is easy to understand his reasons for choosing to highlight the two programs that he mentioned on this occasion. As they were each so different in their design and conception, they truly illustrate some of the ideas that he idealized for the CNCDP’s commemorative program.

The first program had already been on his mind ever since he returned from Pamplona to Porto, as stated earlier. An agreement between the CNCDP and the Fundação Oriente made it possible to hold the summer university in the fabulous premises of the Convento da Arrábida. The aim was to organize seminars dedicated to themes related to both the Portuguese expansion and its presence in the world. Its structure consisted of six seminars (Pedro Nunes, Damião de Góis, João de Barros, Fernão Mendes Pinto, Francisco

⁵ Order from the Prime Minister's Office Nr. 2/89. Published in *Diário da República*, 2ª série, nº 63, 1989.03.16.

⁶ Order from the Minister for the Presidency and National Defense, 1992.07.20. Published in *Diário da República*, 2ª série, nº 17, 1992.08.20. For Luís Adão da Fonseca, this commitment also meant his becoming the editor of the journal *Mare Liberum*, which, from the fourth issue onwards, became a biannual publication.

⁷ Speech. Porto, Fundação Eng. António de Almeida, 6 January 2010.

Sanches, and Duarte de Solis). Each seminar would have both an opening and a closing lecture for which some prominent figure would be invited, as was the case, for example, with Ernest Gellner, one of the most important intellectuals of the last century (Jerónimo 2020).

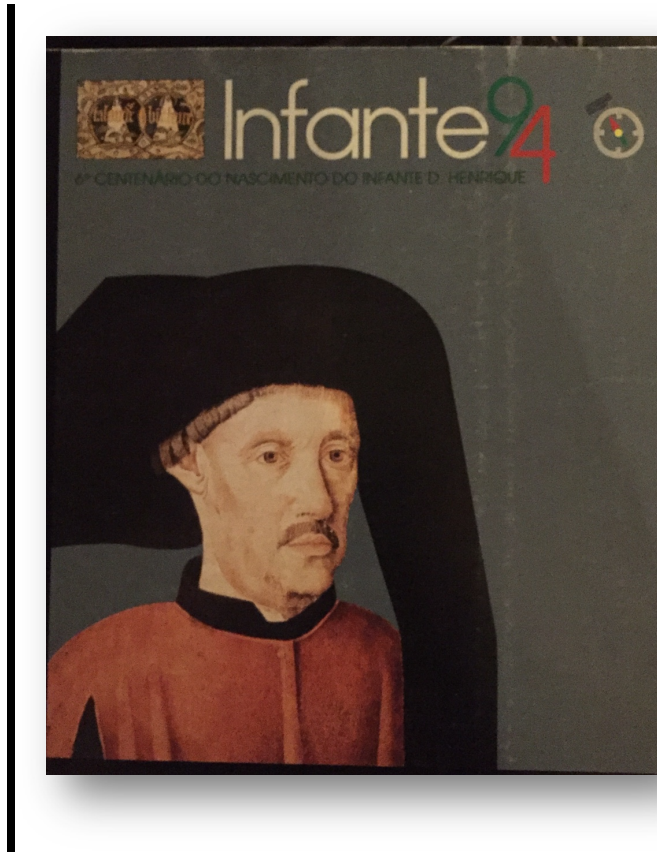


Fig. 2: Program of events for *Infante 94*. CNCDP, 1994.

The second program—"Prince Henry the Navigator 1994"—was designed to celebrate the 600th anniversary of the birth of this *infante*. It was planned that it would receive support from a broad spectrum of different bodies, ranging from town halls to the Portuguese Armed Forces, and from universities to publishers, among many others. A series of events were organized under the scope of this program, including exhibitions, concerts, theatre, cinema, sports, seminars, interventions in the national heritage, and publications. Luís Adão da Fonseca's involvement with the organization of all these events was not always the same (naturally, the seminars and publications occupied his time more directly [AAVV 1994: 190]), but even so, he played a truly decisive role in the planning of this comprehensive set of activities. And it is easy to understand why. On 4 March 1992,⁸ two years prior to the commencement of the commemorations, the Porto Town Hall hosted a reception to present the idea for the program to more than seventy representatives of institutions that were

⁸ <https://arquivos.rtp.pt/conteudos/60-centenario-do-nascimento-do-infante-dom-henrique/>.

committed to collaborating in the celebrations planned for 1994. All the meetings and contacts held in preparation for this session were his responsibility, in close collaboration with the Commissioner-General and Eng. Paulo Vallada, the head of the *Confraria das Almas de Corpo Santo de Massarelos* (founded precisely in 1394), whose guidance and involvement in the organization of the event had been hugely important from the very first moment of its conception.

In short, both “Arrábida” and “Infante 94” were to prove highly significant events, not only because they led to the involvement in the commemorations of various sectors of society, but also because they promoted a great enhancement of knowledge in their related areas through the production of publications, which were successfully organized in both cases.⁹

It is, however, very clear that his work extended much further than these two examples may suggest, and, even considering the close proximity that I enjoyed to this whole process, it is still rather difficult to explain the exact nature of his commitment to his work. He displayed an immense necessity to always do more but also a sense of despair when confronted with the relative inflexibility shown by many academic institutions of the time. As a member of the “scientific council,” the “assistant coordinator” to the commissioner or president of the scientific council of the CNCDP, he always tried to respond to every challenge placed before him. As an academic with a university career, he knew only too well the need for a well-structured program to support research, namely through the “training of new researchers in the areas of the Portuguese Discoveries, research into unpublished sources, and publication, as well as the organization of specialized courses” (Fonseca 1991:4).¹⁰ In this way, he was able to pursue the challenges outlined in the “Plano de Acções a Médio Prazo (1990-1995)” issued by the CNCDP.¹¹

⁹ In 1995, Maria Alzira Seixo coordinated one of the courses at the Convento da Arrábida, dedicated to the theme “A Viagem na Literatura” (“The Voyage in Literature”). The ongoing investment in the theme under the scope of both the international seminar “Studies on Travel Literature,” created in 1994 by the International Association for Comparative Literature, and the seminar “The Voyage in Literature,” supported by the CNCDP in 1990, was certainly a major factor behind the publication of the book *A História Trágico-Marítima (Análises e Perspectivas)*, Maria Alzira Seixo and Alberto Carvalho (eds.), Lisbon: Cosmos, 1996. This investment later had a visible continuity: see *A Viagem na Literatura*, Maria Alzira Seixo (ed.), Lisbon: Publicações Europa-América, 1997. In the case of the “Infante 94” program, see, among many others: *Mare Liberum. Revista de História dos Mares*, vol. 7, 1994, where a significant number of studies dedicated to Prince Henry and his time were published, and the proceedings of the seminar “Historiografia da Dinastia de Avis,” published in *Revista de Ciências Históricas*. Porto: Universidade Portucalense, 1994. Also worthy of mention are the various exhibition catalogues that were produced, such as *O Rosto do Infante* (1994), Francisco Faria Paulino (ed.). Lisbon: Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses.

¹⁰ *Projectos de Investigação. Acções na Área Universitária*. Lisbon: CNCDP, p. 5.

¹¹ *Plano de acções a médio prazo (1990-1995)*. Lisbon: CNCDP, undated.

The overall aims of this scientific policy were to strengthen the research structures at both Portuguese and foreign universities, as well as to guarantee the systematic granting of scholarships, also in collaboration with other institutions, and the publication of studies related to the “Discoveries and the Portuguese Cultural Presence in the World,” as he also wrote (Fonseca 1991: 4). The results are well known but, as I shared the responsibility for the management of some of these activities, I dare to mention that in the summer of 1991, there were more than seventy ongoing projects involving more than 200 researchers. Although the area of this subsidized research was clearly obvious (the Portuguese discoveries), there was an attempt to arrive at a range of themes that, when taken together, would allow for a more comprehensive knowledge of the discoveries: the publication of sources, history, legal history, history of philosophy, literature and linguistics, architecture and art, science, etc. After the death of Luís de Albuquerque, he took over responsibility for the publication of the magazine *Mare Liberum. Revista de História dos Mares* (volumes 4-10), in which, once again, historians were given space to present articles previously approved by members of the scientific council. In fact, this was already a kind of peer-review system.

It is clear that Luís Adão da Fonseca had a vision of what he considered to be fundamental if the CNCDP was to leave behind a visible and lasting legacy. The establishment of the Centro de Estudos Damião de Góis at the Portuguese National Archive (Torre do Tombo) is another good example of his vision, since the idea was to gather together the results of three research projects on the chancelleries of the kings Afonso V, João II, and Manuel I, which would then be made available to the public through a database search. Other initiatives worth mentioning are the Jaime Cortesão Chair (São Paulo, Brazil), the Vasco da Gama Chair (European University Institute, Florence, Italy) and some research centers that were also created abroad (e.g., the Center for the Study of the Portuguese Discoveries at Oxford; the Camões Center in New York). Even though their aims and lifespans were different, some of these still exist while others came to an end, but, even so, the truth remains that a worldwide project was indeed created. Obviously, all of these initiatives generated the promotion of an image of Portugal, either in the form of events specifically aimed at an academic universe or in the form of knowledge disseminated to a wider audience.

There was a very rewarding initiative developed outside Portugal that helped to promote the importance of the Portuguese discoveries at both levels: a request endorsed by the Commissioner of the Scientific Council of the CNCDP, asking for support to be given to Merle Severy, a senior editor of *National Geographic*, to enable him to write a special issue

on Portugal and the discoveries. Luís Adão da Fonseca gathered together a group of people capable of responding to all his requests and, in the end, *Portugal's Sea Road to The East* (vol. 182, 5, 1992) was published. This dossier was very important for its worldwide dissemination of the work that was done.

This above example was chosen at random. Several others could also be mentioned, but I believe there is no need to do so.

At the root of all this was the clear conviction of what commemorations represented, at the time, for Luís Adão da Fonseca. He defined two fundamental pillars in order to explain his views:

[R]esearch, as a guarantee that the effort of representation is not the result of a mere projection of partial anxieties and desires, and the mediating vocation, that is, knowing how to act in the midst of differentiation, proposing, in this case, a commemorative program that addresses the differences. Hence, the belief in a commemoration that is differential. Recalling the words of a great English historian (Peter Laslett), one could say that a memory and a commemoration committed to knowing and showing itself by contrast was called for; it will be a memory and a commemoration based on an inventory of differences. . .

At this time . . . of rapid and profound mutations in which we have to perform a work that contemplates the simultaneity of the heritages within which the Portuguese cultural space has developed, the exciting challenge of making our present meet the history of which we are heirs opens up to us. This can only be done through the differentiation already mentioned, because only the effort to assess the memory of the differences ends up highlighting the reality of what is common.¹²

Two years later, at the time of the publication of his book on the Treaty of Tordesilhas, he drew our attention to the fact that “commemorating is not a mere playful exercise of mnemonic representation of something that has already happened, commemorating is always a collective effort to integrate—both personally and civically—the heritage of the past into the experience of a generation” (Fonseca 1994: 10).

¹² Unpublished speech. Porto, 8 June 1992.

None of the criticisms that the CNCDP's performance triggered after 1996¹³ related to the scientific options, nor could they. Luís Adão da Fonseca, who was responsible for these functions, sought, above all, to preserve what he understood by the term “commemoration” inviolate and, consequently, to remain faithful to a scientific development program that, when faced with any critical remark, would necessarily remain unchanged. Not because he would shy away from criticism, but because he truly believed that the scientific basis would always stand as the greatest value of the investment.



Fig. 3: Logo of the Instituto Camões (IC).¹⁴

Luís Adão da Fonseca was invited to serve as president of the Camões Institute¹⁵ at the height of the CNCDP's work, taking up his duties on 30 July 1992, at a ceremony held at the Torre de Belém. We may say that the grandeur of his mission was perfectly framed by the monument that welcomed his inaugural speech.

That very day, in his own words, he specified that “as stated in its founding decree, the IC is motivated and mobilized by the desire to promote and defend the Portuguese language and to promote its teaching, all of which is inspired by the need to enhance the Portuguese presence in the world.”¹⁶

¹³ See Hespanha (2019). “A comemoração dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, ciclo 1997-2000.” In *Práticas da História, Journal on Theory, Historiography and Uses of the Past*, 8: 210, in which the historian compared Vasco Graça Moura's conceptual orientations to the previous commemorations in the 1960s: “the historical balance was suggested by expressions with positive meanings such as a ‘dialogue of cultures’ and the ‘opening of the world.’ By what it suggests, but above all by what it tries to hide, this new formulation of the word ‘encounter’ is a rhetorical expedient, which is rather more demagogic than the previous one.”

¹⁴ <https://worldvectorlogo.com/logo/instituto-camoes>.

¹⁵ The Instituto Camões was created in 1992 by Decree-Law Nr. 135/92, of 15 July, succeeding the Instituto de Cultura e Língua Portuguesa (ICALP), which was disbanded on the same date. It was initially dependent on the Ministry of Education and, in 1994, was transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by Decree-Law Nr. 48/94 of February 24. Luís Adão da Fonseca served as president until 7 September 1995, when he resigned the office (Order of 1995.07.31, published in the *Diário da República*, 2nd series, n.º. 207, 1995.09.07).

¹⁶ Fonseca (1992). *Inaugural Speech*, July 30, 1992: 6. I used my own copy of the text that was read on the occasion.

The aims were noble and full of potential. They seemed feasible, and certainly very attractive, as they involved an area that required a massive implementation of new activities. Before the ceremony, as he was dictating this speech and I was writing it, I could sense his enormous satisfaction and a visible impatience to begin his work. It is true that a new world was opening before his eyes, one that was certainly not as predictable as his experience at CNCDP. He would face new and very demanding challenges. But there is no doubt that he accepted them without hesitation, fully convinced that, by being true to himself and to the sense of justice that had always guided him through his life, he would leave a legacy of which he could be proud.

Between 1992 and 1995, the multiple tasks and duties inherent in running the IC made it entirely predictable that he would dedicate himself intensely to this new position. And so he did. However, as his work at the CNCDP was consultative in nature, he was permitted to continue in that role, allowing for a continuity that was fundamental for the already ongoing events and scientific activities.

As mentioned earlier, it was right from the very beginning (i.e., his inaugural speech) that he underlined the importance of Portuguese as a language in itself and stressed its enormous potential for generating a most expressive ensemble of heritage, stating that its protection and enhancement would be the main thrust of his presidency. With this in mind, he began to announce some of his priority fields of intervention: “actions necessary for the implantation of a network of institutes and centers abroad; the promotion and support of primary and secondary education abroad; the dissemination and learning of the Portuguese language; the promotion, in collaboration with official and/or private entities, of cultural initiatives within the Portuguese communities, the elaboration or dissemination of texts illustrating Portuguese culture, the spread of library centers, [and] the circulation of teachers and cultural exhibitions,” among other goals.¹⁷

Many of these objectives were immediately implemented, while others would be pursued more gradually. For instance, works by Portuguese authors were translated into other languages, and academic studies focusing on Portuguese culture were prepared and edited.¹⁸ He also promoted the creation of cultural centers (between 1992 and 1995, nine of the twenty cultural centers that exist today were created) with the purpose of “giving greater strength to the promotion of the Portuguese language and culture abroad, with a

¹⁷ *Inaugural speech*. 30 July 1992: 6-7.

¹⁸ *Catálogo de todas as Edições do ex-Instituto Camões*.
https://www.instituto-camoes.pt/images/stories/edicao/edestrageiro_jan13.pdf.

reinforcement of the cultural component” (Baptista 2007). His statement continued: “I think that, for myself too, it was very stimulating to establish the bases for the first cultural institutes abroad. One of the most interesting cases was not far from here, in Vigo. . . The foundations were laid for a center in Barcelona . . . [I]n Rome, things did not go ahead as I had thought, for reasons beyond the control of the IC, in Madrid everything was left ready and prepared . . . [I]n Paris, the building was chosen, and, in Bordeaux, the building was chosen, too. My concern was with finding very dignified solutions; I always sought to reconcile the opposite, resulting in very dignified solutions that were also cheap” (Baptista 2007).

The dissemination of the Portuguese language and culture could also be exemplified through the prestigious work performed by the academic chairs. Moreover, these activities reproduced a model that had already been tested by the CNCDP, as had been the case, from 1992 onwards, with the Jaime Cortesão Chair at the University of São Paulo. This academic chair began its activities under the supervision of the historian Vera Ferlini and represented an enormous asset for the development of research in Brazil. It was also a clear expression of one of the stated aims of the CNCDP. Following this trend, on 7 October 1994, the Padre Antônio Vieira Chair of Portuguese Studies was created by the Camões Institute, through an agreement signed with PUC-Rio, to provide an interdisciplinary space for studies, research, and the production of knowledge in the field of Portuguese literature. On both occasions, Luís Adão da Fonseca’s role in the creation of these chairs was undeniable.¹⁹



Fig. 4: Creation of the Padre Antônio Vieira Chair in the auditorium of the RDC, PUC-Rio. 1994. Photographer unknown. Collection of the Coordenação Central de Cooperação Internacional.

¹⁹ *Camões*. Supplement nº 180 of the edition of the *Jornal de Letras* (22 August 2012 -4 September 2012).

Adão da Fonseca believed that “giving prestige to Portuguese culture meant that we had to create chairs of Portuguese culture at universities, wherever possible. Universities of great prestige were to be chosen and they had to be the best endowed professorships that existed at that university, in order to create a benchmark . . . And then my idea . . . was that Camões would not only create professorships, but that it would also be the heir to the professorships of the CNCDP when this commission came to an end” (Baptista 2007: 50).

On another level, the need to define a statute for the teachers who would come to occupy the lectureships established under the tutelage of the IC ended up being one of his admittedly lost battles,²⁰ but he explained this very clearly when he stated: “I defended from the beginning that there should be a statute . . . for the teachers of Portuguese culture and language abroad.” A paragraph was to be introduced into the law that contemplated the position of *leitor* with the corresponding explanation of the principles that “regulated all of the *leitor*’s activity . . . as a cultural agent of the Portuguese state.” (Baptista 2007: 118).²¹

There is no disputing that his term of office as the first president of the Camões Institute laid important foundations that are still in place today.

It is more than fair to admit that, from the outset, the government’s objectives for the performance of the IC, although adapted to the specific conjuncture of that time, were very demanding in terms of their execution. But the truth is that this reality ended up being attractive to the president of the IC, who did not refrain from announcing an ambitious program of action. In these circumstances, it was natural to expect that he would encounter a series of obstacles to the progress of the aims that he proposed,²² especially the change in the ministry that was responsible for overseeing the institute. As already said, from 1992 to 1995, the IC was transferred from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, leading to constant restrictions in terms of budgetary constraints. There is always a discrepancy between what you want to do and what you can do, especially when it comes to positions of this nature. The experts knew this and mentioned all of this in their written report, published some years before, in 1988.²³

²⁰ It is enlightening to read the words of Jorge Couto, the President of the IC in subsequent years: “this was a battle that was never possible to conclude. This is because there was the idea of defining a specific statute for lecturers, but the legal systems in force at foreign universities were so divergent that they made it unfeasible to create a common model” (Baptista 2007: 119).

²¹ Some interesting comparative tables on the development of the policy for lectureships can be found in Silva, 2005: 214 *ff.*

²² And naturally, it was also expected that some comments would be made. See Silva, Mário Filipe (2005). *Promoção da língua portuguesa no mundo: hipótese de modelo estratégico*. Lisbon. <https://repositorioaberto.uab.pt/handle/10400.2/777>.

²³ I am referring to the report compiled by the “Grupo de Trabalho da Comissão de Reforma do Sistema Educativo,” composed of a well-known group of scholars and experts: Helena Mira Mateus, Fernando Alves

In short, from my own personal point of view, it is clear that his work at both institutions deserves nothing but praise and approval. And I say this because my collaboration at one of the institutions—the CNCDP (for a brief period, this also coincided with his presidency of the IC)—enabled me to be fully acquainted with his daily life. In Lisbon, we would almost always take stock of events at the end of the day. It was easy to see that, despite the obstacles that life always brings, his enthusiasm never waned, and he always retained full confidence that he would be able to overcome any setbacks.

For my part, writing this personal testimony, in which I have shared some aspects of Luís Adão da Fonseca's individual views, has truly helped me to go back in time and rejoice with the good memories.

On March 24, 1994, in an interview with the newspaper *Jornal de Notícias*, Luís Adão da Fonseca expressed some of his ideas regarding the importance of the Portuguese language as “a horizon of culture, a vehicle of ideas, affections and memories, the heritage of all those who see, think and feel under the umbrella of the same language. In a way, language is . . . a fatherland. It is a repository of inheritances.” It was not by chance that he used as the title for this interview a quote from Virgílio Ferreira: “Da minha língua vê-se o Mar.” Many other authors have used it, and all of them have chosen it to illustrate a special feeling. In this particular case, a whole life is interwoven into it; a life that revolved around history, memory, cultural heritage, and a faraway horizon that brought the sea to him, which he then embraced like *a splendor in the grass*.

Cristóvão, João Malaca Casteleiro, Aníbal Pinto de Castro, Jorge Morais Barbosa, Maria Helena Valente Rosa, Mário Quintela Vilela, and Vasco Graça Moura. It was coordinated by Vítor Manuel de Aguiar e Silva.

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