CHAPTER FOUR: Responding to a “National Shame”: The Short-Term Aftermath of the Revolt, November 26 – December 15, 1910

Almost without fail, Brazilians and foreigners alike interpreted the November Revolt and subsequent amnesty project as a national shame for Brazil. Not only did it reflect poorly on President Fonseca, who had scarcely been in office for one week when the revolt broke out, but in many people’s eyes, it damaged Brazil’s image as an orderly and “modern” nation. Given that this reaction occurred during such an intense period of modernization for Brazil, this series of events was almost unbearable for Brazilian politicians and naval leaders. Simply put, these men saw it as an abomination to allow such an embarrassing event to go unpunished. Though the exact facts remain unclear, on December 9 and 10, a second uprising occurred in the Brazilian Navy, providing the perfect opportunity for President Fonseca to declare a state of siege and exact retribution on Brazilian sailors and particularly on the reclamantes. Whether or not Fonseca and his military aides played a role in instigating this “December Revolt” – as it appears that they did – they were ultimately successful in gaining this desired vengeance against the November rebels.

Press Reactions: Shifting Brazilian Sympathies and Moderate International Responses

The Brazilian press reaction to the November Revolt revealed underlying tensions and contradictions surrounding the nation’s modernizing project. In the early stages of the movement, all newspapers had portrayed it as a shocking and unforgivable act of terrorism. As the revolt unfolded, however, a large portion of the carioca press shifted to portray the reclamantes and their uprising in a favorable light. By November 24, it had been firmly established that the revolt was non-political in nature and grounded in legal claims for rights.
As a result of Deputy Carvalho’s progress negotiating with the rebels and Senator Barbosa’s brilliant rhetoric advocating for an amnestied settlement, it became increasingly clear that the revolt would be settled peacefully through political means. As details surrounding the revolt surfaced – the brutal conditions that sailors endured in the navy and the expertise of the rebellious crews, for example – carioca papers largely shifted to support the reclamantes’ cause.¹ Of course, the reclamantes also maintained strong popular support throughout the revolt because they strictly limited casualties; recall that, though the rebels bombarded Rio de Janeiro several times during the revolt, only three civilians were killed as a result.²

Not coincidentally, the papers that defended the movement tended to be aligned with Senator Barbosa’s civilian politics and opposed to Fonseca’s militarily-aligned presidency. The civilista dailies O Correio da Manhã, Jornal do Brasil, and O Estado de São Paulo all supported the revolt (although notably, the hermista paper Jornal do Comércio did as well). Two days into the movement, these papers began to express strong support for the rebels’ demands. For example, the Correio da Manhã editorialized:

[[It has become evident that, in express opposition to Brazil’s highest law, there is general use and abuse of corporal punishment on board our ships. As in the time of slave quarters and the plantation overseer, the chibata cuts the skin of our Sailors, subject to the whims of essentially choleric officers. It has also been verified…that the meals offered in the sailors’ mess halls are pernicious, prepared with adulterated and rotten foodstuffs, not even suitable for dogs. These facts give the government more than enough reason to proceed energetically and firmly in establishing a measure for the equity and justice that is now demanded.]³

² Estado de São Paulo, 25 November 1910, 2.
³ O Correio da Manhã, 26 November 1910, 1. “Ficou evidenciado que, contra a expressa determinação da máxima lei brasileira, a bordo dos navios, se fazia uso e abuso dos castigos corporais. Que, como no tempo da senzala e do feitor de roça, a chibata cortava a pele dos nossos Marinheiros, consoante a fantasia de oficiais mais ou menos biliosos. Verificou-se ainda, pelos queixumes dos revoltados, que a alimentação oferecida às praças arranchadas era uma alimentação perniciosa, preparada com gêneros corrompidos e adulterados, que nem cachorros aceitariam. Tudo isto constitui motivos de sobra para que o governo, enérgica e firmemente proceda, estabelecendo o respeito pela equidade e pela justiça que eram reclamadas.” Also quoted by Morgan, “Legacy of the Lash,” 212 and Da Cunha, A revolta na esquadra brasileira, 8.
In this article and other similar ones, the Brazilian press supported the uprising not as an illegal and shameful movement, but rather as one firmly rooted in Republican law.

This noticeable shift was also reflected in the description of João Cândido. On November 24, O Correio da Manhã effusively described the leader of the revolt: “João Cândido is a dark-skinned guy, tall, nice, and brave…full of ardor and courage, as soon as the movement began, he assumed leadership of the revolt, serving as the head of the rebellious fleet.” The article was entitled “O Almirante João Cândido” – the Admiral João Cândido. Given the fact that men of color were all but barred from becoming officers in the Brazilian Navy, this title was expressly ironic. Yet it also effectively captured the expertise with which Cândido commanded the rebellious ships. Soon, papers across the country were referring to him as “O Almirante Negro” (The Black Admiral).

Though several pro-Fonseca papers – particularly the pro-Hermes daily, O Paiz – remained strongly critical of the revolt and Barbosa’s amnesty project, virtually all of the Brazilian press openly defended both throughout the course of the revolt. Indeed, even O Paiz expressed lukewarm support for the uprising as it was unfolding. In one editorial on November 26, it wrote that the rebels’ “unexpected conduct” had transformed them into men “worthy of praise.” The article continued by proposing, “If we want to have a respectable crew of sailors, treat them in a manner that respects their dignity and comprehends their value…” Crucially, O Paiz argued that these considerations justified Barbosa’s amnesty project. “Amnesty can be decreed as a measure of consolation in light of

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4 O Correio da Manhã, 24 November 1910, 1. “João Cândido é um typo moreno, alto, sympathico e valente…cheio de ardor e coragem, logo que se iniciou o movimento, assumiu a chefia da revolta, funcionando como chefe da esquadra revoltada.”
5 Silva provides the best summary and analysis of the diverse reactions to the revolt in the Brazilian press, both during the event and after. See Silva, Contra a Chibata, 52-76.
6 O Paiz, 26 November 1910. Qtd. in Estado de São Paulo, 27 November 1910, 3. “A conducta imprevista,” “marineiros…tão dignos de apreço,” “Se queremos ter uma marinagem respetável, tratemo-la de modo que ella sinta a sua dignidade, comprehenda o seu valor…”
the generosity with which these sailors have proceeded…” It is no exaggeration to say that, within the Brazilian press during the revolt, support for amnesty was nearly universal.⁸

With the reclamantes’ surrender to the government on November 26, however, many Brazilian papers almost immediately retracted their defense of amnesty and the revolt in general. Instead, they shifted dramatically to portray the events between November 22 and 26 purely as a mark of national shame. Notably, most of these papers backed President Fonseca, and they also tended to have the strongest international consciousness.⁹ Typifying this sudden backlash against the revolt was a November 28 editorial in O Paiz:

In the life of a country, as in those of individuals, there are memories that should be completely erased, due to sadness, due to shame…For Brazil, the sailors’ revolt is one of these memories. It is not worthwhile to analyze the…circumstances that led to it. It was a nightmare…that placed us in a state of hallucinatory agitation….This revolt has done us great damage, whose disastrous effects will be felt for years to come.

The column ended with the damning words, “The revolt is over. Let us no longer think of this shame or misfortune.”¹⁰ This editorial is particularly revealing because it was published just two days after the same paper had portrayed the reclamantes as men “worthy of praise” and amnesty as a rational “measure of consolation.” Nothing in the nature of these events had

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⁷ O Paiz, 26 November 1910. Qtd. in Estado de São Paulo, 27 November 1910, 3. “a amnistia se pôde decretar com um prémio a correcção á generosidade com que essa maruja procedeu…”

⁸ It should be noted that there were scattered voices of dissent against the revolt and amnesty before the rebels had surrendered. On November 26, foreshadowing the end of the revolt, the Estado de São Paulo editorialized, “The revolt has ended with the exact conditions dictated by the insubordinate sailors. The government, therefore, has been defeated… Either this is not a true government, or we are not a true nation.” O Estado de São Paulo, 26 November 1910, 1. “A revolta havia terminado com as condições ditadas pela maruja insubordinada. O governo foi, portanto, vencido. Ou isso não é governo, ou nós é que não somos uma nação.”

⁹ To speak of a unified “domestic press response” is inherently a gross simplification given the state of the Brazilian press during this period. As Joseph A. Page notes, in 1912, Brazil had 1,377 different newspapers and periodicals, 1,275 of which had been founded since the start of the Republic in 1889. Joseph A. Page, The Brazilians (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1995), 156.

¹⁰ “Appello á Camera,” 28 November 1910, O Paiz, 1. “Na vida dos povos, como na das individuos, ha lembraçnas que so desejaria apagar de todo, pela tristeza, pelo vexame, pela afflicção a despertam. Para o Brasil, a da revolta do marujos é um delas. Não vale a pena analyar a solução que se lhe deu, as circunstancias materiaes e psicológicas que a determinaram. Foi um pesadelo que nos estentou, que nos opprimiu, que nos poz em allucinada agitação…Essa revolta fez-nos um damno profundo, cujos effeitos desastrosos se hão de sentir por longo tempo. A revolta acabou. Não se pense mais nessa vergonha ou nessa infortunio.”
changed; rather, it was the perception of the events and their perceived effect on Brazil’s international standing. Also, not to be forgotten was the fact that by this point, the rebels no long had dozens of massive cannons trained on the city of Rio de Janeiro.\footnote{Though many Brazilian papers shifted their attitudes towards the reclamantes dramatically in November 1910, the paper with the most balanced treatment of the revolt was arguably O Correio da Manhã. For an image of the front page of O Correio da Manhã on November 27, 1910, the day after the reclamantes surrendered, see Image 1 in Appendix B, page 149.}

Papers throughout Rio de Janeiro and the rest of the country echoed these sentiments from O Paiz. On November 27, O Universo published an even more damning indictment of the amnesty project: “The government has committed suicide and will never regain its lost name. The dishonor and shame of such cowardice…has been etched in the nation’s consciousness.”\footnote{O Universo, 27 November 1910, 1. “O governo suicidou-se e nunca mais recuperará o nome perdido. A nodou da covardia, não ha benzina que a tive, porque fica gravada na consciência da nação.”} In the Jornal do Comércio, an editorial stated: “There is an overwhelming and well-founded disgust present everywhere that is nearly irrepressible. This fact is all the more clear when we try to hide it.”\footnote{Jornal do Comércio, 29 November 1910, 3. “Ha muito desgosto legítimo extravasando, aqui e ali, de um modo irreprimível. O facto é patente de mais para que pretendamos escondê-lo.”} Though not every Brazilian paper interpreted the November Revolt post facto in such bleak terms, this was by far the prevailing attitude.\footnote{For a cartoon in the caricature magazine, O Malho, that perfectly encapsulates this feeling of “national shame” that many felt at President Fonseca’s signing of the amnesty, see Image 10 in Appendix B, page 155.}

In contrast to the domestic press’s sharp shift from sympathy to scorn in it coverage of the Revolta da Chibata, the international press was more moderate and consistent. Speaking generally, the French newspapers were the most critical, while British and American commentators tended to portray the movement in a more balanced (and occasionally sympathetic) manner.\footnote{The only work written on the international press response to the Revolta da Chibata is a three-page article in the Brazilian historical magazine, Revista de História. Love, Joseph. “Marinheiros negros em águas internacionais.” Revista de História da Biblioteca Nacional 1, no. 9 (April 2006): 30-32.} Nonetheless, Brazilian politicians and naval leaders agonized over the ill effects that the revolt would have on their country’s international standing, often
exaggerating the foreign press’s portrayal of the events. Ironically, many prominent
Brazilians perceived foreign perceptions of the revolt as far harsher than they actually were –
a reflection of the strong national shame that they felt from this unseemly uprising.

A November 26 New York Times editorial was emblematic of this response. After
noting that the rebels’ claims were “reasonable enough,” it continued by stating that, “a
crueler blow to the dignity and authority of a Government…could hardly be imagined, and
the price paid for peace would by most countries be considered appalling.” Yet in keeping
with the balanced perspective typical of the foreign press from the United States and Great
Britain, this same editorial ended with a provocative hypothetical: namely, what if the
American Navy rebelled and took Washington, D.C. hostage?16

Several French papers took a far harsher angle on the revolt. “Anarchy in Brazil”
screamed one headline; “The Brazilian Government Capitulated,” read another.17 In
response to the Brazilian government’s decision to grant the rebels amnesty, Echo de Paris
wrote, “What a strange manner of governing!”18 In a similar vein, Gaulois commented on the
long-term effects of the revolt on Brazil by writing snidely, “What a great sign for the
future!”19 Given these harsher responses from the French press, it is little wonder that one
naval officer writing in 1911 fretted that, “In the magazines of Moulin Rouge and Folies
Bergères, we were treated like objects of laughter and mockery.”20 This shame would play a
crucial role in determining the government’s actions in the weeks to follow the passage of
amnesty.

17 Echo de Paris, 26 November 1910, 1; Martins, A revolta dos marineiros, 130.
18 Echo de Paris, 26 November 1910, 1.
19 Jornal do Comércio, 26 November 1910, 3.
20 Soares, Política versus Marinha, 94. “Nas revistas do Moulin Rouge e Folies Bergères nós fomos mostrados como
objecto de riso e de galhofa.”
Mounting Tensions: Fonseca’s Executive Decree 8,400 and Barbosa’s Objections

Upon regaining control of the rebellious ships, the Fonseca government wasted little time neutralizing the potent weapons that the reclamantes had so recently wielded. On November 27, the day after the reclamantes surrendered, Minister Leão ordered that the four mutinous ships be stripped entirely of their weaponry. This was no small task; it included disarming each ship’s gun breeches, disabling the forty-eight 305 mm cannons on the Minas Gerais and the São Paulo, and also disposing of all portable arms and ammunition on board.

Irving Dudley, the American naval attaché stationed in Rio during this period, observed in a November 29 official report, “the Government is laboring under no delusion…While manned by such a crew, it was deemed advisable that the dreadnoughts should be rendered as harmless as steamboats.”21 The revolt led to a significant shift in the government’s attitude towards its new fleet. Remarkably, from the arrival of the Minas Gerais in Rio on April 18 to the end of the revolt on November 26, the Brazil’s famed Esquadra Branca had gone from representing “the concrete expression of our nation’s energy” to a collection of punchless “steamboats.”22

Somewhat surprisingly, Minister Leão assigned the task of disarming the ships largely to the rebellious sailors themselves. Though his motivations remain murky, it appears that Leão was driven to this choice due to a lack of personnel.23 This decision would prove crucial in the weeks to come.

In these days directly following the end of the reclamantes’ November Revolt, tensions between sailors and their officers escalated dramatically. These tensions were largely

22 O Paiz, 19 April 1910, 1. “a expressão concreta de sua energia de nação.”
23 Martins, A revolta dos marinheiros, 142.
predetermined by the nature of the Congressional amnesty project passed on November 25. By the terms of the negotiated amnesty, the rebellious sailors were to return for regular duty to their ships – the very same ships on which they had rebelled just days earlier. All of the participants in the revolt would be legally protected against any government repercussions relating to their past actions. Moreover, the reclamantes succeeded in coercing the navy to remove all of the officers on board the rebellious ships. Thus, in the days directly following the revolt, Minister Leão dismissed every officer on board the Minas Gerais, São Paulo, Deodoro and Bahia, and replaced them with sixty new men. In this sense, the Revolta da Chibata represented a complete and immediate overhaul of the leadership on board these four vessels.24

Naval officers found the prospect of amnesty downright offensive. In their eyes, it literally equated to letting the rebels get away with murder – namely the murder of their six fellow officers. “With the passage of amnesty,” Minister Leão wrote in his annual report, “the rebellious crews had gained the perpetual forgetting of the massacre of their officials…”25 Moreover, officers feared that the November Revolt would set a precedent for insubordination throughout the Brazilian Navy. In the words of historian Alvaro Nascimento, “what guarantees did the officers have that other leaders would not emerge and call for…other demands that were not accepted in November?”26 In this atmosphere of mutual apprehension, fears among sailors and officers fed off each other, leading to a rapid ratcheting up of tensions on board the ships.

24 Jornal do Comércio, 27 November 1910, 3. This article lists all sixty new officers on board the rebellious ships, including 18 on the Minas Gerais, 19 on the São Paulo, 12 on the Deodoro and 11 on the Bahia. These data are also reproduced in Martins, A revolta dos marinheiros, 137-38.
25 Leão, Relatório, 8. “As guarnições rebeldes, com a decretação da anistia, haviam obtido o perpétuo olvido do massacre de seus oficiais…”
26 Nascimento, “Do convés ao porto,” 44. “…que garantias os oficiais teriam de que outros líderes poderiam nascer e reivindicar o fim dos castigos corporais, o aumento do soldo e outras exigências que não foram aceitas em novembro?”
Just two days after the reclamantes had surrendered, President Fonseca took measures to significantly reduce the rights of all sailors in the Brazilian Navy. On November 28, the president issued Executive Decree No. 8,400, a unilateral measure. It stated: “In support of the Minister of the Navy, the discharge and exclusion of sailors in the National Navy Corps is hereby authorized for those who have become to inconvenient to discipline…” The decree explicitly nullified all formal judicial bodies for disciplining sailors in the navy. Notably, Fonseca’s decree provided no definition for what constituted a sailor “inconvenient to discipline”; this determination would be left to the officers themselves.

From the perspective of Fonseca and high-ranking naval officials, Decree 8,400 represented a necessary means of restoring order in an institution that had been devastated by insubordination. According to several prominent officers, the measure was perfectly compatible with the amnesty project; it did not punish the rebellious sailors for past crimes, but only for those that they might commit in the future. “In the eyes of officers,” writes Alvaro Nascimento, “expelling these individuals from the decks and barracks was fundamental to maintaining the validity of military hierarchy.” For decades, officers had relied overwhelmingly on corporal punishment – and not formal legal channels – as the primary means of maintaining discipline on board their ships. Now deprived of this

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27 Decreto 8400, 28 November 1910, Coleção das Leis da República (CLR), qtd. in Arias Neto, “Em busca da cidadania,” 276. “Atendendo ao que lhe expôs o Ministro da Marinha, resolve autorizar a baixa, por exclusão, das praças do Corpo de Marinheiros Nacionais cuja permanência se tornar inconveniente à disciplina….” Neto proposes that Fonseca and his military advisers had been planning this decree since November 24 or 25, although he provides no supporting evidence for this claim. 28 The primary legal means of dealing with troublesome sailors was the Council of Discipline, which had been created as part of the Obligatory Military Service Law of 1908. Though the Council held the power to exclude sailors from the navy, officers had historically disciplined sailors via force – particularly with the chibata – far more than these legal means of exclusion. Martins, A revolta dos marinheiros, 149. See Chapter Two for more on discipline in the navy. 29 Morgan, “Legacy of the Lash,” 248. 30 Nascimento, “Do convés ao porto,” 40. “Na visão dos oficiais, retirar esses indivíduos dos conveses e quartéis era fundamental para a vigência da hierarquia militar.” 31 Martins, A revolta dos marinheiros, 149.
method, officers felt strongly that they needed an alternate means of dealing with insubordinate sailors. In their eyes, Decree 8,400 would provide the means.

Moreover, given the strongly negative reactions that the revolt and subsequent amnesty had elicited at home and abroad, Fonseca and his advisers were clearly eager – indeed, desperate – to reestablish their authority. As was shown in the previous chapter, throughout the entire November Revolt, Fonseca was left with essentially no viable alternatives to the negotiated amnesty settlement. In this sense, Decree 8,400 represented the Brazilian government’s first concrete action in response to the reclamantes that was not made under coercion.

The reclamantes viewed Decree 8,400 quite differently. To them, it represented a direct attack on the legal protection that they had been promised by Barbosa’s November 25 amnesty law. As Zachary Morgan notes, “the reclamantes’ demands were not that they be excluded from criminal charges, but from any persecution.” By this broader definition of the amnesty project, President Fonseca did indeed renege on his amnesty promise by issuing Decree 8,400. Morgan argues that the decree represented an attempt by Fonseca and his advisers to render the November rebels defenseless, both to prevent a second uprising and also to make them easier targets for government persecution. Yet notably, Decree 8,400 did not predetermine a military crackdown; indeed, given the slave-like nature of naval service, this measure to exclude sailors could almost be seen as a means of “emancipating” them from their brutal conditions.

In the wake of Fonseca’s decree, the Brazilian naval authorities quickly regained legal authority over their sailors. As one carioca newspaper noted on November 29, “Those sailors who reflected on their situation realized that they were not as safe as they may have

Indeed, as events would reveal in the days to come, President Fonseca and Minister Leão had sinister plans in store for the reclamantes.

With the proclamation of Decree 8,400, Senator Barbosa once more sprang to action. In his eyes, the measure represented a calculated attack on the reclamantes, men who had justly fought for and won their legal right to serve without persecution. As an executive decree, this measure did not require Congressional review to take effect. Nonetheless, on November 29, Barbosa delivered a lengthy and passionate speech in the Senate calling for its immediate repeal. Coupled with this oration, Barbosa advanced a motion to abolish corporal punishment in the navy once and for all.

First, Barbosa presented a compelling case to abolish the chibata, echoing many of his arguments from his speeches on November 23 and 24. Overall, he presented three major justifications, citing legal, moral, and “modernizing” reasons to support his case. None of these arguments were particularly new; the Senator continued to frame the chibata as an affront to civilian laws, as a moral abomination, and as a significant hindrance to Brazil’s push to modernize. Barbosa placed particular emphasis on this last justification:

[E]verything, gentlemen, in the modern world, in the middle of the most civilized societies, attests to this healthy evolution that will transform the nature of obedience and discipline…to a state of things compatible with the new and fundamentally modern social evolution.  

In this passage alone, Barbosa’s words are pregnant with civilizing rhetoric, as he uttered the words “modern” and “evolution” twice each within a single breath.

Having presented his case to corporal punishment, Barbosa turned his keen intellect to critique Fonseca’s Decree 8,400. To the legally-minded Barbosa, this decree above all

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33 Jornal do Comércio, 29 November 1910, 2. “Os marinheiros que meditassem sobre a sua situação, que não era tão segura como se lhes afigurava.”
34 Anuais do Senado Federal, vol. 5, 189. “E tudo, senhores, no mundo moderno, no meio das sociedades mais civilizadas, nos atesta essa saudável evolução, que vai transformando a natureza da obediência e da disciplina para convertê-la em um estado de coisas compatível com a nova evolução social no fundo moderno.”
represented a broken promise of amnesty from the government. “[O]nce amnesty was adopted and sanctioned by this government,” he stated plainly, “it was a definitive act, irreparable and irrevocable.”\textsuperscript{35} In light of a 1908 law that had established an official disciplinary board for insubordinate sailors, Barbosa attacked the government’s actions as fundamentally dishonest and illegitimate. “It is not legal,” he proclaimed, “that a Minister [of the Navy]… accrue in his hands the arbitrary power to fire sailors as you would fire a maid or servant.\textsuperscript{36}

To prevent such abuses of power from occurring, Senator Barbosa asserted, it was necessary to recognize the honor and value of sailors in the Brazilian Navy. In a highly romanticized portrait of naval service, he stated that

\begin{quote}
The sailor’s profession has a patrimony just as precious as that of the official…. He is not a mercenary who just contracts himself and relinquishes his will to his boss; he is man who dedicates his life to his profession, in which everything is sacrificed, in which there is no reward, and whose only satisfaction is obscurely fulfilling his duties for his country.\textsuperscript{37}
\end{quote}

Interestingly, the senator did not portray the sailor’s cause in terms of rights and protections from their superiors, but rather through an idealized vision of naval service. Notably, Barbosa overlooked the fact that the vast majority of Brazilian sailors did not volunteer for service, but were rather forced into service through apprenticeship schools and impressment.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{35} Annães do Senado Federal, vol. 5, 199. “…uma vez adotada pelo Congresso a anistia e sancionada pelo Governo, era um ato definitivo, irreparável e irretratável.”

\textsuperscript{36} Annães do Senado Federal, vol. 5, 204. “Não é lícito que um Ministro, por mais marinheiro que seja e por mais amigo da sua classe, reúna nas suas mãos o poder arbitrário de despedir marinheiros como despede os seus fâmulos.”

\textsuperscript{37} Annães do Senado Federal, vol. 5, 204. “O marinheiro tem na sua profissão um patrimônio tão caro como um oficial no seu posto…. Não é um mercenário que se contrata e despede à vontade do patrão; é um homem que dedica a sua vida à sua profissão, na qual tudo é sacrifício, na qual não há recompensa, e cujo único termo, e cuja única satisfação é a de cumprir obscamente os seus deveres para com os pais.”

\textsuperscript{38} These statistics are presented and analyzed in Chapter 2, pages 35-36.
The senator ended his speech on a note of disillusionment: “Few times in our political history have we proceeded with such imprudence, thoughtlessness and offense to previous acts of our own Government.”39 Yet despite the fears of naval leaders over renewed insurrections, Barbosa did not view relations between officers and their crews as completely hopeless. “There is nothing in the amnesty voted on by Congress that makes the officers and sailors of our navy incompatible. (Very good! General support.)”40 As the coming weeks would reveal, such harmonious relations in the navy would prove far more elusive.

Despite Barbosa’s adamant lobbying on November 29, his words had little effect. For one, Decree 8,400 remained intact. Moreover, since corporal punishment in the navy was already technically illegal under most circumstances, Barbosa only succeeded in passing an indicação (a non-binding resolution) condemning the practice. As such, sailors had little legal protection against suffering similar abuses in the future.

By the end of November 1910, then, the government had explicitly addressed just two of the reclamantes’ six demands. Aside from their guarantee of amnesty, the only other one of the rebels’ demands that was unequivocally granted by the government was the replacement of their officers. The four other complaints issued by the rebels in their original manifesto – corporal punishment, low wages, excessive hours, and a lack of training – remained essentially unchanged in the navy.41 From the reclamantes’ perspective, this incomplete response from the government led to renewed resentment. Yet naval leaders were hardly content with the amnestied settlement either; they emerged from the November Revolt with their prestige greatly diminished and military discipline shattered. Given these tensions, what would prevent a renewed conflict in the Brazilian Navy?

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40 Anuários do Senado Federal, vol. 5, 207. “Não há nada na anistia votada pelo Congresso que incompatibilize os nossos oficiais de marinha com os marinheiros. (Muito bem! Apoiaos gerais)”
41 Nascimento, “Do convés ao porto,” 44.
The “December Revolt”: The Government’s Opportunity for Military Crackdown

On the night of December 9, 1910, two groups of enlisted men launched abortive attempts at another naval revolt. The first such attempt began at approximately 9:00 p.m. aboard the light cruiser, *Rio Grande de Sul*, which was yet another of the fourteen British-built ships that had arrived in Brazil earlier that year. The second was led by men in the Marine Infantry Battalion stationed on the *Ilha das Cobras* (Snakes’ Island), located just several hundred meters northeast of downtown Rio. These rebels had no connection to the reclamantes associated with the November Revolt. Indeed, their attempts to rally support from the sailors on board the two dreadnoughts were immediately rebuffed, as Cândido and his fellow reclamantes adamantly declared their support for the government.

While the November Revolt had come as a shock to all of Brazil – and particularly to the Brazilian Army and Navy – this time, the armed forces were prepared. Just 18 hours after the first movement broke out on the *Rio Grande de Sul*, the government had crushed all rebellious opposition. When hostilities concluded and the rebels on the *Ilha das Cobras* finally surrendered at 3:00 p.m. on December 10, at least twenty rebels were dead and several hundred more were wounded. Almost immediately after the movements had arisen, the Brazilian Congress began legislation to grant President Fonseca the authority to declare a state of siege throughout the city of Rio de Janeiro. By December 12, this heightened level was in effect. In the weeks that followed, Fonseca and his military aides suppressed antimistemista newspapers, expelled over 900 sailors from the navy, and, most brutally, arranged for the murders of several dozen sailors associated with both the November and December
uprisings. Though initially granted the power to enact the state of siege for only 30 days, Fonseca ultimately maintained it until May 1911.\footnote{Morel, \textit{A Revolta da Chibata}, 238.}

The exact nature of the “December Revolt,” as this uprising became known, has been shrouded in mystery. Under the state of siege, many newspapers were banned from reporting on the events; moreover, there are no surviving accounts from the men who participated in the uprising.\footnote{As Morgan speculates, it is possible that these men had grievances but were crushed before they had the opportunity to voice them. Morgan, “Legacy of the Lash,” 256.} Given the dearth of primary sources relating to the December Revolt, historians have almost universally come to rely on one account: the 1948 report of Assistant General Anthero José Marques. This source is rife with historical biases; Marques wrote it 38 years after the fact; as an officer in the navy, he is clearly not an impartial author; and indeed, he even participated in the suppression of the marine rebels himself. Despite Marques’s biases, every major historian – from da Cunha to Morel, Morgan to Nascimento – has relied almost exclusively on this document.

The events of December 9 and 10 need not, however, be completely shrouded in mystery. Three sets of documents reveal much about what transpired during these two days. First, Alvaro Nascimento uses official legal documents from the 1911-12 trial of the rebellious sailors to examine these events in slightly more detail. Second, while Fonseca’s state of siege prevented the 	extit{carioca} press from covering the revolt in substantial detail, newspapers outside of the state – in other parts of Brazil and abroad – reported freely on these movements, albeit not always in great detail. Lastly, and most crucially, two American correspondents reporting to the U.S. Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) were stationed in Rio de Janeiro in November and December 1910.\footnote{While Morgan uses these reports to a certain extent, this chapter will seek to examine them in greater detail in order to provide a clearer picture of the events and causes of December Revolt.} These two men – Robert Woods Bliss

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42 Morel, \textit{A Revolta da Chibata}, 238.
43 As Morgan speculates, it is possible that these men had grievances but were crushed before they had the opportunity to voice them. Morgan, “Legacy of the Lash,” 256.
44 While Morgan uses these reports to a certain extent, this chapter will seek to examine them in greater detail in order to provide a clearer picture of the events and causes of December Revolt.
and Irving B. Dudley – both wrote detailed accounts that provide revelatory insights regarding the December Revolt.\(^\text{45}\)

Though the effects of the December Revolt were dramatic and far-reaching, the triggering event was hardly as sweeping. In the late afternoon of December 9, Lieutenant-Captain Carneiro da Cunha of the \textit{Rio Grande de Sul} received an order from Minister Leão to embark immediately for Santos, a city 500 km to the southwest, in order to suppress a strike. At 9:00 p.m., Captain da Cunha announced this news to his crew. In one of the aforementioned ONI reports, Bliss recounts what followed the Captain’s announcement:

This seemed to dissatisfy the crew and they became very disorderly and riotous whereupon the captain sounded to quarters, but the crew did not fall in promptly. Lieutenant da Cunha…who had only joined the ship a few weeks before… attempted to coerce the crew to fall in at quarters and was bayoneted and shot. One man was killed and [another] officer wounded. The captain got the crew under control, but the ringleaders deserted in a boat and were captured by a destroyer.\(^\text{46}\)

Given this description, it would appear that the sailors on board the \textit{Rio Grande de Sul} rebelled as a result of complaints similar to those made by the \textit{reclamantes}, and that these latent tensions were spontaneously touched off by Captain da Cunha’s unexpected order.\(^\text{47}\)

\(^{45}\) Irving Bedell Dudley (1861-1911) was the U.S. Ambassador to Brazil from 1907 to 1911. He was an experienced and savvy diplomat; from 1897 – 1907, he had served as the U.S. Ambassador to Peru. Robert Woods Bliss (1875-1962) graduated Harvard in 1900, and pursued a long career of service in the U.S. State Department. From 1909 to 1912, he served as Secretary of the Legation in Buenos Aires. Though Bliss was primarily stationed in Argentina during this period, his detailed and highly accurate reports reflect his deep understanding of the Brazilian military and political systems, not to mention his frequent visits to the country. In his later years, Bliss became a major benefactor of Harvard, particularly in the field of Latin American history and artwork.

\(^{46}\) United States Office of Naval Intelligence, \textit{Brazilian Naval Revolts, 1910: Various, 1910-1911}. Robert Woods Bliss, “The Revolt of the Naval Battalion (Marine Infantry) on the Ilha das Cobras, Rio de Janeiro, December 9, 1910.” No. 76, 24 December 1910. Register No. 799. National Archives, Washington, D.C., 5 [Hereafter ONI, Bliss, “Revolt of the Naval Battalion, 24 December 1910]. In his annual report, Minister Leão states that the announcement and subsequent rebellion on board the \textit{Rio Grande de Sul} was made at 7:00 p.m., two hours earlier than Bliss says that these events occurred. Given that Bliss was a more impartial observer, and quite accurate in all of his other facts relating to both the November and December revolts, his figure would appear more reliable than Leão’s.

\(^{47}\) For a more thorough treatment of the causes behind the December Revolt, see Appendix A, page 143.
Before the rebels on board the *Rio Grande de Sul* were suppressed and forced to flee the ship in the early hours of December 10, they managed to send out several wireless telegrams. Most of these were directed to other ships in the Brazilian navy – particularly the dreadnoughts *São Paulo* and *Minas Gerais* – in an effort to rally support for their uprising. Several of the dispatches made the false claim that the ship’s officers had attacked and killed several members of the crew and that assistance was required. It would appear that the rebellious crew on the *Rio Grande de Sul* sent these messages with the intent of deceiving other crews of sailors into joining their insurrection.

Overwhelmingly, this call to arms fell on deaf ears. From December 9 to 10, not a single ship in the Brazilian Navy united with the new rebels on board the *Rio Grande de Sul*. Instead, many of the ships – including the *Minas Gerais* – joined with the loyal government forces to crush this new insurrection. The fact that all twenty-one of the other ships in the navy disavowed any connection to this latest insurrection shows the degree to which Brazilian sailors rejected further revolutionary activity.

In the ranks of the Marine Infantry Battalion on the *Ilha das Cobras*, however, *Rio Grande de Sul* rebels found allies in their uprising. Evidence suggests that, upon hearing of renewed insurrection, marines on the island immediately took to arms. As Bliss stated in his ONI report,

> The news of the revolt on the *Rio Grande do Sul* somehow reached Cobras Island, probably by wireless, but some say by boat. It is thought that the Marine Battalion expected the other ships to again revolt. At any rate they revolted and during the night made preparations to defend the island.  

This revolt on the *Ilha das Cobras* began shortly after 10:00 p.m. on the night of December 9, just an hour after the sailors on board the *Rio Grande de Sul* had taken up arms against their

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49 ONI, Bliss, “Revolt of the Naval Battalion,” 24 December 1910, 5.
officers. As such, it would seem likely that the marines on the *Ilba das Cobras* were responding directly to the call to arms from the rebellious cruiser battleship. As Bliss speculates above, it would appear that these marines were under the mistaken impression that sailors throughout the navy were joining the rebellious cause as well.

Despite a lack of sources on the subject, evidence suggests that the Fonseca government played at least a passive role in instigating the December Revolt. Phrased simply, the marines on the *Ilba das Cobras* had no motive to rebel. Both American ONI correspondents noted that the barracks were spotless and the men quite orderly. Bliss visited the island on December 6, just three days before the rebellion, and noted that the men had “every appearance of being well disciplined.”\(^50\) Moreover, throughout the November Revolt, there was not a single case of insubordination among the 600 marines on the *Ilba das Cobras*. These facts – nearly all derived from the invaluable ONI reports – directly contradict the existing histories and the dubious 1948 report from Assistant General Marques, on which they draw heavily. Truly, the marines were the last sector of the Brazilian Navy from which one would have expected a renewed uprising. Given this fact, coupled with the strong desire held by President Fonseca and his military aides to reassert their executive authority, it is highly likely that government elements helped to instigate – if not outright orchestrate – the events of the December Revolt.

Whatever role President Fonseca and his advisers played in fomenting the uprising on the *Ilha das Cobras* prior to December 9, a bloody battled followed on December 10. Shortly after 10:00 p.m., sources say, the marines in the Battalion led a rapid and organized uprising. Bliss recounts the subsequent events in detail:

At about 10 p.m., December 9\(^b\), the Commanding Officer Marquis de Rocha [sic], and what few officers there were on duty on the Island of Cobras, were

\(^{50}\) ONI, Bliss, “Revolt of the Naval Battalion,” 24 December 1910, 3-4.
warned that the Marine Infantry Battalion was in revolt, and that their lives were in danger unless they escaped from the island by a boat that was waiting for them. They took to the boat and de Rocha proceeded to the Naval Arsenal and Ministry of Marine [Minister Leão] to notify them that his men were in revolt.51

The most striking aspect of this series of events was the mercy that the supposedly rebellious marines showed their officers. In total, 8 sergeants, 7 corporals, and 128 “loyal” soldiers all escaped the island safely during this period.52 Moreover, as historian Edmar Morel notes, not a single officer was killed during this phase of conflict on the Ilha das Cobras.53 Had the men of the Marine Infantry Battalion truly been determined to launch a successful second revolt, then why would they have sent all of their officers freely to shore?

Upon finding themselves in control of the island, the rebellious marines set to work preparing for the imminent conflict. Once again, the only account of this crucial period comes from Marques. According to him, the rebellious marines extinguished all of the lights on the base, disconnected the telephone, and flocked into the island’s central patio, screaming “Long live liberty!” while firing their rifles into the air. The marines also freed all fifty of the men who had been locked up in the naval prison, many of whom, Marques stresses, had been involved in November Revolt. Most importantly, Marques emphasizes, the marines seized the weapon magazine and prepared for an extended siege.54 This magazine was especially well-stocked; as Bliss had observed during his December 6 visit, it included four advanced automatic machine guns, 250 rifles, and six English-made 12-pound landing guns. As Bliss notes, the rebels would use all of these weapons during the conflict that followed.55

51 ONI, Bliss, “Revolt of the Naval Battalion,” 24 December 1910, 5.
52 Marques qtd. in Morel, A Revolta da Chibata, 153.
54 Marques qtd. in Da Cunha, A revolta na esquadra brasileira, 99-106.
While much of the period leading up to the battle remains shrouded in mystery, the battle itself is far better documented. During the early hours of December 10, Minister Leão rallied Brazilian soldiers, sailors, police officers, and even foreigners with military experience to head up the government attack at the Naval Arsenal. At 4:30 a.m., Leão issued the order to begin attacking the island. By this point, 3,000 men had reported to fight for the loyal forces; in contrast, the rebellious marines numbered just over 500. Given that Leão assembled his massive force for the counterattack in just over six hours – from the outbreak of the supposed revolt at 10:00 p.m. to his order to begin the siege at 4:30 a.m. – it is almost certain that he had been planning for such an attack several days in advance. Whether he achieved this rapid response from a heightened state of military affairs (as Marques claims), or from a more active role in instigating the events on the Ilha das Cobras on the night of December 9, one thing is for certain: by the early morning of December 10, the government forces vastly outnumbered the rebels and were extremely well-prepared for an extended siege of the island.

Once Leão gave his order, the armed forces began bombing the Ilha das Cobras in earnest. From 5:15 a.m. to 9:45 a.m., artillery rained back and forth between the rebels and government forces. At 9:45 p.m., firing was suspended so that sick men from the Naval Hospital on the island could come to shore to receive treatment.

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56 *O Correio da Manhã*, 11 December 1910, 2. Bliss notes that foreigners helped operate the field guns, perhaps suggesting that the Brazilian armed forces either lacked the manpower or expertise to use these weapons. ONI, Bliss, “Revolt of the Naval Battalion,” 24 December 1910, 7.
57 Leão, *Relatório*, 12.
58 For the number of men fighting for the government, see *O Correio da Manhã*, 11 December 1910, 2. For the number of men fighting on the Ilha das Cobras, see *O Correio da Manhã*, 10 December 1910, 1.
59 Indeed, Dudley notes that on the morning of December 9, the government forces had already begun positioning batteries of field artillery at strategic points along the northeastern coast of the mainland. Notably, these positions all directly faced the Ilha das Cobras. United States Navy Department, *General Correspondence of the Secretary of the Navy, 1897-1926*. R.G. 80. 832.00/68, File Desig. No. 5654-44:2, No. 626. Irving B. Dudley. Letter sent to Secretary of the State. 12 January 1911. “Embassy at Petropolis re recent mutiny in the Brazilian Navy,” 2 [Hereafter Dudley, “Recent Mutiny in Brazilian Navy,” 12 January 1911].
60 ONI, Bliss, “Revolt of the Naval Battalion,” 24 December 1910, 6.
At this point, according to Dudley, the rebels offered to surrender, “provided they could be put on board the Minas Gerais & guaranteed their lives.” Unsurprisingly, the government flatly rejected this request. By 10:30 a.m., the government recommenced its blitzkrieg on the Ilha das Cobras, an assault that would continue unabated for another four and a half hours. Interestingly, Marques himself notes that the rebels raised the white flag of surrender as early as 2:00 p.m., but that this request for surrender was ignored by the armed forces, which continued to bombard the island with gunfire. Not until 3:00 p.m., a full hour after the rebels had offered to surrender unconditionally, did the government finally accept this offer.

What was occurring on board other ships in the Brazilian Navy during this period? Ultimately, five ships helped the rest of the government’s armed forces to crush the uprising on the Ilha das Cobras. When Brazilian naval officers first heard of a renewed insurrection on the night of December 9, however, many pursued a far different course of action – they fled. On the Minas Gerais, for example, Bliss reports that the new officers “promptly left during the night, when they heard of the new trouble, leaving Juan Candido [sic], Seaman, (negro) in command…” Remarkably, for the second time in two weeks, Cândido found himself at the helm of one of the most powerful ships in the world.

This time, however, Cândido had no plans of rebellion. Indeed, over the course of December 10, he would prove himself to be more loyal to the Brazilian government than each of the 18 officers that he had replaced on board the Minas Gerais. At approximately 7:00

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63 Marques qtd. in Morel, A Revolta da Chibata, 155. In a speech that same day, Senator Barbosa made an identical assertion – namely, that the government forces had refused to acknowledge the rebels’ surrender for a full hour. Barbosa’s speech will be examined in greater detail below.
64 The five ships to bombard the island were the Florianópolis, Barroso, Tamoio, Rio Grande de Sul (after its officers had regained control of the ship), and the Minas Gerais. “Revolta da Chibata: acompanhe os acontecimentos,” Revista de História da Biblioteca Nacional 1, vol. 9 (April 2006): 37.
65 ONI, Bliss, “Revolt of the Naval Battalion,” 24 December 1910, 6.
a.m., the Minas Gerais shocked everyone – both the government forces and the rebels – by opening fire on the Ilha das Cobras with a 4.7-inch gun, and continued to shell the island until approximately 10:00 a.m. Eyewitnesses reported that the crew was also armed with rifles, cutlasses and pistols. All of this firepower was expressly against the orders of Minister Leão, who had mandated that the ships involved in the November Revolt be stripped completely of all their arms. Ironically, the fact that the sailors on board the Minas Gerais had stockpiled weapons allowed them to attack the new wave of rebels on the Ilha das Cobras and directly aid Leão’s military offensive.

In addition to firing on the Ilha das Cobras, Cândido made repeated efforts to communicate his loyalty to the government throughout the morning and afternoon of December 10. At 11:00 a.m., the Minas Gerais sent the second of several telegrams to President Fonseca, which read: “We remain faithful to the government. All is calm. Officials have abandoned the ship.” Cândido and his men also requested additional ammunition to help with the suppression of the rebels. Predictably, this request was ignored. In Dudley’s words, “The loyalty of the seamen in control of the two dreadnaughts was wholly distrusted. No credit was given to their good faith in persistently appealing to the Government…” Morgan observes that the Minas Gerais was not an anomaly in its support for the armed forces; indeed, the reclamantes by and large remained remarkably loyal throughout the December movement. Despite several isolated cases of sailors on board the two dreadnoughts disobeying orders, Morgan notes that, in general, “throughout the new

68 ONI, Bliss, “Revolt of the Naval Battalion,” 24 December 1910, 6-7. Dudley also notes that the men on board both dreadnoughts sent multiple telegrams to the president, both to inform him that the officers had abandoned their posts and that the remaining men remained loyal to the government forces. Dudley, “Recent Mutiny in Brazilian Navy,” 12 January 1911, 2.
uprising, the amnestied sailors remained loyal to the government.” As Minister Leão begrudgingly admitted in his 1911 annual report, the crew of the Bahia remained perfectly orderly throughout December 9 and 10.71

Moreover, once the revolt had broken out on the night of December 9, the Minas Gerais and São Paulo exchanged several telegrams both professing their support for the government. “We have already looked for officers on board,” read one telegram from the Minas, “We should not revolt, no. We should defend the government.” Shortly thereafter, the same ship sent another telegram to its fellow dreadnought: “We are waiting for orders from the Minister of the Navy.” In a model of military order, the São Paulo quickly responded, “We are doing the same.”72 If the government had sought to instigate rebellion on the Marine Infantry Battalion to catch the reclamantes in a second seditious act, then this effort failed. As events in the subsequent days revealed, however, these facts would not prevent Fonseca and his military advisers from exacting revenge on the November rebels.

When the government forces finally accepted the marines’ surrender at 3:00 p.m. on December 10, both the government forces on the mainland and the rebels on the Ilha das Cobras had experienced significant casualties. During the course of the ten-hour siege, the rebels had inflicted serious damage on the city of Rio de Janeiro. O Correio da Manhã reported over twenty-five separate locations throughout downtown Rio that had been struck by shells. Among the buildings damaged from the marines’ fire were the Naval Arsenal, the Maritime Police Station, the Brazilian House of Congress, and even the offices of the Correio da Manhã itself! Unsurprisingly, this siege had once again “provoked an absolute panic throughout the

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71 Leão, Relatório, 20.
population.”

In total, the 3,000 men fighting for the government had suffered 9 dead and approximately 300 wounded. According to one foreign correspondent, twenty civilians were also killed during the course of the conflict.

On the *Ilha das Cobras*, the results of the battle were even grimmer. According to a *New York Times* article, the marine barracks had been “practically destroyed” by the government’s bombardment. Notably, just days earlier on December 6, Bliss had described these same barracks as “spotlessly clean” and “a model for any barracks in the world.” On December 11, a reporter from the *Diário de Notícias* who had visited the island described it as “a pile of ruins burying hundreds of corpses.” Though this was probably an exaggeration, the 500 or so rebels suffered at least 11 dead and an undetermined number of casualties – probably between 100 and 200. After the government finally accepted the rebels’ surrender at 3:00 p.m. on December 10, approximately 200 marines were seized trying to escape the

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73 O Correio da Manhã, 11 December 1910, 2. “provocando verdadeiro pânico na população.” The paper notes that a 50-centimeter projectile had landed in their office the day before.

74 Dudley, “Recent Mutiny in Brazilian Navy,” 12 January 1911, 3. Remarkably, no other source mentions the number of casualties on the government side. Indeed, the Fonseca government appears to have actively distorted and suppressed from publication the actual numbers of men wounded and killed on both sides of the conflict. According to official reports from the Army, in total, only 23 men were killed and 18 wounded – figures significantly lower than any of those reported by foreign correspondents.


77 ONI, Bliss, “Revolt of the Naval Battalion,” 24 December 1910, 3-4.


79 Dudley and Bliss both state that 11 of the rebels were killed. Dudley, “Recent Mutiny in Brazilian Navy,” 12 January 1911, 3; ONI, Bliss, “Revolt of the Naval Battalion,” 24 December 1910, 7. The *New York Times* relates a rumor from the Associated Press, probably unfounded, that roughly two hundred rebels were killed during the siege. “Brazil Gets Fleet Away from Capital,” *New York Times*, 13 December 1910, 5. The number of rebel casualties is far more difficult to discern, particularly due to the fact that many of the rebels attempted to flee the *Ilha das Cobras* via boat both before and during the battle. As mentioned above, Bliss reports that over 200 men were captured fleeing the island in boats during the night of December 10 (ONI, Bliss, “Revolt of the Naval Battalion,” 24 December 1910, 7). Morel reports that Rio’s First-Aid hospital received 132 men with bullet and shrapnel wounds, though he fails to cite his source. Moreover, he fails to specify if these men were rebels, government soldiers, civilians, or (most likely), some combination of the three. Morel, *A Revolta da Chibata*, 152.
Ilha das Cobras that evening.\textsuperscript{80} At 8:00 a.m. the following morning, the government forces reclaimed the Marine Infantry Battalion with no resistance.\textsuperscript{81}

Even those marines fortunate enough to survive the prolonged government bombardment were hardly guaranteed their safety. A British officer stationed in Guanabara Bay on December 10 and 11 witnessed the entire conflict on the Ilha das Cobras. In a letter to Bliss, this officer related a particularly barbaric act that had occurred on the afternoon of December 10:

Yesterday evening the mutineers came out of their holes where they had been hiding from the gun-fire, and capitulated. A certain number were shot at once, two were seen from our ships to be taken on board one of the Brazilian men-of-war and then and there shot on deck.\textsuperscript{82}

Clearly, the government forces had been instructed to show no mercy to these rebels, even after these men had offered their unconditional surrender. As events of the subsequent weeks would reveal, President Fonseca had further plans to deal with the rebels, and these plans would not be limited to the December rebels either.

President Fonseca’s State of Siege

Whatever actions may have caused the second uprising on board the Rio Grande de Sul and at the Marine Infantry Battalion, Fonseca seized on these events to establish a state of siege throughout the Federal District and state of Rio de Janeiro. Under this state of siege, civil liberties were suspended, press freedom was greatly curtailed, and over 1,000 sailors and marines were permanently expelled from the navy. In two independent and particularly brutal instances, a combined 25 Brazilian sailors – if not more – were killed by naval officers

\textsuperscript{80} ONI, Bliss, “Revolt of the Naval Battalion,” 24 December 1910, 7.
\textsuperscript{81} O Correio da Manhã, 12 December 1910, 1.
in the weeks directly following the second revolt.\textsuperscript{83} Despite the fact that nearly all of the reclamantes had explicitly distanced themselves from these new rebels – and in the case of João Cândido and his fellow sailors on board the Minas Gerais, had even fought against them – in the weeks to come, these men nonetheless became targets of state-led repression, exclusion and murder. The reclamantes may have gained amnesty and recognition of their demands for improved conditions in the Brazilian Navy, but the Fonseca government ultimately played the final move in determining their fate.

Around midday on December 10, as the government and rebellious forces were still trading volleys of shells and gunfire across Guanabara Bay, Fonseca launched his plan to declare a state of siege in earnest. As was immediately evident by the rhetoric and nature of this state of siege, Fonseca intended it as a means to persecute Brazilian sailors, particularly the November reclamantes. That afternoon in the Senate, Senator Alencar Guimarães (a staunch supporter of Fonseca), read aloud a statement written by the president introducing Project No. 68, which proposed establishing a state of siege throughout the Federal District and the state of Rio de Janeiro for thirty days. After briefly discussing the nature of the December Revolt, the statement continued,

“It is therefore impossible to hide the fact that, coming directly on the heels of the events of the 22\textsuperscript{nd} of November, [the revolt] is the result of a constant and unpatriotic effort to incite anarchy and indiscipline in the people, especially those less civilized ones who are susceptible to such simple suggestions.”\textsuperscript{84}

Directly contradicting the facts surrounding the December Revolt, Fonseca framed this latest movement as a continuation of the events of November 22-26. By making such a

\textsuperscript{83} These events will be discussed starting on page 126.

\textsuperscript{84} Morel, A Revolta da Chibita, 152. “Não é possível, entretanto, esconder que êsse fato, seguindo-se tão de perto aos acontecimentos de 22 de novembro é resultado de um trabalho constante e impatriótico que tem lançado a anarquia e a indisciplina nos espíritos, especialmente dos menos cultos e, por isso, mais suscetíveis de fáceis sugestões.”
facile – not to mention erroneous – connection between the two revolts, the president was clearly pursuing a path of revenge against these men who had emerged from their movement unscathed thanks to the amnesty project passed by Congress and signed by Fonseca himself on November 25.

Once more, Senator Rui Barbosa openly challenged the president’s proposed motion. On December 10, Barbosa delivered an impassioned and long-winded speech – even by his standards – condemning Fonseca’s projected state of siege. Such a measure, the senator proposed, would be “unnecessary, inopportune, and damaging” for the country.85 With the conflict still not resolved – indeed, it would continue for several more hours until 3:00 p.m. that afternoon – Barbosa asserted that moving so quickly to declare a state of siege would be both rash and premature. Indeed, he continued, it was far too early even to say for certain what root causes had led to this latest uprising.86 What was clear, the senator emphasized, was that, “the amnestied sailors had not rebelled a second time.”87 In this particularly prescient statement, Barbosa discerned that the second revolt was not, as the president had claimed, a continuation of the November uprising, but rather a largely unrelated movement.

Senator Barbosa then proceeded to attack President Fonseca and his military aides for having conspired to instigate the December Revolt. Noting that many had criticized the Fonseca government for being weak after having held office for just twenty-four days, Barbosa asserted, “it was necessary, Mr. President, for the Government to change its path, to enter into a situation of violence and force…in order for the Government to establish and

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85 *Anais do Senado Federal*, vol. 5, 213. “desnecessário, inopportuno e malfazejo.”
86 *Anais do Senado Federal*, vol. 5, 230, 246-47.
reaffirm its force and stability…” Given that Barbosa was a minority politician making such statements during a national military crisis, these were bold words indeed.

Despite Barbosa’s daring rhetoric, however, his speech fell upon deaf ears in the Senate. As was the case on November 28, when the senator had attempted to rally his colleagues against President Fonseca’s Decree 8,400, he found little support for his position. This time, however, Barbosa was alone in his opposition to Fonseca’s measures; when the time came to bring the proposed state of siege to a vote, Barbosa cast the lone dissenting vote. The bill was then passed directly to the Chamber of Deputies that same afternoon, where discussions were quickly terminated after several shells struck the building – the conflict between the rebellious marines and armed forces was still occurring. The following day, with the marine rebels now quelled, the Chamber resumed its proceedings, and quickly passed the president’s state of siege by a unanimous vote. At 6:00 p.m. on December 12, Fonseca signed the measure into law. The first military officer to be elected as President of the Republic had finally had achieved his desired military state of affairs.

President Fonseca was not alone in explicitly linking the two revolts; the domestic press almost unanimously made this same flawed connection. To most Brazilian journalists, the December movements represented another shameful episode in a saga that all too clearly confirmed the Brazilian Navy’s woeful lack of discipline. One typical article in carioca newspapers, for example, summarized the December events as “mais uma revolta” (“yet another revolt”). Historian Marcos A. da Silva provides an apt analysis of these reactions to the December Revolt, stating that their underlying argument was to present these events in

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88 *Annães do Senado Federal*, vol. 5, 235. “…era preciso, Sr. Presidente, que o Govêrno mudasse de caminho, era necessário que entrasse numa situação de violência e de fôrça… para que a estabilidade e a fôrça do Govêrno se afirmasse capaz de se impor no país…”
89 *Correio da Manhã*, 13 December 1910, 1.
90 Silva, *Contra a Chibata*, 80.
two ways: first, as a direct continuation of the November Revolt, and second, as “a revolt devoid of objectives.”

If the revolt, as the majority of Brazilian journalists asserted, was indeed motiveless, then logic dictated that the Brazilian government was completely justified in launching a military crackdown. Indeed, several papers used this very reasoning to explicitly encourage the Brazilian armed forces to quash the marine uprising. On December 11, directly following the military’s prolonged bombardment of the Ilha das Cobras, O Paíz declared,

At this moment, all demonstrations of support of the government are necessary, proper, and patriotic. The country cannot remain at the mercy of civil unrest that damages, that holds back, and that weakens her… Marshal [Fonseca] has the entire nation at his back… Crush all of those…who have come to disrupt the Republic…

Brazilian daily newspapers were not the only sources to link the two revolts and encourage the government crackdown; domestic periodicals were arguably even more supportive of these measures. The pro-Fonseca magazine O Malho published dozens of articles and cartoons in the subsequent weeks that lauded the president for his decisive action. One cartoon, entitled “Strong evils require strong solutions,” dubbed the December movement as a “reprise” of the November Revolt, and depicted a marine at the center of gunfire from seven different cannons while holding a banner reading “THE RECLAMANTES.”

Though this cartoon is an extreme example of the way that Brazilian newspapers and periodicals presented the December uprising, it nonetheless typifies the way that the press distorted the facts about these latest events to support the Fonseca regime.

91 Silva, Contra a Chibata, 80. “uma revolta sem objetivos.”
92 “Pela Ordem,” O Paíz, 11 December 1910, 1. “Todos as demonstrações de confiança no governo neste momento são necessárias, são justas, são patrióticas. O pai não pode ficar à mercê de agitações, que o prejudicam, que o atraem, que o envilecem… O Marechal tem ao seu lado a Nação que quer um governo energético, dentro da lei, poderoso dentro da liberdade. Esmagar seu ó todos os elementos de desordem que passam a vir inquietar a Revolta, é prestar no momento o mais alto serviço à dignidade e à solidez da República.”
93 “Para Grandes Males, Grandes Remedios,” O Malho, 17 December 1910, 23. For a reproduction of this cartoon, see Image 11 in Appendix B, page 156.
Those papers that did not support the military’s suppression of the December rebels quickly faced government censorship. After O Correio da Manhã, Rio’s principal anti-hermista paper, published material criticizing President Fonseca on December 10, the government imprisoned the paper’s director on trumped-up charges of sedition. Notably, this occurred before the state of siege had even been officially passed on December 12. Once it was passed, numerous carioca papers saw their reporting on the revolt completely stifled. The Diário de Notícias, for example, published a series of columns on December 13 and 14 under the title, “The Twilight of Liberty.” The content of the columns, however, did not survive government censorship; in printed editions, these columns under this headline appeared blank.94 In its December 13 edition, O Correio da Manhã published the following statement:

In keeping with the state of siege, the police advise the press to abstain from spreading any interpretations that may contribute to the mass unrest; given the current state of the country, it is advised that editorials be submitted to the same form of censorship.95

As evidenced by this targeted suppression of newspapers critical of his regime, it is clear that Fonseca sought to exploit the December Revolt and subsequent state of siege to his own political advantage.

While Fonseca was overseeing the censorship of the carioca press and pressuring Congress into passing his state of siege, Minister Leão orchestrated a mass purging of sailors from the Brazilian Navy. According to his official year-end report, Leão himself stated that 900 men had been expelled from service by December 31, and that number had swelled to

94 Martins, A revolta dos marinheiros, 179. “O Crepúsculo da liberdade.” O Universo, another paper that had been quite critical of Fonseca during the November Revolt, experienced similar censorship.
95 “A policia e a Imprensa,” O Paiz, 13 December 1910, 2. “A policia aconselha á imprensa, na vigencia do E do sitio, abster-se de propagar quaisquer versões capazes de concorrer para intranquilidade publica; commedimento na analyse da situação que o paiz atravessa, submettidos ã censura os editoriaes á mesma referentes.”
1,216 by the end of April 1911.⁹⁶ Thanks to Decree 8,400, which Fonseca had issued on
November 28, 1910, this act of mass exclusion was completely legal – every one of these
sailors, according to Leão, fit the highly subjective description of being “inconvenient to
discipline.” Evidence suggests that, of these 1,216 excluded sailors, a large majority were
reclamantes from the November Revolt. For instance, by December 13, the crews of all four
ships from the November uprising (the Minas Gerais, São Paulo, Bahia and Deodoro) had been
ordered to leave their posts and report to Villegagnon Island, where they would be
processed by naval administrators. It is quite likely that a large number of these men were
ultimately expelled by Leão’s plan.⁹⁷

By December 15, just five days after the conclusion of the Marine uprising, Leão had
already ordered that 500 men be excluded from the navy.⁹⁸ By the end of the month, this
number had nearly doubled. From this point forward, Fonseca and his military advisers
relaxed their widespread persecution of Brazilian sailors. Simultaneously, however, these
men conspired to organize several secret and targeted murders of sailors who had been
involved in both uprisings. From the reclamantes perspective, then, expulsion and deportation
was the least of their worries – for a select few of them, the government would stop at
nothing less than their extermination.

⁹⁶ Leão, Relatório, 21. Of these 1,216 sailors expelled through April 1911, 1,078 of them were sent back to their
home states of origin via the British shipping line, Lloyd Brazileiro.
⁹⁷ O Correio da Manhã, 14 December 1910, 1. This process of emptying out the ships in the Brazilian Navy was
particularly difficult for the government; many of the sailors, particularly those on board the ships from the
November Revolt, adamantly resisted, though not violently.
⁹⁸ O Correio da Manhã, 16 December 1910, 2.