

British Officers in Portuguese Army Service (1809 - 1814)

By Pedro de Avillez

1. The old Portuguese Army of Junot's days, 1807-1808

After the first French Invasion under Junot (1807-1808), the Portuguese Army was deprived of many of its senior commanding cadres and most of its competent officers, for the following reasons:

- Firstly, as a result of the departure of the Portuguese Court to Brazil in November 1807, when Queen Maria I and the Prince Regent, the future king Dom João VI, were accompanied by practically all the Navy and Marine units as well as by high ranking and many general staff officers.¹
- Secondly, many officers left Portugal to go to the Portuguese Atlantic Islands and to Britain, where they later organised the Loyal Lusitanian Legion², with British help.
- Thirdly, with Junot's creation of a Portuguese corps, which was sent to France (later designated *La Legion Portugaise au service de Napoleon*)³ which was composed of a third of the Army, led by the respected figures of the 3rd Marquis d'Alorna and General Gomes Freire de Andrade, who selected volunteers from amongst the better and more experienced officers, mainly from the units around Lisbon and the south of the country, including the higher military nobility. Many of the officers were followers of the celebrated Enlightenment movement and/or were members of Freemason lodges, for whom the inclusion of the Portuguese Kingdom in the Napoleonic Empire appeared to be an acceptable future.
- Finally, Junot ordered the demobilisation of what remained of the Portuguese Army and all of the Militia during the beginning of 1808 and the officers and men were sent home, many of whom were already old and all of whom were demoralised by their inability to perform any useful military action against the invaders and by the historical fate of their country.

The Prince Regent, as he left for Brazil with all the tools of state, archives and government personnel, had specifically forbidden the Army and all the local Authorities to take any hostile action against the Franco-Spanish invasion force, as it was considered senseless to resist the almighty Napoleonic Army, which was furthermore supported by an equally large Spanish contingent. Dom João did not want to shed useless blood and create destruction.

¹ - Kenneth Light , "A Transferência da Capital e Corte para o Brasil", ed. Tribuna da História, Lisboa 2007

² - João Centeno in "O Exército Português na Guerra Peninsular", ed. Prefácio, Lisboa 2008

³ - Ribeiro Artur in "A Legião Portuguesa ao serviço de Napoleão", ed. Ferin, Lisboa 1901

By moving the Royal Family and the capital to Brazil, Dom João frustrated Napoleon's perfidious plan of the secret Fontainebleau Treaty to end with Portugal as a country.

The story of the *Legion Portugaise*, which is a source of much ideological debate in Portugal, deserves additional comments, as this will help to understand the plight of the Portuguese officer corps:

Colonel Ribeiro Arthur wrote the following in his book '*A Legião Portuguesa ao serviço de Napoleão*':

The Emperor foresaw the danger of an insurrection, and on the 12th of November he sent instructions to Junot regarding the march to Portugal and operations within Portugal: "You will disarm and conscript the Portuguese Army. You may form a unit of five to six thousand men of the Portuguese Army, officers and soldiers making them march in columns of 1,000 men to France, telling them that I employ them and you will make them swear allegiance." [pag. v]

On the 20th of November, Napoleon recommended Junot to waste no time in demobilising the Portuguese army:

"This will be easy during the first month, but difficult later on. They should depart immediately, as soon as they have sworn their allegiance. Make them march in battalions to Bayonne...." [pag. vi]

In April 1808, the Portuguese army corps left for France. It was made up of five regiments of infantry, one battalion of *Caçadores*, three regiments of cavalry, one squadron of light cavalry, and an artillery battalion, comprising altogether around 9,500 men, under the command of lieutenant-general Dom Pedro de Almeida Portugal, the 3rd Marquis of Alorna, with lieutenant-general Gomes Freire de Andrade as his second in command, both of whom were prestigious Portuguese officers at the time and were known to admire Napoleon, believing that Portugal would have a better future as part of the Napoleonic Empire, like other continental monarchies. The Portuguese Legion, apart from recruiting more soldiers for Napoleon's armies, also served to remove from Portugal the most able and dangerous men, whose permanence could have proved dangerous for Junot's occupying army. The majority of the soldiers and some of the officers managed to desert during the march across Spain. In Burgos, they were already reduced to 6,000. In Spain, some Portuguese units were already put to good use by the French in helping with the siege of Zaragoza, under the command of Gomes Freire in July and August, when 300 men were either killed or wounded in the fight. By now popular revolts were starting all over Spain against the French armies and their collaborators. When the Legion finally arrived at its French quarters in Grenoble and Gray, it was drastically reduced to a contingent of just 3,000 men. Napoleon was to reorganise the Portuguese corps as the *Legion Portugaise au service de Napoleon*, in three brigades, composed of two regiments of *Chasseurs à Cheval*, six regiments of infantry, and a squadron of light artillery and the Legion's depleted figures were to be reinforced with Italian and Spanish soldiers.

The Legion fought over a period of six years under the Imperial flag. It fought in Germany in 1809, and in Austria in 1810, earning glory at Wagram and in many smaller actions. During the invasion of Russia in 1812, the Legion was incorporated into Ney's army and fought at Smolensk, Borodino and Moscow (where they were the first unit to enter the Russian capital) and also at the terrible retreat from Berezina and Wilna, amongst others, where the Legion was all but destroyed. Napoleon, remembering the flight of La Romana's Spanish troops, never dared to send the Legion as part of Masséna's invading army of Portugal, except for eleven officers who were incorporated in Masséna's *Etat-Major* from 1810-1811, including generals Alorna and Pamplona. Three senior Portuguese officers did in fact defect to the Anglo-Portuguese forces, and were welcomed by Beresford. The Legion's senior officers in Portugal were all to be condemned to death for treason to the motherland, (General Alorna was to die in the Russian retreat), however after the Peninsular War, these sentences were to be the subject of an amnesty, after a much publicised campaign led by the sister of the Marquis d'Alorna, a famous writer and a leading intellectual, who inherited her brother's title. A case has been made that the Prince Regent, when leaving for Brazil, had not yet declared war on France and had left instructions to receive Junot's Napoleonic troops "as friends..."

2. The Portuguese Army after the expulsion of Junot in September 1808

The anti-French revolts in Portugal of June 1808 were all carried out by the various local authorities, in name of the absent Prince Regent (In Spain, the revolt didn't take place everywhere, with vows of allegiance to the Bourbon throne, due to different regional aspirations and confusion about the Royal Family's stand). The Portuguese Army was reborn from the ashes, with units hastily put together, but it lacked arms and officers. The revival of the Army mainly started in the North of Portugal.⁴ Initially, the newly mobilised army consisted of three corps, an Operational Corps of 5,000 men, recruited mainly from the North and deployed to the Centre West, also known as Estremadura, under the command of lieutenant-general Bernardim Freire de Andrade, an Observation Corps in the North (Minho and Trás-os-Montes), under the command of Lieutenant-General Pinto Bacelar, and a Reserve Corps in the Centre, in Coimbra. This new Army, with its untrained and insufficiently armed soldiers, was led by old and confused officers with difficulty in imposing order and unable to provide effective support in the summer of 1808 to Sir Arthur Wesley's disembarked troops. The uprising was much more difficult in Portugal than in Spain, as Junot had confiscated all the horses and arms of the Army, the Militia and the *Ordenança*! This fact was actually mentioned by Wellington in a letter to London.⁵

⁴ Manuel Amaral, "The Portuguese Army and the commencement of the Peninsular War", ed. Tribuna da História, Lisbon 2010

⁵ José da Luz Soriano, "História da Guerra Civil....desde 1777 a 1834", ed. Imprensa Nacional, Lisboa, Vol.I, 2 época, pag. 341

In the Algarve meanwhile, the revolt was led by Lieutenant-General the Count of Castro Marim. After raising a division and having expelled the French garrison of the Algarve, he moved north to join lieutenant-general Paula Leite, who was assembling a corps of old Line soldiers and Militia units in the Alentejo, and who had some effective skirmishes against General Loison's division. Unfortunately however, General Paula Leite moved too late to prevent Loison's division from punishing a popular revolt and from ransacking Évora, but he succeeded in delaying Loison from meeting up with Junot's main army north of Lisbon. After securing the control of the fortresses of Estremoz and Elvas, which made it difficult for Junot's army to leave Portugal through the Alentejo to join general Dupont and other French forces in Andalusia, the joint Portuguese Army finally advanced towards Lisbon, where by then, Junot was already negotiating his conditional surrender to Sir Arthur Wellesley's forces.

Following Junot's return to France after his defeat at Vimeiro and the shameful Convention of Sintra (signed on the 30th of August, 1808), Dom Miguel Pereira Forjaz, who was then the Secretary of the Regency Council, started reorganising the Army, the Militia and the *Ordenança* (embodied levies) in 1808, along the previously approved reform plans of 1803 and 1806. Few officers of the old army were available to supply the command and control structure of the new Portuguese army regiments, and the majority were old and out of touch with the military needs of the day, so the new Army had to co-opt most of its officers from the Militia, which was to be a major factor for great social and political consequences, as this recruitment was to change the traditional political hold that the old aristocracy had over the army and the militia, particularly since the "Restoration" wars of 1640-1668, this was however a common characteristic among most European armies. As stated previously, the traditional senior officers of the aristocracy were detached with the Court in Brazil or in the *Legion Portugaise* in France. After the end of the Peninsula War, this new officer corps was to promote the end of *l'Ancien Regime* in Portuguese society and it forced the advent of a Constitutional Monarchy.

3. Portugal enlists British officers in its Army, 1809-1821

The Government in Brazil, the Regency Council, deprived of the three members that had collaborated with the occupying Napoleonic authorities, and the Army were all conscious of the lack of experienced Portuguese commanding officers and of the need to update the army's technical know-how. In December 1808, the Portuguese Prince Regent, through his Ambassador in London, requested urgent military help from Great Britain, its old ally, who was also facing dangerous aggression from the Napoleonic Empire. After having insisted for the last fifteen years on the recognition from all other European Estates of its Neutrality status, Portugal, faced with an imminent French and Spanish invasion, renewed its Anglo-Portuguese Alliance and proceeded with the transfer of the Royal Family to Brazil, together with its Fleet, and the Portuguese Capital, and made an agreement for British forces to occupy Madeira, in order to ensure its security from Spanish and French ambitions. The

revolt against the French occupying forces in the Iberian Peninsula seven months later however, had brought about a new opportunity for Britain to destabilise Napoleon's control of continental Europe. The British landing in Portugal in the summer of 1808, culminating with Junot's expulsion from Portugal, had consolidated Portugal's liberation, but it had also given a strategic foothold for British forces in Continental Europe and secured the use of the best European port for the Royal Navy.

After Junot dismantled the organisation and resources of the Portuguese Army and with the destruction of the country's colonial trade, a bankrupt Portugal needed help in terms of military equipment and financial loans, and also with the recruiting of experienced officers to serve and train its army in the new warfare techniques of the time. The Portuguese Army needed to recruit young and experienced British lieutenants and captains to serve at company level, and also British majors, colonels and generals with battlefield experience to serve in the top echelons of its army. As the Court was far away in Brazil, an experienced senior officer with a good combat record was also needed to assume the overall command of the Army.

Portugal had often resorted in the past to such a procedure of employing a foreign Commander-in-Chief, examples being: 1) the Count of Schomberg as a foreign Commandant-in-Chief of its Army from 1660-1668, during the latter days of the "Restoration Wars", who had formerly served with Condé and Turenne in France, and later served in Holland and England during the "Glorious Revolution", where he was made a Duke; 2) the Count-Sovereign von Lippe who from 1762-80 led a great reorganisation of the army along Prussian lines, wrote extensive regulations, created support services, and introduced distinctive uniform identifications, and, having worked with Vauban, was also a great builder of coastal fortifications that one can still admire to this day; 3) the Scottish catholic general John Forbes Skellater who commanded the Portuguese "Auxiliary Army to the Spanish Crown" in the Roussillon campaign of 1793-96; 4) the Austrian general Prince Waldeck in 1797 and the French émigré marquis de la Roisière, who both studied and proposed military reforms to help in the probable foreseen wars; 5) the Prussian general Alexander von Goltz, contracted to command the Army in 1800, but who never assumed effective command during the Spanish invasion of 1801, and, finally; 6) William Carr Beresford in 1809, who assumed the command of the Portuguese Army, and was the last foreign commander ever of the Portuguese Army.

As already mentioned, in December 1808, the Prince Regent approached the British Government with a request for a senior army officer. Portugal invited Sir Arthur Wellesley to command the Portuguese Army, but Wellesley declined, as this was incompatible with his political responsibilities in Ireland and England and he suggested his fellow Anglo-Irishman, Major-General William Carr Beresford as an appropriate choice, given his leadership and administrative qualities which he had had the opportunity to witness, and also on account of the fact that he spoke Portuguese. Beresford had acted as Governor of Madeira in 1808, and was sent to Lisbon after Junot's surrender to command the temporary

British garrison and to assist with the confusing administration of liberated Lisbon, acting also as a negotiator and a regulator of the “embarkation procedures” of Junot’s army which included taking important initiatives to prevent the embarkation of loot! He had the opportunity to collaborate with Forjaz, who had arrived to organize the Portuguese army. When Sir Henry Moore assumed the command of the British troops in Portugal in October 1808, Beresford was sent to Oporto in November to help mediate on matters of public order. Finally, he commanded a brigade in Moore’s army, his brigade being the last to retreat from La Corunha, after having successfully protected the embarkation of the troops and all the sick from the campaign.

Other candidates for the top position in the Portuguese Army were the following: the prudent veteran Lieutenant-General Craddock, who was bitterly jealous of Wellington; the brilliant and much loved Sir Henry Moore, who didn’t believe that Portugal could be defended against Napoleonic forces; Lieutenant-General John Doyle; Lieutenant-General Sir John Murray, who was one of the least effective Peninsular War generals, who left the British Army in the Peninsula, as he refused to receive orders from Wellesley and Beresford, as he was older than them and had been their senior in the previous British Army organisation; and also the plebian, brilliant theorist, Colonel John Le Marchant, who was the creator of Sandhurst Military Academy, and who was maybe the best alternative candidate to Beresford, later killed as a Major General leading a cavalry charge at the battle of Salamanca. Canning, the then Foreign Secretary, had expressed his preference for Moore in public, but Lord Castlereagh, the then Secretary of State for War and Colonies, who had Wellesley as his military adviser, prevailed in Parliament and transmitted Wellesley’s suggestion to the Portuguese Government. Wellesley had written some very convincing ideas on how Portugal could be defended⁶, using a field army of 60,000 to 70,000 men, which was to be half British and half Portuguese. On January 9th, the Prince Regent informed the Regency Council of his choice of General Beresford. The promotion of Beresford to a British Lieutenant-General and his transfer to the Portuguese Army appeared in the London Gazette on the 21st of January 1809, accompanied by the transfer of a group of young officers. In March 1809, his nomination by Royal Decree as the Commander-in-Chief of the Portuguese Army was the start of the enormous task of training and disciplining the new Portuguese army. He began to issue his Orders of the Day in March 1809, whereby ‘His Excellency the Marshal Commander-in-Chief of the Portuguese Army’ lay down his guidelines for training and manoeuvring the new army. Afterwards, Sir Arthur Wellesley was made commander of the overall Allied British and Portuguese forces, arriving in Lisbon on April 22nd, 1809.

4. The Economics of the Military Alliance

⁶ Pedro de Aveliz in “Guerra Peninsular-Novas interpretações”, actas do Congresso do Instituto Defesa Nacional, ed. Tribuna da História, Lisboa, pag.462-465.

By January 1810, Portugal mustered 55,000 Line soldiers and 51 Militia's regiments, totalling 50,000 men. If one includes the *Ordenança*, Portugal fielded 150,000 men from a population of just 3,000,000. Portugal was to integrate half of its Line troops (30,000) in Wellesley's Anglo-Portuguese field army. Britain assumed the financial cost of 15,000 soldiers, then later 20,000, and finally of 30,000 Portuguese soldiers in 1810. In 1811, 1812 and 1813, Wellington's Anglo-Portuguese field army deployed in average 70,000 soldiers, about 40,000 being British or British related, and about 30,000 being Portuguese.

Britain kept a program of economic assistance to the Portuguese war effort⁷, both in material goods (arms, uniforms, leather goods, and food resources) and in financial subsidies. Between April 1809 and September 1814 the economic help amounted to 8,228,852 British Pounds, roughly an average of two million a year in 1811, 1812 and 1813, the remainder distributed between the three other years. For Portugal the British subsidy was the equivalent of around 70% of what the Regency State Budget could raise in financial resources during each of those years.

The Portuguese State Budget had to face huge costs in maintaining the Portuguese Army and the Militia, even if an important part of the Line expenses (e.g., the 30,000 Portuguese soldiers of Wellington's field army) was covered by British subsidies. The State had great economic difficulties on account of the destruction of the Brazil trade from 1808 onwards. This activity used to represent 65% of the national GNP⁸. The Regency had to undertake huge expenses to finance the necessary reconstruction work after the huge war damage, and also great expense was needed for the import of food, which was a situation that arose from both the destruction of agriculture as a result of the War and also the shortage of labour in the countryside, which had been mobilised for the war effort, together with the military expenses. All of this put the State Budget under huge stress, both because of its levels of expense, and also because of the difficulty in mobilising financial resources. The State frequently had to raise difficult loans on the London financial market, and Britain kept putting pressure on the Regency Council to develop harder taxation policies to try to achieve equilibrium of the budget, which became a source of permanent tension between the British ambassador and the Regency in Lisbon.

5. The adaptation of the Portuguese Army to British Army practices

In January 1809, Dom Miguel Pereira Forjaz had meanwhile been promoted to be a full Member of the Regency Council, in charge of Foreign Affairs and War, and, as confirmed in May, he became responsible for Defence and Army affairs, and in being the official

⁷ Antonio Alves-Caetano, in "Os socorros pecuniários Britânicos destinados ao Exército Português (1809 - 1814)", edição Lusitania Seguros S.A, Lisboa, 2013

⁸ António Alves-Caetano, in "A Economia Portuguesa no tempo de Napoleão", ed. Tribuna da História, Lisboa, 2008.

Portuguese contact for Wellesley and Beresford on all military and defence matters⁹. Beresford did not have to improvise the organisation of the army. The basic organisation had been established fifty years before, along Prussian lines, by the German general Sovereign Count-Prince La Lippe, who acted as commander of the Portuguese Army in 1764. At the time, Portuguese military organisation was considered to be a model of advanced rational organisation in Europe. Most subsequent organisational reforms were just updates, but often were only partially implemented.

After the experience of the Roussillon campaign in 1793-5, where a Portuguese expeditionary division operated in conjunction with Spanish troops against the French Republican Army, the Portuguese military realised however, that urgent changes were needed in the army. New organisational reforms were debated and various proposals were made in 1798, 1801, 1803, 1806 and 1808. Forjaz worked hard to produce a revised and updated Army Organisation plan by October 1808¹⁰. The Army in 1809 was organised to have 24 Line infantry regiments, each of two battalions, 6 light infantry battalions, 12 cavalry regiments of 4 squadrons, 4 artillery regiments, an engineer corps and various support services, in all totalling about 60,000 soldiers. The tactical infantry unit in 1809 was the Regiment, which was divided into two battalions of five companies each, with both battalions operating together. In 1811, 1812 and 1813, Wellington's Anglo-Portuguese field army deployed 70,000 soldiers on average, about 40,000 being British or British related, with about 30,000 being Portuguese.

Brigadier Dom Miguel Forjaz had served in the Headquarters as an aide to the commander of the Portuguese Expeditionary corps in Roussillon in 1793-6, and as Secretary of all the Reform Commissions since 1798. He had also served as head of the Militia for a long time, all of this making him the most knowledgeable "military manager" in the Army, and furthermore he was totally familiar with all the technical and economic aspects of these reforms, and also with the sensitive political and social issues regarding military organisation in the country. With his appointment as Secretary for War and Foreign Affairs of Lisbon's Regency Council, he was already in a perfect position to implement the urgently-needed reforms of the organization of the Army in 1808. Politically, he was viewed as being close to the Prime Minister, Araújo de Azevedo, in Brazil, and was thought to be a member of the "French or Aristocratic" party, and as such, ironically, was in an ideal position to implement the military policies required by the British, who normally faced resistance from the majority of the Regency Council in Lisbon¹¹. As an intelligent man he quickly understood that the only way for Portugal to beat the Napoleonic threat was to develop a true and deep alliance with the British military and to win the trust of the London Government. The Militia and *Ordenança* remained directly under the authority of Forjaz,

⁹ Francisco de la Fuente in "Dom Miguel Pereira Forjaz –the organizer of the fight against Napoleon", ed. Tribuna da História, Lisbon, 2011

¹⁰ Manuel Amaral in "A Luta Política em Portugal nos finais do Antigo Regime- as Reformas do Exército, 1803, 1805-1823", 3 vol., ed Tribuna da História, 2010-11

¹¹ Wellington said "Forjaz is the ablest statesman (...) in the Peninsula" , Wellington to Stuart, 11 10.1813 in "Wellington's Dispatches", Vol. XI, London

as this entailed administrative issues with home affairs. However, at times, regiments could be mobilised to operate under Beresford's command, often brigaded with Line regiments.

British officers with combat experience were precious teachers during the recruitment phase, and also during field operations, supervising the introduction of new weapons, new tactics and new procedures and command voices in the field. Proved British disciplinary methods were also to be introduced. But above all, these new procedures were indispensable for helping the Portuguese units operate in perfect cooperation with the British units in the upcoming field manoeuvres and in battle. Between 1809 and 1814, over 350 British officers (English, Scottish, Irish and Hanoverian) served in the Portuguese Army, which was a small percentage, when compared with the 6,000 total Portuguese officers' contingent. Almost all served with the Portuguese units that were integrated in Wellington's field army. Some served just for a few months, and others for the duration of the whole Peninsular War (1809-1814). Some even carried on serving in Portuguese service until 1821, or even later, during the civil war of 1832-4. One must take note that after the Peninsular War, and even more after Waterloo, Britain drastically reduced its heavy military expenses and therefore it was hard for many officers to find employment, and many tried to enlist in a Foreign Army.

Many of the Portuguese officers that had left the Army in 1808 were old and sick, or incapable. The first list of officers who were retired was composed of 108 officers, of which 6 were colonels, 6 were lieutenant-colonels and 14 were majors. Between 1809 and 1814, the number of Portuguese officers who left the service of the Army was 876 (9 generals, 15 colonels 32 lieutenant-colonels, 64 majors 292 captains, 222 lieutenants and 242 ensigns¹². By the end of 1809, 164 British officers were in Portuguese service (1 marshal, 1 lieutenant-general, 1 major-general, 13 brigadiers, 17 colonels, 36 lieutenant-colonels, 20 majors, 34 captains, 10 lieutenants, 10 ensigns and 20 surgeons). In 1810, the total number was 210. The total number of British officers that entered the Portuguese service between 1809 and 1814 were 343 (13 generals, 15 colonels, 29 lieutenant-colonels, 72 captains, 163 lieutenants, 22 ensigns and 22 sergeants). During this period, on average there were about 130 British officers present at any time in the Portuguese army. British officers were present in all Portuguese Line regiments and battalions, but very rarely in the Militia, and never in the *Ordenança*. Beresford placed British officers interspersed with Portuguese officers, thus avoiding the preponderance of one of the two nationalities amongst the higher-ranking officers of a particular regiment. If the brigade commander was British, then the regiment commanders were Portuguese. If a Colonel of one regiment was British, then the Lieutenant Colonel would be Portuguese, and vice-versa. One must say that the British officers that were chosen were normally able and dignified professionals which, together with the good quality of the mostly new and enthusiastic Portuguese officers, accounted for the great efficiency of the renewed Portuguese Army.

¹² João Centeno in "O Exército Português na Guerra Peninsular, Vol.I do Rossilhão ao fim da Segunda Invasão Francesa", ed. Prefácio, Lisboa, 2008.

Many of the British officers were involved in important roles, namely commanding brigades, regiments and battalions, usually with responsibilities in combat activities, as can be seen by the very high number of those killed and wounded. But the reality was that the British were always a minority amongst the officers in the Portuguese army. As an example, of the list of officers serving in the 14th Infantry Regiment in 1811, only four were British officers, out of a total of fifty three officers in the regiment, namely: Lieutenant-Colonel Havilland Le Mesurier, Captains P. McArthur and V.R. Lovett, and Lieut. Bartholomew Cassey. Throughout the six Peninsular War campaigns, from 1809 to 1814, starting with the Battle of Bussaco (27th of September, 1810) through to the Battle of Toulouse (10th of April 1814), the number of British officers in the 14th Infantry Regiment was never more than six.¹³

6. What was the temptation to serve in the Portuguese Army?

A system to attract British officers was established so that officers in Portuguese service would enlist at a level immediately above their rank in the British Army, and in some instances with double salary (British and Portuguese), and for some, an additional pay of “Bat, Baggage and Forage Money”. The possibility of serving in the Portuguese Army was tempting for young and ambitious officers, who had their promotions blocked in their original British regiments. Time of service was virtually the only form of promotion in the British Army. Promotions for vacancies only became available within each regiment with retirement, death in action, or illness. These were not very frequent, despite the many campaigns.

On the other hand, there was a tradition of purchasing promotions, but some of the younger officers did not have sufficient family income to permit this advance in their careers.

The novelty of volunteering for Portuguese service was, in the first place, that officers were offered a promotion above their rank. Initially, to encourage volunteers to serve in the Portuguese Army, British officers were promoted two posts above their rank and one in the British Army. Thus a British captain became a major in the British Army and simultaneously a lieutenant-colonel in the Portuguese Army, or a major to a lieutenant-colonel in the British Army and simultaneous a colonel in the Portuguese Army, etc. Only twenty-four British officers benefitted from this double promotion.

Captain James Oliver of the 4th Foot Regiment was an example of this double promotion. He was promoted to major whilst still in England as a General Staff Officer in the Infantry, as there was no vacancy in his regiment. On arrival in Portugal, he was promoted to Lieut.-Colonel. This was quite a step up in his career for a thirty two year old. These officers were rather looked down upon by some of the Portuguese officers, but envy was much more

¹³ Major-General Rui Moura in his work on the “Biographies of the British Officers in Portuguese Service during the Peninsula War “, about to be published.

noticeable amongst those British officers of their generation who remained in England without promotion and with half the salaries of their counterparts in Portugal.

This type of promotion also served Wellington's personal interest, as it allowed him to alter the ancient and rigid rules of the British Army. Amongst his British officers, he chose the most capable and distinguished, those who were able to command troops, and he placed them in the Portuguese Army. These officers were thus able to command their older comrades, who did not merit Wellington's confidence, when units of the two armies fought together. For example, Dickson, an exceptional artillery captain, was put in charge of all the artillery units of the Allied armies, with the rank of Lieut.-Colonel of the Portuguese Army. This was the reason why he always wore a Portuguese uniform, with his Portuguese army rank. This meant that he was of a higher rank than older Majors and Captains of the British Army, much to the irritation of many of his British colleagues.

Later on in the Peninsular War campaign, from 1810 onwards, with volunteers pouring in, British officers who wanted to serve in the Portuguese Army were only promoted by one rank in the Portuguese Army, and maintained their rank in the British Army. However, they accumulated their corresponding salary in each of the two nations.

A Final Comment

The success of the military alliance of these two nations, with different cultures and embracing different religions, was only possible due to the history of an Alliance developed during centuries, built around their similar fascination for faraway lands and their historical commitment to a seagoing mercantile activity. Together they shared the use of the sea as an extension of their home and also a common distrust of the European Continental Powers' politics.

This particular bond is something which most historians writing about the Napoleonic European conflict don't seem to understand. This also explains the frustration of the British Army with its difficulty in coordinating military manoeuvres with their Spanish allies and the inconceivable participation of British officers in a Spanish army.

One must also remember that the Peninsular War could not have been won without the extraordinary quality of three key personalities, Wellington, Forjaz and Beresford, and without the resilient character of the people of these two Nations.

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