

AN ALLIANCE FRUSTRATED

by Luiz Marques

PORTUGUESE AMBASSADORS ACCREDITED
IN ENGLAND FROM 1547 TO 1553

On November 26, 1546, the king of Portugal, Dom John III, sent Henry VIII of England a letter accrediting the jurist Dr. Gaspar de Oliveira as his ambassador at the court of the English sovereign. The purpose of this diplomatic mission was to request Henry VIII to curb the boldness of some of his subjects who were endangering the cause of peace and the friendship between the two kingdoms by harassing the vessels loaded with corn for Portugal (1).

Henry VIII's death took place shortly after the arrival of the Portuguese diplomat in London. Dom John III sent Fernão da Silveira (about the end of March 1547) to bear his condolences to Edward VI and to congratulate the young prince on his accession to the throne.

Fernão da Silveira was also to visit Princess Mary and to present the Portuguese King's condolences to her, too; and furthermore to seek audience with the Duke of Somerset, uncle of the deceased monarch and now protector of the Realm, and deliver to him a letter which he bore from John III (2).

On 20 September 1553, John III gave instructions to Lourenço Pires de Távora, who had been appointed Portuguese Ambassador at the court of St. James. By this time Edward VI was dead and Mary had succeeded to the throne (3).

These were the Portuguese diplomats in London between the year 1547 and 1553.

REPORTS OF THE PORTUGUESE DIPLOMATS TO DOM JOHN III, DURING THE REIGN OF EDWARD VI.

In a letter to Dom John III, dated 29 August 1549, the Envoy begins by informing his master that the French Ambassador had bidden farewell to the King of England and had begged him for leave to depart.

(1). State Papers Office. Bundle 1, Portugal, No. 5.

(2). Archives of the Torre do Tombo, Lisbon, S. Vicente de Fora manuscripts, Vol. IV, page 152.

(3). "Account of the Illustrious Persons bearing the name of Távora", published by Rui Lourenço.

He adds that war between the two countries was held to be certain; that the French Ambassador had not as yet obtained the King's consent to leave; that he (the Portuguese Envoy) did not know the reason for this delay but supposed that it might be on account of the fact that the English Minister had not yet returned from France. He further mentions that the English people were much divided among themselves; that in Norfolk 40,000 men had assembled to oppose the nobles and that an army had marched out against them; that in Cornwall Lord Grey had slaughtered 3,000 rebels who had risen some because of the new laws concerning religion, whilst others desired matters "in pursuance of their own opinions"; that the Protector and the Council were kept very busy not only with these affairs but also with those of Scotland and France.

The Envoy also records that Princess Mary was at Oudesoe (Windsor?) some 30 miles from London, living close to the rebels and leading a very holy life. He further states that the Protector had written to him concerning a certain Englishman who desired a recommendation to the King of Portugal. The letter ends by the Envoy requesting his master to send a reply by André Nogueira to his enquiry regarding his return to Portugal and as to what provision had been made for him (4).

PROJECT OF MARRIAGE OF PRINCE DOM LUIS OF PORTUGAL TO PRINCESS MARY OF ENGLAND, WHO CAME TO THE THRONE ON THE DEATH OF HER BROTHER EDWARD VI WITH THE TITLE OF MARY TUDOR.

On the death of Henry VIII, Fernão da Silveira was sent to London by John III, by whom he was instructed, amongst other things, to pay a visit to Princess Mary on behalf of the Portuguese king and present the latter's condolences on the death of her father.

Silveira's stay in London was short, Dr. Gaspar de Figueiredo remaining in that capital as resident Minister.

It was about this time that the plan to marry Princess Mary to Prince Lufs of Portugal, brother of John III, was mooted anew (5).

In order to further this plan, Edward VI sent Sir William Paget, as ambassador to the Emperor Charles V, to effect negotiations and settle

(4). Archives of the Torre do Tombo Chronological Corpus P. I. bundle 83. doc. 13, mentioned by the Viscount of Santarém, Quadro Elementar, Vol. XV, page 49 et seq.

(5). According to the Viscount of Santarém, quadro Elementar, vol. XV, page LIX.

the terms of the said union, also to arrange for a perpetual peace. The said envoy departed on his mission before July of that year (1549). He was fully instructed as to the terms of the marriage, which were as follows: Princess Mary was to be given a dowry of 100,000 crowns, or the annual income corresponding to that sum, payable in Calais, whither the Princess was to repair in the event of marriage (6).

As soon as he was received by the Emperor, Paget wrote to the Lord Protector Somerset, Regent of the Realm, informing him of the way he had been received and also how he had laid the plan of the said marriage before the Emperor. The latter had commented very graciously on the matter, but had said that he wished to consult Cardinal de Granvelle (7).

The English Government did not approve Paget's promising a lump sum of 100,000 crowns, as dowry, and declared that Dom Lufs should make a settlement of 20,000 crowns in favour of the Princess. Somerset in his letter of 4 July of that year, added that Paget was to reduce the amount of dowry offered in proportion to any cuts made in the aforesaid settlement, and that the dowry was in no case to exceed the sum already quoted. The final instructions to Sir William Paget were that if the Emperor were not to refer to the subject again, he, the envoy, was not to bring it up (8).

The diplomatic correspondence of the next two years (1550-1551) show that no further steps were taken in the matter of the projected union between the Infante and the Princess.

Charles V, who was endeavouring to arrange the marriage between Princess Mary and his own son Philip, kept this scheme dark even from his own sister, Queen Mary of Hungary, Regent of the Low Countries. The latter represented to the Emperor the urgent need to appoint a resident Ambassador at the English Court, adding that such an ambassador should be a man of strong character, so as to secure fair dealing for the Flemish ships using the English ports. She further pointed out that it would be quite easy to invade England and so avenge the deeds wrought by Edward VI. She suggested, as one of the means to secure this end, employing Dom Lufs in this enterprise, since his brother, the King of Portugal, would be sure to provide assistance to bring back England to the Church. The Emperor however paid no heed to these proposals.

(6). Brit. Mus. Biblioteca Cottoniana, Galba B 12 f. 92.

(7). Brit. Mus. Manuscript of the Biblioteca Harleyana No. 523 fol. 57.

(8). Brit. Mus. Biblioteca Cottoniana Galba B 12.

On 6 July 1553, Edward VI died at Greenwich, at the early age of sixteen.

In spite of her right to the throne, Princess Mary was excluded from the succession, and Lady Jane Grey, daughter of the Duke of Suffolk, was crowned queen, thanks to the machinations of the Duke of Northumberland. This unfortunate princess reigned only 9 days, being forced to yield the throne to the legitimate successor. She was subsequently executed at the Tower on 12 February 1554.

As soon as Mary Tudor came to the throne, the question of her marriage was immediately broached again. The claims of the various suitors to her hand were examined, and it seemed that Courtenay, Duke of Devonshire, had the greatest chance; Parliament had proposed him to the Sovereign, on the grounds that he was English and a royal kinsman, which circumstances were pleasing to the people; moreover, he was a man of great personal worth and the Queen was fond of him. However, he himself did not accept the proposals made to him in that connection (9). He had a great liking for Princess Elizabeth, holding her beauty and wit in greater esteem than the royal power of her sister. The preference shown for Elizabeth considerably cooled the Queen's affection for Courtenay, and on the Emperor's Envoy referring to her match with that nobleman, as commonly supposed, she assured him that she had no intention of marrying him and that as far as she could see there was no one in England in proper circumstances to wed her.

In the meantime, John III of Portugal, who had not given up the hope of arranging the marriage between Mary and the Infante Dom Luís, as soon as he heard of Edward VI's death, wrote to his Ambassador at the court of the Emperor, Antonio de Saldanha, that he should reopen negotiations for the match (10). He also appointed Lourenço Pires de Távora his ambassador extraordinary for the purpose of complimenting the Queen of England on her accession to the throne and gave him detailed instructions, dated 20 September of that same year (1553) (11) providing him also with two credential letters, both bearing the same date, the first empowering him to present the King's congratulations and the second in case Charles V should be inclined to back up the negotiations for the marriage between the Queen and the

(9). See Godwin *Annales du regne d'Henri VIII, Edouard VI et Marie*, pag. 339.

(10). *Papiers d'Etat du Cardinal de Granvelle*. Vol. IV page 72.

(11). *Account of the Illustrious Persons of the name of Távora*, page 116 et seq.

Infante.

The Ambassador journeyed by way of Castille, saluting the Spanish king on behalf of his master and acquainting him, in accordance with the first clause of his instructions, with the object of his mission. He then made his way to Paris, where the King of France gave him an audience, and finally reached Brussels where the Emperor was holding his court.

As he went through Valladolid, in Spain, the Ambassador conferred with Dom Diogo d'Azevedo, who had returned from England a few days before, upon the state of affairs in that country. The Portuguese Envoy learnt that there was nothing to be expected in the matter of the marriage of the Queen to Dom Luís, and writing to the King of Portugal, the aforesaid Envoy suggests that in order to maintain the dignity of the monarch and of the Infante, he should limit his visit to a mere presentation of compliments followed by an immediate return to Portugal. John III concurred with this view of his Ambassador's.

The Envoy reached the court of Brussels on 24 October. In the course of the audience granted to him by the Emperor, he pointed out the great advantages resulting to England from the union of the Queen and the Infante D. Luís. He concluded, in accordance with his instructions, by declaring that his sole mission was to follow any course which the Emperor might suggest.

Charles V had considerable influence over the mind of the Queen of England and was already preparing the ground for a marriage between her and his son. With his usual dissimulation he replied to the Portuguese Envoy that in view of what had happened after the death of Edward VI, he had advised the Queen to wed the son of the Duke of Northumberland, who was the head of a faction against the Queen, so as to win him over to her side by this means; however, as matters had improved, he had counselled her to wed an Englishman and to be guided by the advice of her Council in the matter. The Emperor felt therefore that he could give no further advice until he satisfied himself as to the future course of events in England; he had instructed his ambassadors to endeavour to probe the mind of the Queen on the subject of her marriage. On the Portuguese Envoy making some suggestions, the Emperor appointed the Bishop of Arras to confer with him. However both the Bishop and the Queen of Hungary answered in the same strain as the Emperor. Charles V, fearing that the Portuguese Envoy might queer the negotiations in favour of the Prince of Castille, lavished entertainment upon him and purposely delayed him in Brussels. Finally, the Emperor told him that the matter of the Infante's marriage had been broached several times and he had not wished it to go forward. He then sent the Bishop of Arras, the Regent Figueiroa and Erasso to the Envoy's very residence, to

acquaint him with the fact that the Queen's party had chosen the Emperor's son and was requesting that proper persons should be appointed to arrange the terms of the union, and that consequently the Infante's suit could not be pressed.

After this communication the Portuguese Envoy had a further audience with the Emperor, though the latter was ill in bed. At this interview, the Emperor spoke for three quarters of an hour, endeavouring to dispel the bad impression which the communication of his representatives might produce in Portugal, not only because of the exclusion of Dom Luís and the state to which the Infanta D. Maria was reduced, but also on account of the political consequences resulting from the marriage of the heir to the throne of Spain, to the Queen of England, involving, as it did, the union of so many realms.

After this last audience, Lourenço Pires de Távora left for England, where Charles V had his movements watched by his Ambassador. The Portuguese Envoy was received by the English Queen on 7 December 1553. He complimented her, on behalf of his royal master on her accession to the throne. On receipt of her official thanks, he returned to Portugal on 18 January 1554, and it is likely that he gave the King of Portugal a detailed account of the religious, political and military affairs of England, as he had been enjoined to in the various clauses of his instructions.

Thus ended the long negotiations regarding the marriage of Dom Luís. The Court of Portugal found itself against many difficulties, chief amongst which was the ambitious policy of Charles V, who no sooner heard of the death of Edward VI and Mary's accession to the throne than immediately he schemed to place the crown of England on the head of one of his own sons, his plans being favoured by the English Queen's devotion to him on account of the protection which he had ever accorded to her.

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(This article was found among the papers of the late Luís Marques and is printed here by kind permission of his family.)