

Cecil Beaton in Lisbon, 1942

Cecil Beaton was already a well-known fashion photographer when he was sent to North Africa by the UK Ministry of Information to serve as a “war artist”. While there, he received instructions to go to Lisbon to photograph the Council of Ministers and local celebrities, presumably in an attempt to flatter the Portuguese authorities at a time when Britain was competing with Germany to obtain Portuguese wolfram (tungsten) and was also hoping to gain access to Portuguese bases in the Azores. His photographs were subsequently published in Portugal in *Panorama*.

In 2009, the British Historical Society of Portugal, in collaboration with the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the British Council, organised an exhibition of Beaton’s photographs. The catalogue¹ contained 35 photographs, together with the sections from his diaries that covered his time in Portugal, which are reproduced here.²

By Cecil Beaton

Arrival

The other passengers going straight through to the United Kingdom were to be taken, like a school treat for the day, to Estoril, but I must to the Press Attaché. Did they know anything about my visit? No, but two young men looked after me with interest and enthusiasm; they telephoned all departments to know what jobs were awaiting me, and then sent a telegram back to the Ministry. It gave one confidence to find such bright and intelligent men holding positions of responsibility. Until the information arrived, I had better wait here in Lisbon, they said. Stewart booked me a room at a hotel and as he did so he smiled - no wonder he smiled. For the Aviz Hotel is a phenomenon! More like a millionaire’s house than a hotel, it once belonged to a newspaper proprietor. It is decorated with tremendous pieces of Portuguese carving, tile work, iron work, a magnificent carpet and huge bowls of silver were filled with ugly flowers. Only thirty people can be put up; the whole atmosphere is so refined and expensive, so apart from the life that I have known since the war, that it was as if the baroque clock in the hall had been put back twenty or even forty years. The shrouded, rose-coloured Louis Sixteenth dining-room was sprinkled with a few pre-war personages of various nationalities, and several millionaires, including Mr. Gulbenkian, the oil and caviar king. Here I had the most sumptuous and extravagant luncheon I could order. I did not know it was possible to eat so much; I hogged - hors d'oeuvres which were almost too iced, rouget grillé, cold rosy roast beef and salad followed by a baba with crystallized cherries. I had eyes, but no further stomach-room, for the wonderful looking fresh strawberries at the side of the trolley.

Here once more I indulged in the pre-war form of sight-seeing. After the experiences of the last four months, which had been so entirely new to me, the Lisbon expeditions were in the nature of recapitulations of the past, for although I had not been to this country before, I had spent many holidays wandering among the ornate rococo decorations of the eighteenth century. In comparison, then, to the rest of my journey, this visit must necessarily possess less of the element of surprise, and to the reader it will undoubtedly come as an anti-climax. Nevertheless, of all of the contrasts which I had experienced, this produced the extraordinary sensation, that of being comfortable.

¹ The BHSP still has copies in its library available for purchase.

² This text, which has been prepared from a scanned version of the catalogue, is faithful to the original version in the catalogue, with the exception that sub-titles have been inserted, and obvious errors and the Americanisation of some spellings have been corrected. All photographs, other than the one of Beaton, are from the catalogue.

My cotton dressing-gown, which had acquired, since my sojourn in the bare damp cell in West Africa, a permanent smell of mildew and wet moss, made my apricot-coloured bedroom here in Portugal, appear all the more strangely luxurious.



Cecil Beaton, 1944

After the existence we have become accustomed to since Hitler's egomania precipitated us into war, to find oneself in a neutral country, leading a normal existence, was as strange in its way as the life in the desert had seemed at first sight. One felt baffled, as if something were missing. Something was missing. Yes. The War. It was all very well to continue one's work leisurely, to sit reading, or drinking a glass of sherry, but we others now have little capacity for leisure. The commissionaire standing with nothing to do but pat lap dogs belonging to the rich hotel guests, and the gardener, as if in slow motion, watering some coarse flowers, seemed, like most people here, to have extremely vapid vocations.

It was a shock to see the food-shops packed with such rarities, kiosks overloaded with magazines of all nations, and sitting at the tables the peoples "of every nation under heaven". That party of inflated, slug-like buffoons were obviously Germans. So far, the war had gone well for them; but their beady, ferrety eyes wore a furtive look. They showed no assurance. Strange to think that yesterday, or perhaps tomorrow, I could kill them without being punished; but that this evening I should be imprisoned for doing so. It was strange to realize that one could write to one's friends in Occupied countries. One could even have written to an enemy if one wished. I wrote to Gertrude Stein at Aix and B  b   B  rard at Marseilles, and felt as if I were waking from a nightmare, and was trying to pick up the threads of reality. It was strange to talk to people who had recently arrived from Paris, who told us stories of the Occupation. There are so many things one is allowed to do here on neutral ground. Neutral ground - there is something inhuman about it. Only the bare surface of the ground can be quite neutral. Those who still walk upon it feel things too much, knowing that those below feel things too little.

Many Lisbonians have become self-conscious that their capital city of late has been treated as a background for the world, and New World, celebrities passing through Lisbon. They consider that the emphasis should be laid upon the city itself, which, in spite of the adverse effect of the war on its economy, has succeeded in balancing its budget and carrying out the experiments of the New State. Lisbonians consider they have been interpreted unfavourably by passing journalists, who have written of the capital city as a melting-pot of spies, adventurers and gambler refugees. Anglophile Portuguese feel that a truer picture would be given if an effort were made to represent Portugal as a partner of the Allies, for Portugal has an alliance with Great Britain. Founded in 1386, it has been renewed many times since, but has not been invoked by us in this war.

Sightseeing

How strong are one's latent appetites. With what relish did I return to the pleasures of sightseeing. This Portuguese fantasy of ornamentation was like coming upon an old favourite friend, who again cast her usual spell. In Lisbon there is much charmingly ridiculous decoration of the nineteenth century; and, with a mixture of surprise and familiarity, one learns that the comic and pretty tower-lift, connecting the lower part of the city with the heights, is an early work of Eiffel.

Marcus Cheke, who wrote a life of the Marquis de Pombal, Portugal's eighteenth-century Dictator, was my guide in sight-seeing. He has a great knowledge of Portugal and is himself eighteenth century in character and taste. He likes the Portuguese, whether they are the peasant and the country folk, the worldly yet unsophisticated townspeople, letting off their fire-works, or the bull-fighting nobleman, who twice a week visits the zoo where he throws squibs into the den of the monkeys.



Unknown person with horse carriage

Our taxi, bent on pleasure, dashed with a fury only known to Portuguese taxis, up the cobbled steps of the Moorish quarter of the town - the Alfama, which has survived the catastrophic earthquake of 1755, when more than two-thirds of Lisbon fell down in fifteen minutes. It climbed the steep streets hung with balconies, bird cages, morning glories, and washing. From the summit of the town, the jumble of roofs looks like a patchwork quilt, its texture of coarse weaves. Here is the fish market, and the women, bearing huge platters of fish or their heads, become excited and fight continuously, smacking one another across the face with their fish. The taxi darted down again and, on two wheels, navigated the hairpin bends that are protected from a drop of great precipitousness only by a delicate iron-work grille. The Black Horse Square looked very Venetian from the vantage point down by the water's edge of the quay, where the speckled marble steps have the same texture as the ornamental arch and the equestrian statue of King Joseph I when seen from the distance.

To visit the Museum of Coaches was like being back in those distant days when holidays were spent sight-seeing, discovering baroque in the steps of the Sitwells. The carved, gilt, ceremonial coaches, lined with dark cherry Genoese velvet, are as fine as filigree. They are indeed made for Emperors, Kings, Queens,

Cardinals, and Popes, and they possess an extraordinary romantic appeal. They are wooden jewels that can, upon occasion, in spite of their decoration and ornamentation, become practical; they can face the onslaught of sun and the other elements, and can, though slowly, travel along a thoroughfare. Some of these coaches with egg-shell carvings, made in Rome, were brought all this way by relays of horses. By the time the cortège had arrived in Lisbon, the five-hundredth horse was among those who had conveyed this three-dimensional frame for royalty.

The taxi charged along the broad Pombaline avenues, profusely ornamented with statues, past the ornate churches, the belching fountains, the museums, crowned with carved trophies, past Beckford's favourite haunts, of which he wrote in his letters, to the Convent of Jeronymus. Its architecture corresponds in date to our perpendicular, and is known as Manueline Gothic. The effect is coarse, but rich.

To San Roque - a church containing the shrine presented to the Jesuits by King John the Fifth, who seems to have been the Solomon and the Louis XV of Portugal. The chapel, which cost the King two hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds, though it measures only fifteen feet by twelve, is made of silver, gold, lapis lazuli, porphyry, alabaster and marble; yet the effect is drab - the most precious materials are sometimes the least effective. Some kings have been fond of fireworks or Russian ballet; King John liked church processions. He would arrange to have small children wearing wings, representing angels, accompanying three hundred black priests dressed alike. The altar cloths, the banners that were carried, and the bishop's robes with their heavy gold metal embroideries, were on view this day; and it was difficult to decide which gave the greatest effect of richness, the heavy encrustation of gold on green, on red, on grey or on silver.

It is possible to convey one's pleasure at the first visit to the Palace of Queluz? It is pink, pistachio green, and prettier than anything to be seen in Bavaria. It is more fanciful than any of the eighteenth-century palaces in France. It is the apotheosis of all "fondant" architecture. After the visit to the Libyan desert, where our men have left behind the elaborate paraphernalia of civilization and have settled down quite naturally as tent dwellers, considering themselves fortunate to be protected from sun and wind, it was quite a shock to see something so utterly different from anything that the New Order of things has created. One building, with Dutch gables, and steep mansard roofs, with Chinese pagoda-like extremities, has a façade ornamented with terminal figures, busts and pale green balconies, that is fantastic in its concentration on decoration and effect of luxury.

For that one afternoon's escape, during war time, to this pink and green palace with the angels blowing trumpets, the pink and green gardens, and the magnolia trees in bloom, I am grateful.

Portuguese families

Church dignitaries, Marquesas, in black lace, fluttering fans, statesmen, old gentlemen in resplendent uniforms -- with these figures, set apart in a scene of their own, far from the intensely living and dying world of Africa, Marcus Cheke filled the hours I must spend awaiting my next orders.

He introduced me to many families living in their homes outside the city. At one, the family escutcheon was draped in a shroud and the servants were dressed in black. The hostess, in black lace, gave us fruit salad and orangeade and took us on a tour of her gardens with her Irish companion, a great character, Miss Rhys, who goes into Lisbon each evening by bus to buy that day's London *Times*. The two ladies talk all day and until early dawn. They die of the heat each sunny day and get worried by the news, but their troubles seem remote and rare.

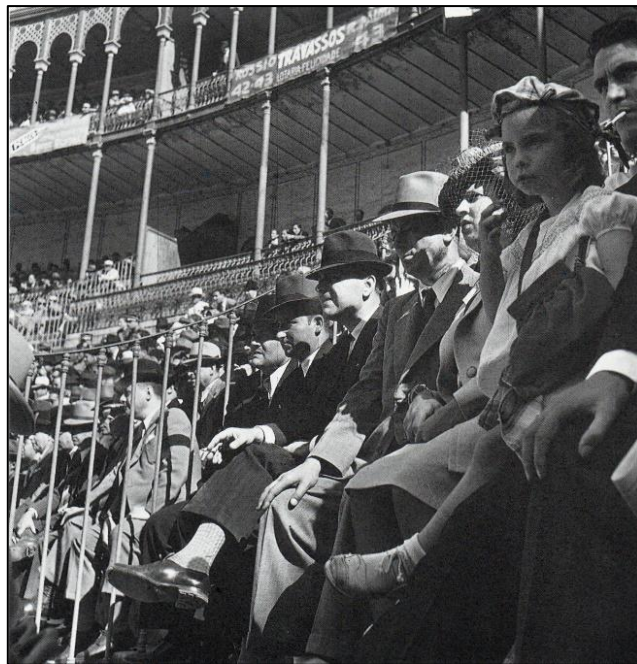
Then to Carnide family in the Carnide house. A huge family group gathered on a terrace, overlooking the ancient box garden. The hedges have grown to a height of fifteen feet into elaborate cones and umbrellas; the house is lined with azulejo tiles and a clutter of mixed furniture. It was nine o'clock, the family sitting

gossiping in the calm before the family dinner. A typical gathering. They might talk about their relations, the bull-fight on Sunday, the Scarlatti concert or about the duties of the British Ambassador, who, according to them, does not entertain enough. "He should lay at least two thousand covers a year, and he doesn't do it."

"Well, he doesn't approve of it in war time." "An ordinary family lays at least twelve hundred covers in two years."

Bull fights

On Sunday afternoons, the Lisbonian families drive to the bull-fight in smart dog-carts. The Stadium, in fantastic Oriental style with four onion domes with crescent moons attached, makes a pretty setting. After Spain, and even Mexico, the bull-fights here are rather tame for amateurs to watch; for although there is much danger and skill involved, and the various "passes" can be adroitly perfected, for the novice the excitement and disgust is not the same when neither bulls, horses nor picadors are going to be killed. Here the main onslaught is launched upon the bull by a fighter mounted upon horseback - upon a Portuguese horse with small, curving head and neck, a horse which is much too quick on its turns to be caught by the bull. Moreover, the whole performance has, to the stranger, a slightly ridiculous aspect. The entrance of the bullfighters did not augur well; their costumes were old and faded, and some of the men elderly and sagging at the knees.



Spectators at the bull fight, Lisbon

Instead of coming in with braggadocio and dash, they stood around weakly; one portly man in pink happened always to be singled out for the attention of every bull and spent his time in making ignominious retreats over a wall. When, at one point, the bull seemed to be interested only in awaiting this man's return, a determined but fatuous effort at distracting the animal was made by an elderly friend, in pale mauve, running out, desperately waving a very faded squashed-strawberry-coloured handkerchief. The turn provided by the *forcados* was hilarious. A dozen old men appeared, dressed like the robbers in "The Forty Thieves" - in chintz jackets of yellow and scarlet roses (one of them had obviously been told: "We've run out of that particular chintz, this is the best we can do!" and had turned up in a jacket of blue and pink roses). These short jackets are worn over an enormous scarlet tummy band. The leader, followed by a huddle of the others cowering behind him, walks towards the baffled bull, proffering his large scarlet tummy in a most child-like and laughable way. The bull is likely to ignore these advances; but if, after a series of blandishment, he charges forward at the red tummy band, this *forcado* must leap at the bull's head, hanging on by the horns long enough

for the brother *forcados* to hurl themselves on to the animal bringing it to a halt. However, it seldom happens this way; the first *forcado* has been unable to hang on to the horns long enough; there follows a horrible scuffle in which one or two of the old men are ignominiously hurt and the whole audience laughs as, one by one, they hobble out of the arena looking dreadfully, undramatically, sorry for themselves, holding on to a cricked back or rubbing a dislocated knee-cap. The audience is cruel and fickle, and the man who, one moment, is cheered and showered with hats and flowers, will, five minutes later, be booed out of the ring.

By far the most pleasing spectacle of the evening, was provided by the Lopes father and son. The father, a magnificent and noble-looking creature, well-known as one of the best Portuguese fighters, came prancing into the arena on a magnificent horse, like a charger out of tapestry, wearing an eighteenth-century Spanish coat and beplumed tricorne. To the cheers of the crowd he introduced, for the first time in the ring, his even more beautiful and suave son, aged eighteen - a second Prince Charming on his dancing steed, wearing scarlet satin and doffing his plumed hat to the crowds. It was a great occasion. Father and son smiled wonderful stylized smiles, the sun cutting their cheeks with deep shadows. The young man, his head as if carved in wood, with silky hair highly polished, his back and legs as straight as arrows, sat erect while his horse performed a series of intricate movements, side stepping and dancing. Father and son circled the arena, collecting the plaudits of the crowd; then they joined again, still on horseback, to clasp each other around the waist, and to shake hands. Once again various trumpet calls were the punctuation marks of the courses. The trumpet blew; the bull rushed out; immediately Prince Charming on his horse was attacked and in turn attacked the bull. With his long lance, decorated with coloured rosettes, he achieved triumph in a flash, for the staff had found its way into the back of the maddened bull. Prince Charming was already a favourite; he was a dashing gallant sight.

A huge bunch of pink carnations was thrown to him. The father watched outside the arena, with tears coursing down his cheeks.

Photographs

Word came from the Minister of Information that I was to photograph the entire Portuguese Cabinet. This meant getting permits, for it appears that in Lisbon you are arrested for taking pictures, and once in prison it takes weeks to get out again. Time means nothing in Portugal. Owing to stringent economies, resulting from Salazar's financial reforms and in the balancing of the budget after years of financial chaos, sacrifices have been made by everyone in the country including government officials. This may be the explanation that some of these servants do not work all day at their government office desk. When, at last, our most uncommonly efficient official arrived at the *Secretariado*, he sat at his desk surrounded by telephones, carrying on long conversations. Each time another bell rang, he would look more harassed; yet he would dial numbers without ceasing; cursing the operator; hanging up and dialling again immediately. He would throw wild gestures at the telephone and scream into the mouth-piece. Having kept us watching this performance for half an hour, he then got on to the police, but looked sad that, thus late in the afternoon, most of the other people had gone home until tomorrow. He continued arguing further with the operator; suddenly he winked: "Things are moving fast!" He smiled. Patience is the first thing one must learn in Portugal.



Veva de Lima (“Madam Ulrich”)

The siege of photography started. First on the list was an old admiral of eighty years old, the official representative in Portugal of the Duke of Braganza, Pretender to the throne, and as such head of the monarchist party. Now living in an overcrowded apartment, this courtier from the days of Don Carlos is surrounded by photographs in silver frames of his friends who have now been claimed by the shades. Next followed the contrast of Madame Ulrich, a dynamo of energy, with corn-coloured fringe, a skirt draped with kangaroo pockets, and to her credit a recent impassioned speech on the radio entitled "Why I am an anglophile." The elderly Condessa das Rivas, a great worker for charity who organized schools for waifs called the "Little Flowers of the Street", provided the next contrast, with her grey pompadour and black bombazine. Thence to President Carmona in the mediaeval castle entirely renovated in the nineteenth century, out beyond Estoril.³



President Oscar Carmona

³ Presumably Beaton is referring to the *Palácio da Cidadela* in the Citadel of Cascais.

In a large mustard-coloured room with silver ornaments, portraits like oleographs and the usual bric-a-brac, he received us in a morning coat, looking like an illustration by Caran d'Ache. He is dapper with a straight lithe figure, legacy of his army days. He was expecting to see an English colonel, instead of me, but he soon adapted himself enough to consent to be bandied from room to room, out on to the terrace and back, in spite of a painful leg. Born in the 'sixties, President Carmona led the coup d'état of 1926 which eventually resulted in the foundation of the present Portuguese "New State". He was elected President in 1928 when Dr. Salazar emerged as the brain behind the new order of things. Now he enjoys as much prestige as a reigning sovereign. Carmona is the Botha to Salazar's Smuts. He smoothes out troubles and has the army as a solid bloc in support of him. He is widely loved and respected by all classes. "Thank you, your Excellency, merci infiniment."

Next to visit His Excellency, the Cardinal Patriarch of Portugal, Cardinal Gonçalves Cerezeira, the youngest cardinal, with white hands and pointed nails, bright black-currant eyes and small mouth, astute, sagacious, and interested in politics. He could hardly be dragged from discussing the problems that would beset us after the war: "The things for which we fight are much deeper and more important than those for which we are ostensibly making such sacrifices." The scarlet-and-black robes and purple-and-crimson settings, staircases with trophies carved on the walls, and the Cardinal's gay and childish amusement at the proceedings, were a succession of surprising phrases in this Portuguese parenthesis.

Discussions on France

One night I dined with a brilliant young man whose work has brought him here for some considerable time. He is cast in a different mould from the other "coming young men" who base themselves on the nineteenth-century pattern. He named a few men in the Foreign Office and Treasury whom he thinks could be of outstanding help to our country, but moaned "the worst is that they may never be allowed their chance." He was a friend of Pétain and still keeps in touch with him. He knew, he said, long beforehand that France would collapse, for Pétain had told him that France was like someone suffering from a cancer - and, even if she were to be victorious over her foes, she would die of her own disease.

Pétain considered the period of the Third Republic the most unfortunate and corrupt in the annals of French history. He had but one great ambition, to form within France a new sort of democracy. Now unfortunately Pétain has little resistance left, and only a limited amount of strength for each day.

My friend described how the French plenipotentiaries had arrived here in Lisbon to explain armistice terms, after our Embassy staff had left Paris. But, when they heard of the encounter at Oran that day, they did not continue their journey to England. My friend had read the Germans' terms and asked "But what about the Fleet - no mention is made of it?" "That is a matter of subsidiary importance," they had said. But they advised: "we know General de Gaulle will fight on. France is now an invalid, a split personality. Don't only collaborate with the strong side of the person. Remember to take into consideration the weak side of the invalid, too." This we have not been able to do. How great a pity said my friend. He told me of Salazar's difficulties in doling out to the various countries, in happy ratio, the coveted supplies of wolfram, the precious metal which hardens other metals, and which is only available to Germany from Portugal. Its price has risen to many times its normal value. The farmers in the district where wolfram is sometimes found have often abandoned their farms and dug up the subsoil, thereby ruining the earth for many years. Those that have succeeded in discovering this metal have become so wealthy that they have no idea what to do with their money. A party of four rich peasants arrived at a country restaurant, plumped themselves down for dinner, and said "We want what the rich people have to eat". The waiter suggested, "Some chicken? A piece of pork?" "No, we can get that at home. We want what the rich people eat". The waiter called the proprietor. The proprietor was baffled. "What about a turkey!" "A turkey, yes, stuffed with sweet caramel?" A turkey stuffed with nougat was what these rich men were given. When they left, they called for a taxi. A taxi here?

It was many miles in the country: The proprietor asked slyly: “You only want one taxi?” “No”, said the peasants, embarrassed and furious. “Four taxis”. So each drove away in a separate taxi. Often these wolfram profiteers wear a wristwatch on each arm, a gold watch on a chain, and three fountain pens clipped to their breast pockets, though they can neither write, read, nor tell the time.

My friend told me of some of the French “collaborators” with Germany who come here from Paris to do many business deals. It is remarkable, he said, how the human mind adapts itself to different conditions and, in accepting them, soon finds new problems to tackle. With the exception of Poland and Greece, who have not enough calories and remain in a starving condition, the other countries, who are really hard up for food, adapt themselves to the lower level and can now do without the essentials of butter or meat, but strive for other commodities, with which they can continue their business deals, and carry on their money-making interests.

More photographs

More photographs. A woman poetess, the Minister of Education, and the President of the National Union. Then the head of the army, General Pereira dos Santos, received us in a hideous public building outside Lisbon. He apologized for asking us to come thus far; but it was so hot in Lisbon and he preferred to change into his uniform here where his things were kept. Would we mind waiting ten minutes for him to change? Certainly. Then next on the list came General Casimiro Teles, head of the Portuguese Home Guard, with a theatrical smile, a brilliant and dashing old-fashioned uniform and an opéra bouffe quality. He posed in a setting of gold-framed portraits, painted ceilings and coloured glass windows.

Many had envied me when, at the end of a long and particularly forlorn winter in England, I started off on my journey. Since that day I had visited many countries that were new to me, and had seen many strange and wonderful things. I was returning the richer for all that.

I had been nearer the fighting than ever before, but the minor, yet nevertheless most irksome, inconveniences of war had existed less than in England. There had been plenty of good food, comfort, brightly lit nights, sun and “good times”. But if the people at home were enduring restrictions, I began to feel almost as if I was being cheated out of my share of them.



An unidentified secretary at the British Embassy

The progress of the war still seemed far from satisfactory. There were certain periods when only an Englishman could have been convinced that he was inevitably on the winning side. The dictum about “the last battle” seemed to be holding good in this war too; but the final victory looked remote. No. The possibilities of the coming winter months were not entirely encouraging. I knew I would be returning to a cold and extremely dark winter. Life would be less and less easy, but my appetite for easiness was satisfied. I found I could bear only a certain limited amount of time away from England, and - in spite of the drawbacks and the ugliness, the dank gloom of the future - I longed for home. After the many nationalities I had seen, I had a great hunger for English insularity, the English jokes, tough courage, sound judgment, innate optimism, intuitive instinct, and crafty wisdom. I had not fully realized before how much home meant to me and how much I admired the English.

At the press office, I spent one afternoon reading English newspapers. It was now depressing to see some of the optimistic leading articles that had since been “contradicted by events”, and the reports that everything was satisfactory, from various members of the House, were no longer heartening. Nevertheless, it was comforting that the gravity of the recent Libyan news had not been minimized, that the London headlines had blazed the fact that the Germans had reached to within eighty miles of Alexandria, at a time when the Cairo newspapers were pretending the situation in the desert “could best be inferred by the fact that, whereas Rommel was anxiously visiting his troops in the forward lines, Ritchie was sitting back confidently in his caravan, smoking his pipe”, or that “we were too quick for Rommel”. The effect on me of reading these newspapers was one of restlessness; I had an almost overpowering impatience to get back home. The luxury of my hotel soon palled and the apparently aimless existence of its residents became depressing. When the rest of the world is tortured by war it seems wrong that men should spend so much time paying court to their women-folk, and one felt that this country, by refusing to be involved in the bloodshed of war, was yet committing suicide.

But I had to remain until all the distinguished Lisbonians, on the list compiled by the Secretariat, had been recorded by my camera. These included Admiral Botelho de Sousa, the Portuguese Sir Dudley Pound, the Chief of the Naval Staff, with grey hair cut in a fringe, who smiled shyly, and the Minister of Public Works, Dr. Duarte Pacheco, one of the most energetic of Dr. Salazar's Cabinet, as the devastations in every part of Lisbon, and the vast new buildings bear witness. Until the last moment, there was no news of an appointment from Salazar. The ritual was unvarying - first the production of calling cards, then a short delay, long corridors, at last effusive welcomes. My small camera placed on an impromptu tripod, the back of a leather chair, or a spittoon; always my same genuine enthusiasm for the job. “C'est beau, ne bougez pas”, and then later an interval, “voulez vous m'excuser; il faut changer le pelicule”. After a bit, the thanks: “merci beaucoup, merci mille fois, merci infiniment.”

I spoke to people recently arrived from Berlin, who told me that the ordinary German never mentions the war; I spoke to others recently flown from New York who talked of rationing; I talked to a French family who had just left Paris. They were shy and self-conscious at first about discussing the war; then the father owned that he had come across many English people who had given him the impression that they were enemies. He talked about conditions in France, how hungry people are, and how much more serious would be the shortage of fuel and food during the coming months. The Germans have robbed the shops of France, and still wonder why they are not liked. They wish, above all things, to be popular. What could be worse than, at this moment to be an average German wishing to be liked, a German who must, if he thinks for a second, realize what retribution is in store for him. He has accumulated, so far, more and more victories, and yet they mean nothing to him. He knows he must face the prospect of a great many disasters. The father said, later that evening, that he considered that by signing the Armistice, Pétain had saved the war - thus far can a man go in upholding theories made to suit his conscience. “France, out of the war; is a help; for otherwise”, he continued, “France would have been entirely captured, two more million prisoners taken, and those

escaping to North Africa would have been sunk en route. North Africa itself would have been invaded and taken with little opposition, and at that time the English, having few troops in Egypt, would not have been able to put up much serious resistance if the enemy had pushed forward.” But, if this theory is a comfort to some Frenchmen, why should they suppose that we should have given-up the fight under the circumstances, any more than we did after Dunkirk?



Duarte Pacheco

Departure

On the evening fixed for our departure, a sudden gust of breeze blew up. The wind rustled the trees all down the Avenida and caused the parasols over the café tables to flap. Flags struggled to escape from their flagpoles, and the diamond-fingered Portuguese had to hold on to their hats. Down in the bay the waves were frisking white horses, and at the end of the jetty the windsock was inflated.

The passengers for the United Kingdom waited on the quay. Their luggage had been weighed, and their eyes wore the glint of home. But these bright gleams turned to basilisk stares when the captain of the flying-boat pronounced the news: “Too rough to take off”.

We must disperse and wait for the wind to subside. All that night the wind whined, howled and tore at the window frames, then whistled shrilly in the dry fronds of the palm trees. The hotel was filled with victims of the wind, waiting, with nothing to do until it should drop.

We were told that sometimes here these gales continue to blow for weeks on end.

Lisbon is accustomed to passengers waiting to escape. Sometimes they wait a year. We waited. Still no signs of the storm abating. Another whole day passed away from home and yet another. The English passengers looked gloomily out of their windows towards the sea. The delay became almost unbearable. The wind itself, and its noise, added to one’s nervous irritation.

Eventually, one evening, we were bidden “to try again”. As we motored out to the bay, we passed a bus load of other passengers returning from an unsuccessful attempt at departure. But perhaps the wind would have weakened by the time we reached the sea. Perhaps our aircraft would succeed where theirs had failed. We were expectant. Again the foolish rites of luggage weighing. On the jetty the windsock was still inflated.

But perhaps not quite so fully as before. We waited. The waves lashed the motor launches and our flying-boat moored out far away in the distance, was bucketing to and fro on the turbulent waters. We waited; an optimistic whisper told us that the captain himself had had enough of Lisbon and that he too longed for home. “Yes, he'd try it”.

I cannot pretend that what followed was not alarming in the extreme. One only realized exactly how rough the sea was, when once upon it. The wind tore at the roots of one's hair. It was a perilous manoeuvre to come alongside the flying-boat, and to get aboard one had to leap with agility and decision at the right moment.

The engines started, and we taxied for miles along the coast banging and bumping as we went. Then we turned about, and started a terrifying dash through the waves. The aircraft was covered with a steel wall of water. We were battered and buffeted. We crashed and thudded in a thunderous roar. The aircraft struggled to gain height, but seemed to be making no headway against the weight of water. Would we ever make it? I shut my eyes, and prayed. A tremendous series of cracks made me look about in terror. Then engines were roaring, spitting and backfiring. We lurched forwards and then down again. An eternity was lived in those minutes. The water had become a furious menace. One of the passengers, a soldier, made the sign of “thumbs up”. Lurching and dropping in swift jerks, the climbing in one perilous paralytic ascent, we were, at last, air-borne and on our way to England and to home.

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Cecil Beaton was born in 1904 in Hampstead, north London. At school in Eastbourne, he was best-known for the beauty of his singing. His nanny taught him the basics of photography using her own Kodak 3A camera and he was soon sending his photos to London society magazines. Despite not being academically inclined he went to Cambridge University to study history, art, and architecture. There he was able to take advantage of his contacts to sell a photograph to Vogue. Leaving Cambridge without a degree he worked for a time in the family business, and put on his first exhibition in London, under the patronage of Osbert Sitwell. In 1928 he moved to New York, obtaining a long-term contract with Condé Nast, editor of American Vogue. In addition to his fashion work, he rapidly became known for his Society portraits. He was a good writer and often accompanied his photos with texts. In 1938 he was sacked by American Vogue after inserting some antisemitic words in an illustration about New York Society. The issue was recalled and reprinted.

His career was rehabilitated when Queen Elizabeth (later Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother), who was his favourite royal sitter, recommended him to the Ministry of Information. Initially he took photos of the Blitz in London; one of his photos, of a three-year-old girl in hospital clutching her teddy bear, was said to have played a role in the American decision to enter the Second World War. He was then sent to North Africa and it was after this assignment that he stopped in Lisbon. In later life, Beaton became a costume and set designer, winning two Academy Awards for Best Costume Design (Gigi and My Fair Lady), and also became known for his diaries. He died in 1980.