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13, Rua da Arriaga  
1200 LISBON  
Tel: 397 86 03

### **Internal decoration**

Having the same objective as the tiles, the frescos inside the palace gave life to the rather austere architecture. The walls and ceilings of several rooms have a very important number of frescos with neo-classic and romantic themes. The most important is the decoration above the grand staircase, where the architectural details are combined with the frescos in the ceiling in order to create a scene rich in space and colour.

### **19th and 20th centuries alterations**

The decoration of the interior of the building and repairs to the small towers and the façade over the garden were finished in the first half of the 19th century. The Counts of Porto Covo bought remarkable pieces of art in order to give increased value to their palace. The Counts supported liberalism and were well known figures in the economy, politics and society of the time. The first Count died in 1806 and was buried in the Palace chapel. His nephew, also called J. F. Bandeira, succeeded to the title.

With the death of the second Count in 1895, the prosperity of the family stagnated and only cosmetic repairs were subsequently carried out on the Palace.

### **Sale of the Porto Covo Palace to the British Embassy**

After the death of Alberto Júlio da Bandeira, the third Count, in 1937, all the family assets were sold by public auction. This included the palace and buildings in Rua de São Domingos and Sacramento à Lapa, the Porto Covo Bank and the trade company. Also dispersed were the remarkable furniture and works of art of the palace. The main building and the garden were bought by the British Embassy and the works of art were bought by private and public museums. The chapel reverted to the Patriarchate.

The building had already been connected with service to the British Crown during the Napoleonic campaigns when the Baron Porto Covo gave permission for the building to be used as the Headquarters for Wellington's troops. The Embassy moved into the Palace during the Second World War, in 1941, following extensive repairs and alterations.

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**Simon Wilson is the Political and Information Officer of the British Embassy in Lisbon. He is also a member of the Council of the British Historical Society and has been in Portugal since December 1992.**

## **PORTUGAL PLUNDERED: CONSEQUENCES OF THE CONVENTION OF CINTRA**

by **Alice Berkeley**

In November, 1807 Napoleon's army invaded Portugal. The King of Portugal and his family fled to Brazil just twenty four hours before General Junot occupied Lisbon. Once again Portugal's ancient ally, Great Britain, was called to the rescue. King George's troops were mobilized and eventually arrived in Portugal in August, 1808. Four days after he landed on the coast between Oporto and Lisbon, Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Wellesley had the French on the run. General Junot called for a truce and proposed terms for an armistice: 'It is agreed provisionally, that the French army ... shall be transported to France, with their arms and baggage, and the whole of their private property, from which nothing shall be excepted.' Nine days later both sides signed a Convention which mainly confirmed the French proposals. The action in this story took place in two short weeks, but its repercussions were dramatic - it created a public furore in Great Britain and Portugal, toppled the high command of the British army in Portugal and added to the animosity which resulted in a duel between two of Britain's greatest statesmen, Lord Castlereagh and George Canning.

On August 1st, 1808 Sir Arthur Wellesley landed at Figuera da Foz, the mouth of the Mondego River, and headed south with some 15,000 troops. His instructions from Lord Castlereagh, the Secretary of War, were to ensure the 'throwing off the yoke of France, and the final and absolute evacuation of the Peninsula by the troops of France.' Within a day word arrived that 15,000 support troops would soon arrive from the Baltic theatre with Sir John Moore. Lord Castlereagh thought this enlarged army would be too big and important to entrust to the command of the youngest Lieutenant-General in the British army (Wellesley was thirty nine at the time) and Canning, the Foreign Secretary,

didn't like Sir John Moore. So the Governor of Gibraltar, Sir Hew Dalrymple, was ordered to report to Portugal as Commander-in-Chief of the army, with General Sir Harry Burrard second in command. His long service in Gibraltar gave Sir Hew, aged 58, a working knowledge of the Iberian Peninsula, and from that listening post he was able to act as London's primary informant on Spanish resistance to Napoleon's invasion of Spain. However, during his long army career Sir Hew had only once seen active service, and Sir Harry Burrard, aged 53, had not seen action for ten years.

Knowing that he would soon have to hand over his command, Wellesley hurried south and met the French army in a skirmish at Alcobaça, then head on at Roliça - the first British engagement in the Peninsular War. The French withdrew and Wellesley followed, setting up headquarters on August 18th in the village of Vimeiro at the mouth of the Maceira River. There he covered the landing of two more brigades which would help him pursue the French towards Spain.

On the evening of August 20th Sir Harry Burrard arrived on a ship in Maceira Bay, and Wellesley rowed out to meet him and bring him up to date on recent events. Informed of the French retreat and Wellesley's plan to follow, Sir Harry, in his momentary role as Commander-in-Chief, decided the army should stop and wait for Moore's reinforcements, which at that point were only two hundred miles to the north. Burrard stayed on his ship for the night; Wellesley went back to Vimeiro downhearted and countermanded the order to advance the next morning. However, during the night the French were closing in on Vimeiro threatening an attack, and Wellesley had no choice but the happy one of preparing for battle. Next morning Junot's troops were soundly beaten off by the British and fled. Wellesley wanted to pursue them while they were in disarray, but Burrard, who had arrived off his ship in the midst of the battle, insisted that no action be taken.

The following morning, August 22nd, Sir Hew Dalrymple arrived and took over command from General Burrard. The three Generals were in Wellington's headquarters at Vimeiro briefing the new Commander-in-Chief on the situation when a flurry in camp announced the arrival of a detachment of French cavalry waving a white flag of truce. General Kellerman, representing General Junot, was escorted to the tent - a big ugly man who wore odd shapes of black sticking plaster on his face. He presented Dalrymple with a list of terms for an armistice, proposing a ceasefire during which arrangements could be made to send the French army back to France with all its arms, personal baggage, and horses. Because the French still held Lisbon, they insisted they should be treated as party to a truce, not in any way as prisoners of war.

During the following week General Dalrymple moved camp several times, and messengers were constantly on the move carrying copies of the amended armistice back and forth between him and General Junot. Proposals and counter-proposals were negotiated on both sides. Points of contention included the transport of the French horses (ten of them taken from the King's stable), naval occupation of Lisbon harbour and the Tower of Belem, disposition of the Russian fleet which occupied the harbour, and permission for the French to take away Portuguese property in their personal baggage. Junot quickly acceded to Admiral Cotton's insistence on taking charge of the Russian fleet, the British occupied the forts at the entrance to the Tagus but not Belem, and the French were told that horses would have to be evacuated at their own expense. Negotiations were more complex on the question of exactly what the French soldiers could take away as 'personal baggage'.

General Dalrymple lived to regret his failure to keep the Secretaries of War and Foreign Affairs in London informed during the week of negotiations. Letters could be received in a speedy five days with favourable winds. Wellesley wrote to his family and to the Ministers to recount his victories at Roliça and Vimeiro, and these produced great jubilation in the British press. But General Dalrymple remained silent.

The second error he made was to send a copy of the first draft of the armistice to the Portuguese General Freire, who protested that no national representatives had been party to the original negotiations. In the absence of any local Lisbon government, Freire supported the Archbishop of Porto and his Junta in their bid to set up a government in the North. The Archbishop was scandalized when he read the armistice, particularly as it appeared to allow the French soldiers to leave with all the Portuguese property they could carry. He asked the Portuguese Minister in London, Chevalier de Souza, to protest to Mr. Canning, the Foreign Secretary. The Archbishop's letter and the draft of the armistice were reported word for word in the British newspapers just a day after jubilation over Wellesley's victory at Vimeiro, causing an outcry of public fury. Fueled by tales of French soldiers looting Portuguese churches and private property, the newspapers published damning articles and caricatures of the British Generals who allowed, at British expense, the enemy troops to take all they could carry back to France, ready to reassemble for a new attack on Spain and Portugal.

The Convention was ratified at Torres Vedras on August 30th. Dalrymple set up headquarters at Cintra on September 2nd, and from there he wrote, belatedly, to Lord Castlereagh and sent a copy of the treaty. Thus it was called the Convention of Cintra.

There is no evidence that General Dalrymple ever went into Lisbon to survey the scene himself, nor to participate in the joyful welcome given to the liberating British troops. The streets were filled with rejoicing citizens, the roar of cannon and blare of trumpets resounded through the city, and ladies threw flowers from their windows onto the soldiers as they marched past to symbolically liberate the barracks and the Castle of St. George from the French. Four thousand Spanish prisoners were freed, and in a ceremony in the Campo d'Ourique General Beresford restored their arms and reviewed the troops. Afterwards they all tucked into food and wine and danced fandangos until they dropped.

General Dalrymple appointed Major-General Beresford and Lieut-Colonel Lord Proby joint Commissioners to see that the provisions of the Convention were carried out when the French left Lisbon. A British soldier had reported seeing a stockpile of items plundered from Portuguese churches, houses and shops in the British Factory Assembly Rooms. The Commission was able to return many of the works of art which could be identified to their rightful owners. But during the same week that the English were trying to pacify the local inhabitants, General Junot was packing up the collection of the Prince Regent, the Royal Library and the contents of the Natural History Museum and he tried to requisition five Danish ships to transport his 'personal baggage' back to France. At last General Dalrymple said 'No', and pointed out the lapse in the spirit of the Convention. Dalrymple wrote to Beresford from Oeiras on the 5th of September:

"You should be aware that, in the course of the negotiations at Lisbon, an Article was framed, specifying in direct terms that the property of churches, monasteries, galleries of paintings, etc. should not be carried away. But this Article was, at last, withdrawn, on the repeated representation of General Kellerman, that its being introduced into a public document appeared so reproachful to the French army, that the Commander in Chief particularly wished it could be omitted. And that he was willing, on that condition, to pledge his word of honour that nothing of the kind should be removed... General Kellermann, however, disavowed all knowledge of the appropriation, by any individual, of any public or private property belonging to this country, with the sole exception of some horses and mules, taken for the service of the army, and some carriages, of no great value, left behind by the Court."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Dalrymple to Beresford, 5th September, 1808, Fanshawe pp. 54/5.

Two state carriages had been left behind by the Duke of Sussex, son of King George III, after his stay from 1801 to 1804. When pressed by Beresford the next day, General Kellermann admitted that the manuscripts and objects taken from the libraries and museums should be returned, but he hedged, cheekily suggesting that the items being packed for removal 'were all duplicates, and were wanting in the Parisian Museum,' What, he asked, would the British take for them? Dalrymple wrote to Beresford again: 'To reply to General Kellermann's proposal as to the duplicates extracted from the Museum... These articles not being mine to dispose of, I will not allow them to be removed.' A particularly precious Bible was missing, and Kellerman and Junot cooked up papers to show that it had already been sent to Paris.

During embarkation on September 12th, fifty three boxes of indigo were found in General Junot's baggage, worth £ 5000. Junot disclaimed all knowledge. He sat on board ship for three days while the Commission demanded the return of £ 40,000 which had been stolen from individual accounts at the Deposito Publico and levied from the Directors of Magazines. The Payeur General was finally ordered on shore with his silver chest, and the debts were paid.

Another source of contention were the silver bars which were made of melted church plate. Beresford insisted these should be used to pay debts left behind by the army and General Kellermann wrote to say this had been done. But many silver bars weighed down the cases of the French officers.

The Portuguese took it into their own hands to recover what they could. A deputation of Lisbon citizens protested to Sir Hew that the French were openly packing up public and private property to send off to the ships, and the population was incensed. An eye-witness account of the embarkation of General Junot and his troops from the Cais de Sodr  reveals little pity for the French:

<sup>2</sup>Caes de Sodr : This place was the scene of embarkation of the French troops after the convention of Cintra...The catraieiros (shore-boat-men) were not behind hand on their part in turning to advantage the confusion which accompanied the embarkation of the French troops. Whenever they were employed to convey on board the transports two or three individual officers, whose baggage looked as if it contained some enviable spoils or bags of money, they, under pretence of being forced by the violence of the current or upon any other subterfuge, would take their passengers into the

<sup>2</sup>(*Sketches of Portugal and the Portuguese by an Eye-Witness*. pp. 52-55.)

middle of the Tagus at its widest part, where calls for mercy or help would be alike unheard, and there butcher them. Then, consigning their bodies to the all concealing deep, they would avoid the chance of detection, by landing with their booty on the opposite shores and hiding themselves for a season in the pine forests.

In Oporto too the local citizens kept a close watch on the embarkation of French troops who had been escorted there from the fort at Almeida. When almost all the soldiers and their baggage were aboard a military chest fell to the ground, burst open and revealed a cache of church plate.

'There was now no arresting the fury of the populace. The ships were instantly boarded, the French disarmed, their baggage taken on shore, examined, and plundered; and when it became apparent, that under the head of private property, the pillage of the most sacred edifices in the kingdom was about to be conveyed away, the lives of the whole detachment were placed in imminent danger.'<sup>3</sup>

During this chaotic evacuation of Lisbon, Sir Arthur Wellesley had been writing to Castlereagh asking for a transfer. He did not want to be implicated in any way with the terms or results of the treaty, and was furious that he had not been allowed to pursue a military strategy which would have put the French army out of action altogether. Castlereagh finally called all three Generals back to London and they were required to recount details of the Convention to a Court of Inquiry at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea. As a result, Dalrymple and Burrard were dismissed from the army, and Wellesley returned to Ireland.

Canning's long intrigue against Castlereagh was exacerbated by their disagreement over the culpability of General Dalrymple and the King's duty to recognize the Convention and abide by it. This and other clashes over policy in the Peninsula led to the fall of the Tory government in September, 1809. Castlereagh sent a blazing protest to Canning and challenged him to a duel. They drew their pistols on Putney Heath, but fortunately did less physical damage to each other than to their political careers.

The purpose of the Convention of Cintra was to expedite the departure of the French army from Portugal, and this was achieved with minimum losses on both sides. Wellesley had to admit, at the Court of Inquiry, that pursuing the enemy

<sup>3</sup>(Londonderry, pp 135/6)

could have resulted in its regrouping with reinforcements from Spain in the forts on the eastern border. On the other hand, a crushing French defeat, which may well have been within Wellesley's grasp in 1808, might have avoided five more years of fighting in the Peninsula. Unfortunately, Wellesley and Dalrymple were at loggerheads from the day they met. The young Lieutenant-General, who had learned in India to drive home tactical advantage with such success and who had recently distinguished himself in battle against the French at Roliça and Vimeiro, was furious at having to sit for a week, his hands tied and his men restless, while he watched his doddering old Commander-in-Chief being duped by the French high command. The Archbishop of Porto was encouraged by the popular outcry against the terms of the armistice to make his own bid for the leadership of Portugal, while his Minister in London exploited the bad relations between the Secretary of Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of War. In the midst of all the furore General Dalrymple was out of touch with London, with Lisbon, with the Portuguese, or with anyone who might have been able to give him good advice. He allowed General Kellerman to make a fool of him over Article V in his naive belief that the entire French army would act like gentlemen and unload any treasures which they had stolen from Portugal. As Commander-in-Chief of the Peninsular Army he made the final decisions, and so deservedly took the blame for the infamous Convention of Cintra.

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Alice Berkeley, co-author with Susan Lowndes of *English Art in Portugal*, currently lives in Belgium where she continues to write about Portuguese history and art.

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