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THE SANTA CRUZ FORT IN FAIAL  
(AZORES)

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The fort of Santa Cruz, like most others in the Azores, was originally built for protection against Moorish pirates. It was started in the year 1567, and a 2 per cent tax was placed on imports and exports and on harbour dues for financing the work. Some gunners and cannon were sent to the island to man the Fort but construction went slowly owing to the lack of funds, and in 1572 an additional tax on meat, olive oil, wine and salt was decreed to speed up its completion.

In 1580 the Spaniards occupied Portugal; but the Azores remained loyal to Dom António, Prior de Crato, and it was only after some difficulty (particularly in Terceira where the inhabitants brought down semi-wild bulls against the invaders who were forced to retire before returning with a stronger force) that the Spanish subdued the Islands.

They attacked Faial with a squadron of 12 galleys, 4 smaller vessels and 12 pinnaces, with a total of 1500 men, landing 2 miles to the south of the town in order to be out of range of the fort of Santa Cruz. They met with little resistance at first but on nearing the town they came up against stiff opposition from the Portuguese and French (400 French troops having been sent to reinforce the small Portuguese garrison). The fighting lasted most of the day, and the Portuguese and French took up positions on and around the present Observatory Hill from which the Spaniards finally dislodged them, the defenders running down to the Fort where they asked for terms. The French were allowed to leave without arms or baggage, while most of the Portuguese escaped into hiding in the country before the Spaniards took over the Fort. The Portuguese Governor of the island was hanged and

the town, as usual in those days, given over to sack. After this the Spanish fleet sailed off, leaving a garrison of 80 men to man the Fort, their maintenance to be paid for by the town, of course. A few years later the local people complained of the expense and offered to man the Fort themselves. This offer was accepted by the Spanish Governor General in Terceira, and the Spanish garrison was shipped away from Faial, leaving behind their cannon and arms.

In September 1589 the Earl of Cumberland attacked Faial (both England and France at this time supporting the deposed claimant to the throne of Portugal) and partially destroyed the Fort, throwing the guns into the sea and demanding a ransom from the town. A careful description of the Fort and town was made by one of Cumberland's captains: this appears in *Hakluyt's Voyages* and shows that the walls and gun emplacements of the Fort were the same then as now.

In 1597 the Fort (repaired and now jointly manned by Spanish and Portuguese) was attacked and captured by Sir Walter Raleigh who was second-in-command of a large English fleet under the Earl of Essex. Arriving the following day, Essex was furious with Raleigh for having attacked the island without his admiral's orders. (There is a verbal tradition that Essex and Raleigh were ready to start a duel on the beach but were pacified in time.) Essex gave orders for the town to be sacked, and this resulted in the usual looting, robbery and burning of churches before his fleet sailed away.

When, in 1640, the Spaniards were driven out of Portugal, their garrisons in the Azores left hurriedly, and the Fort was once more manned by Portuguese soldiers. Some years later a volunteer militia was formed whose members were allowed to live in their own villages and carry out their normal work, receiving a tiny allowance from the army. Little of note occurred in the Fort for many years and the buildings deteriorated for lack of funds. In 1775 Captain Cook called at Faial for a short visit and reported: 'On landing we realised why the Portuguese had not returned our salute — their gun carriages were rotten and they were afraid to fire their guns . . . the garrison was supposed to be 100 men but they had only 40, undisciplined and without proper arms.' However, the Fort must have been given attention, for in 1821 it was reported by an inspector to be in good repair.

On 26 September, 1814, during the renewed hostilities between Great Britain and the United States of America, sometimes known as the 'Second War of Independence', the American privateer brig *General Armstrong* arrived at Horta, commanded by Samuel Chester Reid. She had come to take on fresh water in the 24 hours allowed to belligerent vessels.

A few hours later a British squadron arrived, under the command of Admiral Lloyd. The British brig *Carnation* anchored less than a pistol

shot from the *Armstrong* and at nightfall sent four long-boats of armed men towards the privateer. Reid warned them to keep away, but as they continued to approach he gave his men orders to fire, killing two British and wounding seven, while two Americans were also killed and some injured. The British long-boats then pulled away and Reid moved his brig as close to the Fort as possible. The Civil Governor of Faial sent a message to Admiral Lloyd requesting him to refrain from hostilities, as the *Armstrong* was in a neutral port to take on water; but Lloyd took no notice, and shortly afterwards 12 British long-boats, carrying 300 men, moved in towards the American ship. A full-scale battle ensued, the *Armstrong* beating off the British who could only attack from one side because the American brig had moved in very close to the Fort. The British lost no less than 120 men killed and wounded before pulling off.

Early next day the brig *Carnation* moved in and opened fire on the *Armstrong* which promptly returned the fire, so that the commander of the *Carnation* withdrew to confer with Admiral Lloyd in the *Plantagenet*. The *Armstrong* was now in a bad way, and Reid decided to abandon the stricken ship, taking ashore his dead and wounded and such luggage as was possible. Here the American Consul, Mr. Dabney, gave him every assistance. Reid then gave orders to scuttle his ship, which was partially aground, and as this was being done, the *Carnation* returned, boarded the wrecked vessel and set fire to it.

This gallant fight of the *General Armstrong* was the last between British and American ships — resounding to the glory of Captain Reid and to the discredit of Admiral Lloyd. The guns of the *Armstrong* were salvaged by the Portuguese and, some years later, the 'Long Tom' was shipped to the Washington Naval Museum at the request of the American Government. The other seven guns of the *Armstrong* were left in the Fort, though they are not identifiable at present.

On 3 September, 1825, during the struggle between Constitutionalists and Absolutists, a military coup put the Absolutist supporters of Dom Miguel in power in Faial. On 4 November a Constitutionalist frigate disembarked a small group at a landing four miles out of town. This was done at nightfall and a number of local sympathisers joined the party who marched into the town and overpowered the detachment at the Fort. The Governor and the military commander took refuge out of town but returned at dawn two days later with sufficient troops to re-take the Fort, after a brief fight in which two of the 'rebels' were killed and two wounded while thirty were taken prisoner, the remainder managing to escape. Such was the *revolta do castelo*: a small affair but an attempt to strike a blow for democracy which finally triumphed

in 1831 when the Count of Villa-Flor (1) landed and the Absolutists fled or went into hiding. At the time of Villa-Flor's arrival in the island the British frigate *Galatea* was in the harbour, commanded by Charles Napier (2) who fired a 21-gun salute to celebrate the event and gave a gala dinner on board for the Count and senior officers.

It is interesting to note that Faial supplied more volunteers to the Constitutionalist cause than any other of the Azorean islands – a fact remembered by the King in 1833 when Horta was raised to the category of City. Faial had also set up a maritime arsenal. The city's coat-of-arms, granted later, bears in the lower right quarter a stylised castle, commemorating the Fort, while the scroll carries the words 'Very loyal city of Horta'.

The entrance to Santa Cruz was rebuilt in 1847 and, very misleadingly, this date appears over the gate of the four hundred-year-old Fort: it is now, alas, called an *estalagem* – a word hardly appropriate for a pleasant hotel with such an historic past.

(1). António José de Noronha (1792-1860), 7th Conde de Villa-Flor and, later, 1st Duque da Terceira.

(2). Sir Charles Napier (1786-1860) was later invited by Dom Pedro to command the Constitutionalist fleet. Commanding this he escorted Terceira's troops to the Algarve in 1833 and there defeated the Absolutist fleet at the second battle of Cape St. Vincent. For his services to the Liberal cause, Napier was rewarded by Dona Maria II being made a Grand Commander of the *Ordem da Torre e Espada* and ennobled as the Visconde (later Conde) de S. Vicente.