

## The Napoleon Series

### A Conjugal Familiarity: Historic Asymmetries and Social Plan during the 1808 Portuguese Campaign

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#### Introduction

British soldiers sacrificed their lives to restore liberty and values of self-determination, particularly to grant permanent, legitimate governmental institutions to the people of Portugal.<sup>1</sup>

The troops had followed the Lieutenant General Arthur Wellesley's expeditionary corps, and landed on the intertidal zone, «*praia da Costa de Lavos*», south of Figueira da Foz, western Iberia.

In the geo- strategic sphere, an intense military campaign was launched, and collisions against French regular regimental formations promptly ensued.

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<sup>1</sup> First-hand accounts of primary historic sources are evident. Early XIX century Peninsular historical events were a time largely consistent, with intense public debate, and for the severest social reflections. Under evolving times and inter-actions of political discourse, a number of qualities would have been worth considering. Due to their significant aspects, all the ongoing historical occurrences would be considered as objects of firm constitutive analysis, be they either brought towards political systems, military systems, or security matters. And would surely form the work for a focused analysis. Amazing and symbolic facts of the past – notably the widely ranging military campaigns and vigorous strategic applications, which were conducted against the ever-growing and oppressive projections of aggrandizement, and armed conquest, of the *empire* – were largely comprehended in their obvious motivations of causes as the primary ambitious dominance of an autocrat. In 1804, in an elaborate ceremony at Notre Dame, Napoleon Bonaparte had crowned himself emperor of France. The Continental Treaty, a forcibly imposed continental blockade forbidding British import goods to be commercialized in the European countries, rapidly ensued as a commanding solution to destabilize the economics and the politics of a country. That cunning would have meant a ruinous catastrophic outcome. Worth recalling are proven, relevant historical facts. By the Meuthen Treaty which was stipulated in 1703 (military and commercial clauses of agreement were considered), Portugal had ensured that British manufactured textiles would have entered Portugal without incurring any customs clearance or any taxation (importation fees), and abstracting from the geopolitical situation in the two nations. While persisting major Napoleonic offensives, and large-range warfare operations and strategies (1805-1807), Portugal had decided to acquiesce to inspired politics of conformed wisdom, preordaining a state of confirmed neutrality; *de facto*, it invigorated its commercial relationships with Britain to the maximum. Those profitable interchanges dated back to the year 1373. In 1807, when an arbitrary act was imposed upon the formal diplomatic negotiations, disregarding any legitimate sovereignty, French divisions were ordered to invade and to conquer Portugal territories. The British historian Holland Rose (28 June 1855, Bedford - 3 March 1942) expounded: "Prussia and Russia were overthrown by Napoleon at Jena and Friedland; and by the Berlin decrees and the treaty of Tilsit, the "Coast System" became the "Continental System". The Berlin decree (November 21st, 1806) declared the British Isles in a state of blockade, ordered that all English subjects, goods, and letters in any country occupied by French or allied troops should be seized, and a moiety of the confiscated property be appropriated to French and allied merchants to indemnify them for the losses they had sustained from English cruisers" [vide: John Holland Rose, Napoleonic studies, London, G. Bell and Sons, Ltd, 1914, p. 183, l. 15-23, p. 184, l. 1-3].

How many intrepid Anglo-Portuguese combatants perished in battle, were taken prisoners, or were missing in action?

A major consideration is the interposition of honour and the preservation of fallen soldiers' memories.

Are their names recorded for their crucial efforts and ultimate sacrifice against foreign invaders, overbearing oppressors of social communities?

Vigorous combat ground actions resulted in a grievous loss of life from the 95th Regiment, 2nd Battalion.

Rifleman Harris'<sup>2</sup> recollections<sup>3</sup> are fluently denoted concerning the eventful facts of that period, himself having experienced the bloody outbreak and brutality of Peninsular warfare, and the premature death of dear, respected friends.

In the documentary chronicles which he dictated to Captain Henry Curling,<sup>4</sup> Harris recounted many episodes correlated to circumstances surrounding the front-line intrepidity of the combatants.

But this terse episode that occurred during the 1808 military campaign is, in particular, an account of wives and family members suffering dolorous human lacerations during the conflict in the Iberian Peninsula theatre.

### **The Lusitanian Front: a Western Military Declination**

In these particular narrative passages, an eminent historical cadre of events is elaborated.

Constitutive traits of cultural insight focus on land warfare operations which, in 1808, were launched through synergistic conjoined military efforts by the English and Portuguese armed forces.

The primary strategy, a resolute ground offense, was to achieve an essential objective: to repel, through systematic, synchronized political and military dynamics, the invading French host and its armed compounds from the Peninsular western territories.

Just after the hardily-disputed clash of arms which had occurred in the neighborhood of the Roliça country-village (17th August, 1808), the slow, progressive and backward regrouping movement of the British troops singularly vibrated through the unyielding, distinguished characters of self-sacrifice, and physical exhaustion.

Under evolving tactical proficiency and manoeuver, the Anglo-Portuguese combatants'<sup>5</sup> strenuous abnegation to valour sealed a victorious outcome.

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<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Randell Harris was born on 28 October 1781, at Portsea (Portsmouth, Hampshire); died in 1858. The son of Robert and Elizabeth Harris. A trained shepherd, he had a long military service (1803-1814) in the British army. A rifleman in the 95th Rifles, he served in the Peninsular theatre and in the Walcheren expedition. The author of a memoir entitled "*The Recollections of Rifleman Harris*".

<sup>3</sup> *Editio princeps: Recollections of Rifleman Harris, (Old 95th.) With Anecdotes of His Officers and His Comrades*, Edited By Henry Curling, Esq., Half-Pay 52d Foot, Author Of "John Of England", London: H. Hurst, 27, King William Street, Charing Cross, 1848.

<sup>4</sup> 1803-1864. 52nd Regiment of Foot.

<sup>5</sup> *Id est*, the "*Luso-Britânicos*" regimental field units.

Intense, protracted military actions, and the most profound virtue of survival, had paved the way to counter-oppose, and ultimately overcome the fiery French adversary: *Général de division* Henri-François Delaborde's highly flexible "*corps d'interdiction et de bataille*".<sup>6</sup>

## Politics, Tradition, and Popular Sovereignty

Since the execrable beginning of the French occupation which in effect turned into an invasion,<sup>7</sup> it is worth recalling that on the popular level of social stigmatization, fervid conceptualizations emerged, such as the quickly composed apothegmatic mottoes '*resistência ao estrangeiro*',<sup>8</sup> '*resistência aos invasores*',<sup>9</sup> and '*resistência ao exército invasor*'.<sup>10</sup>

A preeminent truth was observed: these admonitory exhortations were thoroughly disseminated and produced concurrent, contributing factors to stimulate the "*defesa do país*".<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Transl.: Corps of interception and battle. Its regimental units belonged to *Général-en-chef* Jean-Andoche Junot's *armée de Portugal*. Maximilien Foy (3 February 1775 - 28 November 1825), a French memorialist and veteran who participated in the campaign of Portugal, carefully noted the military reality: «[...] *le corps d'observation de la Gironde prit le nom d'armée de Portugal*» [vide: Maximilien Sébastien Foy (*Général*), *Histoire de la guerre de la péninsule sous Napoléon précédée d'un tableau politique et militaire des puissances belligérantes*, publiés par madame la comtesse Foy, Livre Deuxième, Paris, Baudouin Frères, éditeurs, 1827, p. 29, l. 17-18]. Transl.: «[...] *the corps of observation of the Gironde took the name of army of Portugal*». The army's contingents deployed strength that counted 26,000 infantrymen, and 3,400 troopers. It is important to recall that when the French moved offensively forward, they incurred tremendous losses and their forward marches were retarded, which were due to the deficiency of logistics and to the natural environment's difficulties: "L'armée perdit de Bayonne à Lisbonne, dix-sept cents hommes, qui succombèrent à la fatigue et à la faim, ou qui se noyèrent en traversant les torrents" [vide: Maximilien Sébastien Foy (*Général*), *Histoire de la guerre de la péninsule sous Napoléon précédée d'un tableau politique et militaire des puissances belligérantes*, publiés par madame la comtesse Foy, Livre Deuxième, Paris, Baudouin Frères, éditeurs, 1827, p. 6, l. 8-11]. Transl.: "The army lost from Bayonne to Lisbon seventeen hundred men, who succumbed to fatigue and to famine, or that drawn themselves crossings the streams." According to this historic statement, some hundred men (a coefficient percentage of 05,78% is calculated) had to be deducted from the official army lists. From these implications, the results are that by then, the army counted 27,700 men.

<sup>7</sup> '[...] et l'on ne regardait le drapeau français arboré dans les forteresses, que comme un signe de convention destiné à constater l'occupation militaire' [vide: Maximilien Sébastien Foy (*Général*), *Histoire de la guerre de la péninsule sous Napoléon précédée d'un tableau politique et militaire des puissances belligérantes*, publiés par madame la comtesse Foy, Livre Deuxième, Paris, Baudouin Frères, éditeurs, 1827, p. 28, l. 18-21]. Transl.: "[...] and people regarded the French flag hoisted in the fortresses, only like a sign of convention destined to record the military occupation". A model of integrity and civic virtues, Foy had unequivocally defined the pretentious characters of the armed occupation, and the destabilization which would have irreversibly changed Portugal's economics: an imposing monetary contribution to the whole country: "[...] une contribution de cent millions de francs sur une population de deux millions d'ames, [...]" [vide: Maximilien Sébastien Foy (*Général*), *Histoire de la guerre de la péninsule sous Napoléon précédée d'un tableau politique et militaire des puissances belligérantes*, publiés par madame la comtesse Foy, Livre Deuxième, Paris, Baudouin Frères, éditeurs, 1827, p. 35, l. 1-3]. Transl.: "[...] a contribution of hundred million of francs on a population of two million of souls, [...]". Would that efficiency have meant a percentage of fifty French francs «*per capita*» (*i.e.*, per unit of population)?

<sup>8</sup> Transl.: "resistance to the foreigner".

<sup>9</sup> Transl.: "resistance to the invaders".

<sup>10</sup> Transl.: "resistance to the invading army".

<sup>11</sup> Transl.: "defence of the homeland".

Under actual circumstances in the sphere of strategic domain<sup>12</sup>, their perspicacity carefully calculated in advocating centuries-old dogma, the cardinal heritage concepts of “*patria e honra*”.<sup>13</sup>

## Brothers in Arms

“When the roll was called after the battle, the females who missed their husbands came along the front of the line to inquire of the survivors whether they knew anything about them. Amongst other names I heard that of Cochan called in a female voice, without being replied to. The name struck me, and I observed the poor woman who had called it, as she stood sobbing before us, and apparently afraid to make further inquiries about her husband. No man had answered to his name, or had any account to give of his fate. I myself had observed him fall, as related before, whilst drinking from his canteen; but as I looked at the poor sobbing creature before me, I felt unable to tell her of his death. At length Captain Leech observed her, and called out to the company.”<sup>14</sup>

This emblematic post-combat scene had acquired a phenomenal sense of dynamic consecution.

That was a period of profound trepidation.

After valiantly struggling in the operative front-line, and consumed by physical exhaustion, a foot-company roll-call was commanded<sup>15</sup>.

The surviving combatants were ordered to recompose the ordinary files' organizational set-up.

The cadres' headcount – and reevaluation of their active fighting manpower – proved to be a stringent necessity.

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<sup>12</sup> The dynamics of the popular uprisings against the foreign occupation of Portugal were signally concerted. The “*chef de l'état-major général*” (Chief of Staff) of the “*armée de Portugal*” laconically remarked: “*En effet, le Portugal entier étoit soulevé [...]*” [vide: Paul Thiébault. Lieutenant-Général, *Relation de l'expédition du Portugal, faite en 1807 et 1808, par le 1er corps d'observation de la Gironde, devenu Armée de Portugal*, A Paris, Chez Magimel Anselin et Pochard, 1817, p. 183, l. 26]. Transl.: “*In fact, the whole Portugal was raised*”.

<sup>13</sup> Transl.: “*homeland and honour*”.

<sup>14</sup> *Recollections of Rifleman Harris, (Old 95th.) With Anecdotes of His Officers and His Comrades*. p. 43, l. 4-22.

<sup>15</sup> “Le 17, le général anglais attaqua une division de six mille hommes, commandée par le général Laborde, qui était campée sur les hauteurs au sud de Rolica. Le terrain fut bien disputé. Néanmoins, la position fut enlevée, et Laborde effectua sa retraite en assez bon ordre. Il avait des troupes aguerries, et il était supérieur en cavalerie. Cette affaire coûta aux Anglais près de cinq cents tués ou blessés” [vide: Jean Sarrazin, *Histoire de la Guerre d'Espagne et de Portugal de 1807 à 1814* par M. Sarrazin, maréchal de camp, un des commandants de la Légion d'Honneur et ancien chef d'Etat-major du prince royal de Suède aux armées d'Allemagne et d'Italie, Ornée de la carte d'Espagne et de Portugal, où sont tracées les marches des armées française, anglaise et espagnole, dressée,” par M. Lapie, Paris: J. G. Dentu, imprimeur-libraire, rue du Pont de Lodi, n.° 9, près le Pont Neuf, 1814, p. 31, l. 4-13]. Transl.: “On the 17th, the British General attacked a division of six thousand soldiers, commanded by General Laborde, that was encamped on the heights at the south of Rolica. The ground was well disputed. Nonetheless, the position was taken, and Laborde carried out his retreat in enough good order. He had some battle-hardened troops, and he was superior in cavalry. This affair cost to the British nearly five hundred killed and wounded». Both armies went through the fightings exhibiting amazing courage, tactical skill, and sheer audacity. Both sides of the belligerents had people who acted honorably.

That imparted disposition was a provident perspicuity, and the human losses incurred by the regimental unit's compounds were carefully calculated.

This determination occurred on 17th August 1808, in a location within close proximity.

Proof lies in the fact that it was effectuated after the conclusion of the military attrition (after 05.00 o'clock p.m.).

After having achieved an overwhelming tactical ground supremacy, the accompanying British Army women could finally reach the line and lavish their solicitous attentions, caring after their husbands' endangered lives.

This critical emergency constituted a complex exercise of pity, a hearts' devotion and a lifetime's affection.

Circumstances arose that revealed existential reverberations and after-effects of continued human suffering.

A British memorialist who had served in the old 95th Regiment of Foot (Rifles)<sup>16</sup>, vividly recalled his impressions of an act of compassion which he had witnessed; rifleman Benjamin Randell Harris, evoked quite a scene, marked by conjugal tenderness and sorrowful afflictions.

One woman, out of the many standing in proximity to the women's quarters, was searching for her husband, calling him aloud.

As no response was articulated while inquiring for the fellow-comrade, a certain Cochan, his ultimate fate could not yet be disclosed to the anguished consort.

Visibly moved by this lamentable impasse, Captain Leech, the Company's commanding officer, addressed his soldiers in order to gain any clarification about the compatriot missing-in-action.

An intrepid, stouthearted soldier, was no longer under the banner.

His friends and comrades in arms' reciprocal aid, and their conjoined efforts to investigate his whereabouts, were most honorable and conscientious.

That act of moral dignity constituted the promptitude of a generous attempt, to find Cochan, alive or dead, in order to treat his wounds, or to bury him if he had not survived during the armed hostilities.

### **A Valorous Soldier: Bravery and Abnegation**

“Does any man here know what has happened to Cochan? If so, let him speak out at once.’ Upon this order I immediately related what I had seen, and told the manner of his death. After a while Mrs. Cochan appeared anxious to seek the spot where her husband fell, and in the hope of still finding him alive, asked me to accompany

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<sup>16</sup> Due to the distinctive colour of the uniform, the soldiers were nicknamed green jacketed riflemen.

her over the field. She trusted, notwithstanding what I had told her, to find him yet alive. “Do you think you could find it?” said Captain Leech, upon being referred to. I told him I was sure I could, as I had remarked many objects whilst looking for cover during the skirmishing. “Go then”, “said the captain”, and shew the poor woman the spot, as she seems so desirous of finding the body. “I accordingly took my way over the ground we had fought upon, she following and sobbing after me, and, quickly reaching the [...]”<sup>17</sup>.

The Company commander’s behavior unequivocally revealed a distinguished gentleman’s elegant attitude.

His thoughtfulness helped to ascertain Cochan’s ultimate destiny and was significant in the purest essential, generous human solitudes in regards of Mrs. Cochan.

Notwithstanding Rifleman Harris reference to the poignant and particular elements related the circumstances (*id est*, how his comrade had perished during the combat action),<sup>18</sup> Mrs. Cochan’s hope had not yet faded away.

She wanted to embrace her beloved husband one more time, and give him a dignified burial.

Harris was consequently granted permission to guide the woman – who was grieving over losing the consort – to the place where Joseph Cochan’s corpse laid still unburied.

And more particularly, to offer compassions as well as human and moral support to alleviate her grief.

### **Woman’s Weeping: the Causality of Warfare**

“[...] spot where her husband’s body lay, pointed it out to her. She now soon discovered all her hopes were in vain; she embraced a stiffened corpse, and after rising and contemplating his disfigured face for some minutes, with hands clasped, and tears streaming down her cheeks she took a prayer-book from her pocket, and kneeling down, repeated the service for the dead over the body. When she had finished she appeared a good deal comforted, and I took the opportunity of beckoning to a pioneer I saw near with some other men, and together we dug a hole, and quickly buried the body. Mrs. Cochan then returned with me to the company to which her husband had been attached, and laid herself down upon the heath near us. She lay amongst some other females, who were in the same distressing circumstances with herself, with the sky for her canopy, and a turf for her pillow, for we had no tents with [...]”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Recollections of Rifleman Harris, (Old 95th.) With Anecdotes of His Officers and His Comrades* p. 44, l. 1-22.

<sup>18</sup> “Joseph Cochan was by my side loading and firing very industriously about this period of the day. Thirsting with heat and action, he lifted his canteen to his mounth; “Here’s to you, old boy”, he said, as he took a pull at his contents. As he did so a bullet went through the canteen, and perforating his brain, killed him in a moment” [ibidem, p. 42, l. 4-12].

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem, p. 45, l. 1-22.

Only silence is necessary to contemplate the authenticity of these sequential literary passages.

A most touching scene is described.

One discerning analysis is remembered about an ancient Latin motto which recalled «*Amor omnia vincit*» (i.e.; *Love conquers all things*).

Any further observations are therefore superfluous.

Emphasis is placed on Mrs. Cochran's prayers, offered in humble intercession to the Almighty Creator; a highly sensitive petition that one day she might rejoin her husband in Heaven was an appropriate appeal.

The immortality of the souls and Eternal Life were the primary, transcendently comprehended by her to have been life's inner Grace direction.<sup>20</sup>

After having returned to the company's open ground quarters, the woman had entered her widow's state, by rejoining other fellow countrywomen who were experiencing this same life transition status.

A number of deplorable difficulties ensued.

The Spartan lives they were forced to live while on campaign consisted of greatly endured experiences, and miserable vicissitudes. In evaluating this civilian compound – their characters of flexible mobility are apparently confirmed evidence – contemporary researchers have to carefully examine the case studies individually to indicate them by specific terms, such as camp-followers,<sup>21</sup> or army wives.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> That family existence was understood to have been cultivated by significant spirituality.

<sup>21</sup> Through the centuries, this definition was used to identify civilians and their children who were following armies on the move, either in peace, or through warfare encumbrances. The determining social typology of camp-followers included the wives and the children of regular soldiers; the women that were accompanying their husbands – or their fathers' army – and progressing from localities and places of assignment. There were then army services providers (contracted workers, formal, and informal as well) looking for conspicuous advantages, and selling goods and services to the military (i.e., cooking, laundry, alcoholic drinks, nursing, sutlery). While marching forward into Portugal's interior territory, the hardships through the rough, inadequate country roads and byways, and the unmitigated, continual trial of brutal conditions became very difficult. "Being immediately pushed forwards up the country in advance of the main body, many of us, in this hot climate, very soon began to find out the misery of the frightful load we were condemned to march and fight under, with a burning sun above our heads, and our feet sinking every step into the hot sand" [ibidem, p. 25, l. 19-22, p. 26, l. 1-4.]. In examining the historic source, the fact is obvious: there were limited water resources; fresh water sources were much sought after to quench the soldiers' thirst. That was a time of crisis. Proficient and well-organized camp-followers and resourceful Portuguese peasantry signally appeared to offer immediate economic negotiations. Then how can it be thoughtfully explained regarding the dispositions to activate autochthonous market services for foods and refreshing beverages? How much these provisions were necessary is a meaningful and substantial matter of comprehension. "Next day the peasantry sent into our camp a great quantity of the good things of their country, so that our men regaled themselves upon oranges, grapes, melons, and figs, and we had an abundance of delicacies which many of us had never before tasted. Amongst others presents, a live calf was presented to the Rifles, so that together we feasted in our first entrance into Portugal like a company of aldermen" [ibidem, p. 28, l. 4-13]. From the detailed context of the army's nourishment and profiled alimentary economics, it is relevant to note the effectual collaboration, and prompt activations of duty, which were enacted within the Anglo-Portuguese military hierarchy. Who transacted the ongoing businesses? Who ordered the provisions to be sent? Who haggled over the quality of the goods, their quantities, and relative payments? Who then organized the

Thus the acquired foundational meaning was comprehended as an incomparable parallel structure and “varied accompanying society”.<sup>23</sup>

### **A Case Considered: Army’s Widows**

“[...] us. Poor woman! I pitied her much; but there was no remedy. If she had been a duchess she must have fared the same. She was a handsome woman, I remember, and the circumstance of my having seen her husband fall, and accompanied her to find his body, begot a sort of intimacy between us. The company to which Cochan had belonged, bereaved as she was, was now her home, and she marched and took equal fortune with us to Vimiero. She hovered about us during that battle, and then went with us to Lisbon, where she succeeded in procuring a passage to England. Such was my first acquaintance with Mrs. Cochan. The circumstances of our intimacy were singular, and an attachment grew between us during the short time we remained together. What little attention I could pay her during the hardships of the march I did, and I also offered on the first opportunity to marry her. “She had, however, received too great [...]”<sup>24</sup>

Rifleman Harris’ detailed narrative «*exposé*» is quite revealing about his concerns.

While a formidable cadre of intensely planned military strategies continued, Harris’ emotional feelings and humanity preordained his preoccupation towards the most immediate, Mrs. Cochan’s material urgencies and precarious solitude.

Through the dreadful passage of days, communal attitudes of sharing and harmony had created a link, a correlative “*penchant*” of reciprocity, esteem and support.

The term “*intimacy*” (*i.e.*, friendship, familiarity) is an adapted literary quality.

Under the circumstances, it has to be similarly comprehended, as mellifluous and exhaustive interlocutions<sup>25</sup> were exchanged.

That was the revelatory seal of a correspondent confidentiality between the two.

After a fierce and incredibly stubborn conflict against opposing French divisional forces at Vimeiro (21 August 1808), Mrs. Cochan reached Lisbon and ultimately succeeded in leaving the war front in Continental Portugal.

She embarked by marine-transport<sup>26</sup> to England.

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chain of the transports? Another matter worthy of note, is that the soldiers exhibited a determined humanity towards the local inhabitants. Those acts of friendship were recognized as signalled reciprocities, deep respect and honour to the country. Vital attitudes of cooperation are notably emphasized, a transcultural meeting of traditions.

<sup>22</sup> These women were devoted wives, they accompanied their husbands – enrolled soldiers – in the army.

<sup>23</sup> A point of remark, is that within the research contents no clarification is expounded about the arrangements for victualling – an important component for the ease and physical integrity either of women and soldiers. It may be enough to understand – dietary regimen shortcomings – and penetrate and evaluate that “*vacuum*”.

<sup>24</sup> *Recollections of Rifleman Harris, (Old 95th.) With Anecdotes of His Officers and His Comrades.* p. 46, l. 1-22.

<sup>25</sup> Dialogues and conversations, most likely on a daily basis.

More in detail, Harris' chronicled expanded remembrances with their own particularity and deeper meaning: it is connoted that the British army's widowed women were conveniently and safely transported to return to their homeland.

In a perspective analysis, acute logistics and safeguarding dispositions were imparted.

### **Destiny and Providence**

"[...] a shock on the occasion of her husband's death ever to think of another soldier", she said; she therefore thanked me for my good feeling towards her, but declined my offer, and left us soon afterwards for England"<sup>27</sup>

The spontaneous declaration, a *viva voce* marriage proposal to rationalize affection in a stable conjugation was unquestionably surprising.

It revealed Rifleman Harris's vitality, and, in point of fact, an honest, predisposed sentiment.

From those fresh and congenial expressions of love, much detail can be understood about Harris' inner personality; he had been always most real and virtuous to himself.

Actually referring to the raised effects, the responsibilities of marriage were, the case considered, an untimely and premature proffer to a widow who had not yet recovered from the crude loss of her husband.

In the short period which had passed after the vigorous engagement at Roliça, and the clash of arms at Vimeiro, Mrs. Cochan's *contretemps* could not afford her a balanced psychological stability.

Neither her fault, her limitations nor her reluctance were divergent causal motivations, on the contrary, her transpicuous purity to a sacred bond is demonstrated.<sup>28</sup>

Her animus was to never break, and to enshrine in the heart the only marriage-tie to which she had consented.<sup>29</sup>

Why did Mrs. Cochan politely decline the offer?

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<sup>26</sup> Sea-going sailing ship.

<sup>27</sup> *Recollections of Rifleman Harris, (Old 95th.) With Anecdotes of His Officers and His Comrades.* p. 47, l. 1-5.

<sup>28</sup> *Rebus sic stantibus*, this corroboration is essentially extrapolated from the perscrutation of the documentary contents.

<sup>29</sup> In this case, the specific term, "marriage" needs a careful analysis, especially to comprehend the principled properties it joins in singular form. True love is definitely a personal sentimental experience. This phenomenon obeys distinct laws of subjectivity. Shaken by the adversity of protracted warfare, society at that time, true love was a cause of pure and tender affections. Notwithstanding the continued military attrition, love relationships constituted a *primum*, that taken from every situation, demanded a recognized right of priority.

In reality, she had continued to honour her husband's marital tie, in *primis*, that unique proposition that Joseph had once declared to her: irrefutably, it signified that love and affections toward him had never evaporated.

Love is not material, but eternal.

In respect to solid educational values, Mrs. Cochan temperately listened to Harris.

She gave attention to the decision in which he was confident and resolute in character, but that would neither have been a practical likelihood nor a persuasive compromise in observing her behaviour's feminine ethics.

Words flew in the wind; love remained adamant.

Through perseverance, Cochan's conjugal familiarity continued.

Poignant.

The narrative's final scores were an amazing silent lesson, brilliant.

Although a succinctly recounted memoir, never can modern research analysts learn so much – through subjectivity and particularizations – about one individual's character than by inquiring about Mrs. Cochan's life over a few, tremendously conflicted days in a foreign land.

## **Conclusions**

In examining early XIX century diplomatic schemes and transnational politics, complex period events involved Portugal and Britain into quite an uninterrupted struggle to oppose the military expansionism of a foreign country.

Extensive historic sources point to the political, social, and military prevarications which originated from the ratification of the "Treaty of Fontainbleau" (1807).

The crude involution it caused to the geopolitical stability, and to the sovereignty of the people in Peninsular Iberia, is consistently documented through first-hand memorial accounts, be they either French, Spanish and Portuguese sources, are considered reliable.

This was the reason why armed hostilities unpredictably broke out.

The price which was paid was unbearably high.

Bloody conflicts ensued, and military campaigns were disputed till 1814.

In this primarily considered documentary, a moral excellence of the story can be assessed.

It is a very worthy cause to support the wishes of the bereaved.

That is a classic tenet of humanity: charity in action.

The dignified character of the Company commander was particularly noteworthy.

This professional cannot pass unnoticed.<sup>30</sup>

Focusing on the marriage proposal offered to Mrs. Cochran, more factual elements have to be analyzed beyond the purely scientific scrutiny: the woman was young, and was quite physically attractive.

A lonely soldier's motives may not have been altogether virtuous.

In the modernity of the historical horizon, let that quintessence of fervid sentimental predilection remain an illuminating source of transpicuous human affection.

### **N.B.**

Mrs. Cochran had matured the prospect to return home, to her family of origin.

Her intent was to return to her historical background: the town or village from which she had departed, and to reconnect the friendships she had.

After analysis of primary data, it is not possible to ascertain if she had any children in her homeland, nor if the maternal love was the mission she had silently and honourably shielded.

Relatively speaking, an intimate component of private life is inherently indicated.

It sealed the truth – since then protected by the young woman.

Referring to the figure of Mrs. Cochran, she is particularly to be commended by the fact that she followed her husband almost to the gates of "early hell".

She was a heroine, of feminine bravery, and let that be her epitaph.

There can be no greater accolade.

## **Chronology**

### **1807**

27 October: Treaty of Fontainebleau, signed by France and Spain to take possession of Portugal.

20 November: Imperial French corps crossed the Portuguese border.

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<sup>30</sup> Considerations verged on the plan of personal responsibilities. Captain Leech had to resolve the immediacy of so many transitory urgencies. *Exempli gratia*, the severely wounded personnel; the agony of the combatants who had fallen during the fight. In an analogous measure, the duties of care, contemplated organizing mobile rescue squads provided with wooden stretchers to assist those soldiers partially disabled or injured who were not ambulatory.

29 November: Prince Regent John of Bragança, Queen Maria, Prince Pedro, the Infante Miguel, Doña Carlota Joaquina and the infantas – Casa Real de Bragança – and the Court, with the assistance of the British navy fled to the colony of Brazil.

Junot's units straggled into Abrantès.

30 November: French troops entered city of Lisbon.

On account of his penetrating military success, Junot was rewarded the ducal title of Duc d'Abrantès, and subsequently appointed Gouverneur du Portugal.

13 December: a serious riot broke out in Lisbon.

## **1808**

1 February: in Portugal, the organization of power is reformed. Composed by then by one President, five governors, and two secretaries, the Conselho de Regência (Regency Council) is replaced by a Government Council.

Among its members are nominated: François-Antoine Herman, State secretary appointed to the interior and the finances; Lhuitt, War's and Marine's State secretary; D. Francisco Rafael de Castro, charged of Justice and of the Cults.

15 February: Marquis of Alorna is appointed General-inspector of all the Portuguese army.

Junot proclaimed himself General Commander of the Portuguese army.

16 February: beginning of the Peninsular War.

Napoleon I ordered conspicuous French forces to pass into Spain's territories.

The causal pretext was a specious «ruse de guerre»: to send reinforcements to the Armée de Portugal, by then an army of military occupation on foreign soil.

20 February: organizational decree of the new Portuguese army: the permanent troops will be composed of five infantry regiments, three cavalry regiments, plus one battalion and one squadron of «caçadores» (hunters; light cavalrymen).

The artillery and the engineers will instead be structured with the same organization.

17-19 March, mutiny of Aranjuez, Madrid.

19 March: abdication of Charles IV of Spain, in favour of his son, Ferdinand VII, Aranjuez, Madrid.

23 March: French troops under Murat enter Madrid.

24 March: Ferdinand VII enters Madrid.

1 May: declaration of war against France, and publication of a Manifest of the Regent Prince which declared that the treaties signed with France were invalidated.

2 May: Dos de Mayo uprising, Madrid.

May 18: re-organized by the Marquis of Alorna to serve France, the Portuguese army is incorporated in the French army as «Legião Portuguesa».

The news is reported through an Imperial decree signed in Baiona.

6 June: uprising of Porto (Portugal).

Coronation of Joseph I, Madrid.

10 June: D. João declares war on France.

16-18 June 1808: uprising of Olhão (Portugal).

15 June -14 August: first siege of Zaragoza, Aragón.

13 July: uprising of Évora, by proposition of General Francisco de Paula Leite.

29 July: battle of Évora, Alentejo (Portugal).

1 August: British troops disembarked at Lavos (Figueira da Foz).

17 August: battle of Roliça, Leiria (Portugal).

Distinctly, the first armed engagement fought by the British army's contingents in the Peninsular War front.

21 August: battle of Vimeiro.

General Arthur Wellesley defeated the French under Major-General Jean-Andoche Junot.

30 August: "Convenção de Sintra" (Convention of Cintra).

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