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from the 18th century to the present day*

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KINGDOM OF PORTUGAL, 1824 ABRILADA. COMMENTS TO HELP UNDERSTANDING A COUP D'ÉTAT

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Abstract

The Abrilada of 1824, a pivotal event in the turbulent political landscape of early 19th-century Portugal, holds significant historical weight. This paper delves into the coup attempt known as the Abrilada, situating it within its historical context and examining its profound impacts on Portuguese politics during King John VI's reign (1767-1826). By delving into the interactions between key figures such as King John VI, Hyde de Neuville, and William Carr Beresford, the study brings to light the tension between 'miguelismo' and 'liberalism', two ideological currents that shaped the era.

The early 19th century was a transformative period for Portugal, marked by the French Invasions, the Peninsular War, Brazil's Independence, and internal ideological conflicts. King John VI, a key figure in this period, navigated between conservative 'miguelistas', supporters of his son Miguel who favoured absolutist rule, and 'liberais' who sought constitutional reforms and greater political freedoms. The Abrilada, a coup led by Prince Miguel, aimed to fulfil the objectives of the 1823 Vilafrancada *Coup d'État*. The uprising, marked by its swift execution and military involvement, sought to overthrow the influence of the 'freemasons' in government and establish a more absolutist regime.

However, the coup was suppressed with the intervention of Hyde de Neuville and Marshal Beresford, highlighting the intricate web of international influences on Portuguese politics. Their involvement not only thwarted Miguel's aspirations but

underscored the fragile nature of Portuguese sovereignty, often influenced by foreign powers. The Abrilada's aftermath had profound implications for Portugal's political trajectory, reinforcing tensions between 'miguelismo' and 'liberalism' and setting the stage for the Civil War of 1832-1834. This study argues that the Abrilada was a significant turning point, exposing deep-seated ideological divisions within Portuguese society and influencing the nation's subsequent political struggles and transformations.

Keywords: 1824 Abrilada; 19th century Portugal; John VI (King of Portugal - 1767-1826); Miguelismo; Liberalism; Hyde de Neuville; William C. Beresford

Historical Context

The political situation in Portugal in the early 1800s was shaped by the aftermath of the French Invasions (1807-1811), the Peninsular War (1809-1814), the Liberal Revolution (1820), and Brazil's Declaration of Independence (1822). These events led to establishing a constitutional monarchy, but tensions remained high between absolutists and liberals.

The Abrilada 1824 coup, following the steps of the Vilafrancada 1823 coup, attempted to restore absolutist rule, reflecting the broader ideological conflicts of the period.

In the 1820's, the Congress System, established after the Vienna Congress (1815), heavily influenced the European political landscape, also known as the Concert of Europe, which sought to maintain the balance of power among nations while suppressing revolutionary movements that threatened the conservative status quo. Across the continent, most nations were governed by restored absolute monarchies, prioritising the rejection of liberal and revolutionary ideologies in favour of conservative policies. Under the Bourbon Restoration, France saw Charles X ascend to the throne after the death of Louis XVIII (1824), further solidifying the monarchy's commitment to conservative governance and the reassertion of royal authority. In the United Kingdom, the government of Lord Liverpool (1812-1827) grappled with significant economic challenges and mounting calls for parliamentary reform, reflecting internal tensions within an otherwise stable constitutional monarchy. Meanwhile, under Chancellor Klemens von Metternich (1821-1848), Austria played a pivotal role in upholding the conservative order by actively suppressing nationalist and revolutionary movements within its diverse empire and beyond. Similarly, Tsar Alexander I of Russia (1801-1825) ruled with an autocratic hand, continuing his policy of quashing revolutionary uprisings across Europe. This collective adherence to conservative principles among European

powers underscored the era's political dynamics, as leaders sought to preserve traditional power structures against the rising tide of liberalism and nationalism.

The Iberian Peninsula was characterised by significant political upheaval and ideological conflict as Spain and Portugal grappled with the tension between absolutist and liberal forces. In Spain, the *Trienio Liberal* (1820–1823) marked a brief period of liberal governance established by a military revolt that restored the Constitution of 1812 and implemented progressive reforms. However, in 1823, conservative European powers, through France's military intervention known as the Hundred Thousand Sons of Saint Louis, suppressed the liberal regime, reinstating King Ferdinand VII's absolutist rule. Harsh reprisals against liberal supporters accompanied this transition, including revoking the Constitution of 1812 and a return to autocratic governance.

Similarly, Portugal experienced political instability following the Liberal Revolution of 1820, which led to the establishment of a constitutional monarchy after the approval of the Liberal Constitution on 23 September 1822, curbing the monarchy's and the aristocracy's powers. In November 1822, Queen Carlota Joaquina, who was deeply opposed to liberalism, refused to swear allegiance to the Constitution. Consequently, the government stripped her of all civil and political rights inherent to a citizen's status and a Queen's dignity⁽¹⁾. Her position was rehabilitated after the Vilafrancada.

Although King John VI accepted the principles of the new Constitution upon his return from Brazil in 1821 and signed it in 1822, he encountered staunch resistance from conservative and royalist factions. This opposition culminated in two coup attempts led by Prince Miguel: the Vilafrancada (1823) and the Abrilada (1824), both aimed at reinstating absolutist rule. The situation was further exacerbated by Brazil's declaration of independence in 1822 under John VI's son, Pedro I. This severance weakened Portugal economically and politically, intensifying the nation's instability. Liberal factions, determined to restore Brazil to colonial status, even contemplated military interventions in South America. Meanwhile, the French intervention in Spain in 1823, which restored Ferdinand VII's absolutist rule, emboldened Portuguese absolutists and alarmed liberals, who feared similar foreign interference. Through 1823 and 1824, Portugal grappled with profound political instability as the government struggled to balance the competing pressures of conservative and liberal forces, compounded by the economic and political fallout of losing Brazil, and to balance the influence from France and Britain.

However, the Portuguese political landscape was far more complex than the binary division of "absolutists" and "liberals" often portrayed by historians. While these two factions undoubtedly represented opposing ideological poles, the reality was a multifaceted spectrum of political affiliations and shifting loyalties. Personalities frequently altered their positions based on changing circumstances, personal ambitions, and social or

1. Santos, 1883, p. 503-510

political interests, leading to fluid alliances and frequent side-switching among military leaders and politicians. On the right of the political spectrum of that time were both the ultra-royalists or ultra-conservatives, who championed an extreme form of monarchy and clerical influence, and the absolutists, who supported a strong but more pragmatic monarchy. Moderates or constitutional monarchists occupied the centre, advocating a balance between royal authority and constitutional governance. Liberals, also called progressive constitutionalists, pushed for greater political freedoms and reforms, while radicals and republicans, at the far left of the spectrum, sought the abolition of the monarchy altogether. This diversity of political positions highlights the dynamic and volatile nature of the period, where alliances and ideologies often intersected and clashed unexpectedly.

Manoel Ignácio Martins Pamplona Corte Real exemplifies the fluidity and complexity of political positions in early 19th-century Portugal. Initially a colonel in the Portuguese army, he defected to join Napoleon's Grand Armée during the Peninsular War and fought against the Allied Armies with the invading French forces in 1810–1811. His actions led to his conviction as a traitor, with a death sentence imposed in absentia. He remained in France, rose to the rank of general in the French Army, and became a French citizen. Following the 1820 Liberal Revolution, Pamplona returned to Portugal, benefitting from a general amnesty that absolved him of all his crimes. He rapidly ascended the political ranks, becoming a minister under King John VI and even serving as a member of the Constitutional Cortes. However, his allegiance shifted again in 1823 when he supported Prince Miguel in the Vilafrancada, an absolutist coup that sought to undo the constitutional monarchy. Pamplona, now Count Suberra, became the prime minister of the Kingdom of Portugal⁽²⁾ and was instrumental in repressing dissent after the Abrilada coup of 1824. Considered a French agent, he was dismissed and sent to a diplomatic posting in Madrid in 1825, only to return later to support Miguel's absolutist regime. Despite his absolutist alignment, Pamplona's career ended tragically. Ironically, Miguel himself ordered Pamplona's imprisonment, where he died after four years of confinement. Pamplona's trajectory illustrates the volatile interplay of ideology, pragmatism, and survival in the political turbulence of the time.⁽³⁾

2. Holding the offices of Minister Assistant to the Dispatch (Prime Minister), Minister and Secretary of State for the Navy, and Minister and Secretary of State for War. He was the right-hand man of Dom Miguel during the Vilafrancada but gained the King's trust, who appointed him to the government and made him Count de Suberra. As Minister Assistant to the Dispatch and Minister of War, he had complete control over the decisions of Dom Miguel, the young and inexperienced Commander-in-Chief of the Army, from May 1823 to April 1824.

3. Rui Moura, "O General Pamplona Corte-Real. Barão de Pamplona e Conde de Suberra (1762–1832): 'Ser ou não ser (Liberal), eis a questão.'" *Actas do XXVII Colóquio De História Militar*, edited by Comissão Portuguesa de História Militar (2019): 209–259.

Analysis of the Abrilada

The history of the Abrilada of 1824 remains relatively obscure and is still shrouded in a cloud of propaganda and unilateral perspectives.

A notable example is the book *Portugal Militar* by Carlos Selvagem,⁽⁴⁾ which derives his information not from primary sources but from 19th-century publications, providing a partial and distorted perspective of events:

“Dom Miguel took command of the rebel regiments assembled at Rossio and proceeded to Bemposta, where he imprisoned the King in his quarters and coerced him into completing the undertaking initiated in Vilafranca – the restoration of absolutism. At that time, the intervention of the diplomatic corps, led by the French Ambassador Hyde de Neuville⁽⁵⁾, proved futile. Dom João VI acquiesced to all demands, and 18,000 arrest orders were issued against liberals. Terror reigned everywhere. Apparent victories were achieved by the apostolic forces.”⁽⁶⁾ and

“However, on 9 May, with England’s complicity, Dom João VI, who had his own plan, launched a counter-coup against his son’s supporters, involving the entire diplomatic corps aboard the British ship Windsor Castle, anchored in the Tagus River. Summoned aboard, Dom Miguel was stripped of his position as generalissimo and was subsequently transferred from the British vessel to the Portuguese frigate Pérola. He was then ordered to travel throughout Europe, eventually settling in Vienna, Austria.”⁽⁷⁾

The 19th-century books that recount, either wholly or in part, the Abrilada of 1824 events focus their attention on the following key ideas: a coup orchestrated by the Prince against his father with the support of a faction within the military, forcing the King to abdicate and establishing a regency led by Queen Carlota Joaquina and Prince Miguel himself; the King’s imprisonment in Bemposta Palace; the fundamental role played by the diplomatic corps; Prince Miguel being compelled to leave the country; the defeat of the absolutist party and the victory of the liberal party.

4. Carlos Selvagem, *Portugal Militar*. (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1931).

5. Jean-Guillaume, Baron Hyde de Neuville (1776 – 1857), was a pro-monarchical politician and French diplomat who, among other roles, served as French Minister of the Navy and Overseas and as Ambassador to Portugal and to the United States of America. He was one of the most loyal supporters of the legitimacy of the House of Bourbon on the throne of France. The role he played in the political events surrounding the Abrilada led to him being awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of the Tower and Sword, and he was made the 1st Count and later the 1st Marquis of Bemposta. The work *Mémoires et souvenirs* (3 volumes), Paris, was compiled from his autobiographical notes by his nieces, Viscountess de Bardonnnet and Baroness Laurenceau. The book by Francisco José Rocha Martins (1946), titled *A Abrilada: 1824 (Segundo o depoimento do Ministro de França Hyde de Neuville)*, is the most comprehensive work in Portuguese on this coup. However, it presents only a single perspective, and contains numerous omissions, and exhibits certain inconsistencies.

6. Carlos Selvagem, *Portugal Militar*. (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1931), 544.

7. Carlos Selvagem, *Portugal Militar*. (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1931), 544.

Understanding this pivotal event in Portuguese history requires careful analysis of various primary sources, providing a more nuanced and accurate description. Firstly, contemporary press accounts, particularly from the *Gazeta de Lisboa*,⁽⁸⁾ serve as essential resources, as they published proclamations by Prince Miguel and King John VI alongside letters, decrees, and detailed descriptions of the unfolding events. Secondly, the memoirs and personal correspondence of key figures involved in the Abrilada offer valuable insights into the principal actors' motivations, strategies, and experiences. Thirdly, the official inquiry conducted after the events, known as the *Auto de Devassa*, provides a formal record of testimonies and investigations, albeit shaped by the political context in which it was produced, containing an odd plan of the revolution. Lastly, historical accounts and interpretations published in books offer additional perspectives but must be approached cautiously, as they often reflect their authors' biases and unilateral views. When critically examined, these diverse sources allow historians to construct a more balanced and comprehensive understanding of the Abrilada, free from the distortions of propaganda and partisanship.

The Abrilada unfolded as Prince Miguel mobilised military support to seize control of Lisbon and demanded changes in governance. Dom Miguel had served as Commander-in-Chief of the Army since the Vilafrancada coup of 1823, which ensured the officers' compliance and facilitated the mobilisation of army units, as they merely followed his orders under the military discipline.

In the early hours of 30 April 1824, a Friday, the Abrilada coup unfolded in Lisbon with decisive action. Military units from the Lisbon garrison gathered at the Rossio, assembling in front of Prince Miguel's headquarters, the former Palace of the Inquisition⁽⁹⁾. The *Gazeta de Lisboa* initially reported the events of that day on 1 May, providing a brief account of the coup. However, for the following fifteen days, the newspaper's coverage of the events was riddled with inaccuracies, inconsistencies and extensive periods of no information at all⁽¹⁰⁾. The issue of 1 May also included the full texts of two proclamations by Prince Miguel – one addressed to the army and the other to the Portuguese people – alongside a letter he wrote to his father, King John VI.

In the lengthy proclamation to the Portuguese People,⁽¹¹⁾ Infante Dom Miguel seeks to justify his leadership by framing his actions as a defence of the throne, King Dom João VI, the Royal Family, and the nation against what he alleges to be a Masonic conspiracy threatening the country. He highlights that the campaign initiated on 27 May 1823

8. "Gazeta de Lisboa". Lisboa: Imprensa Régia, 1824.

9. The Palácio dos Estaus, also known as the Paço dos Estaus or the Palace of the Inquisition, with its three-story towers, was located at the northern end of Rossio Square in the historic centre of Lisbon, Portugal. Since 1846, the site has been occupied by the National Theatre Dona Maria II.

10. From 4 May to 10 May, *Gazeta* provided no information whatsoever regarding the events, thereby allowing falsehoods and rumours to proliferate.

11. "Gazeta de Lisboa" 103 (1 May 1824): 474.

has yet to achieve the anticipated success, attributing its stagnation to the continuous oppression of the King and betrayals by internal factions. Miguel further criticises the authorities for their ineffectiveness in addressing Portugal's pressing economic and administrative problems, including the significant loss of Brazil, which he attributes to Masonic forces seeking to dismantle the monarchy and destabilise the nation. Appealing directly to the Portuguese people, Miguel calls for their continued resistance against what he describes as the "*Masonic race*," vowing not to sheath his sword until the Kingdom's security and stability are restored. He concludes by reaffirming his unwavering loyalty to the King, the Catholic religion, and the nation, urging the Portuguese to trust his leadership and the legitimacy of the constituted authorities to guide the country through its trials. This proclamation was also printed and distributed in Lisbon.⁽¹²⁾ Confirming that this document was delivered on 30 April, Beresford⁽¹³⁾ writes that when he arrived at Bemposta a little after 8 a.m. on that day, he learnt what was going on through a copy of the proclamation given to him by the officer of the guard, "*I called for the officer of the guard, who corroborated what the sentries said and added they were the orders of the Infant Dom Miguel, shewing me at the same time a proclamation which at once shewed me the nature of this event*".⁽¹⁴⁾

In a short proclamation,⁽¹⁵⁾ now to the Portuguese Army, Dom Miguel draws a parallel between the events of 30 April 1824, and those of 27 May 1823, presenting both as historical milestones in defence of the throne, the Royal Family, the Nation, and Religion against what he describes as a disorganising and masonic faction. He issues a rallying call to arms, expressing his unwavering confidence in the soldiers' loyalty and steadfast dedication to safeguarding the King's cause and securing the stability of the Kingdom. Concluding his motivational address, Miguel offers words of encouragement. He reaffirms his unyielding loyalty to the King, the Catholic faith, and the Nation while pledging to vanquish the "*wicked Freemasons*," whom he identifies as a fundamental threat to the established order. His proclamation served as both a motivational appeal and a reaffirmation of his commitment to his political and ideological objectives and was printed as a pamphlet.⁽¹⁶⁾ This proclamation to the soldiers was read in every garrison

12. Arquivo Histórico-Militar (AHM), "Manifestos e Carta de Dom Miguel sobre a Abrilada", 3 May 1824, PT/AHM/DIV/1/18/079/18.

13. William Carr Beresford, Marquess de Campo Maior, served as the commander of the Portuguese Army from 1809 to 1820 and was a member of the Council of Regency. Upon his return from Brazil in 1820 he was denied entry to Lisbon and subsequently travelled to London. In 1823, he was appointed Lieutenant General of the Ordnance under Arthur Wellesley, Duke de Wellington, holding the position of Master General of the Ordnance. After the summer of 1823, contrary to the wishes of both Wellington and the British Government, he travelled to Lisbon to attend to private matters. He resigned from his post in England and remained a close and influential figure in the court of King John VI for almost a year.

14. Wellington Papers (WP), University of Southampton, Special Collections, "Letter from Lord Beresford to Arthur Wellesley, First Duke of Wellington, Giving an Account of the Attempted Coup on 30 April at Lisbon", 5 May 1824, MS61/WP1/792/4, f. 3v.

15. "Gazeta de Lisboa" 103 (1 May 1824): 475

16. AHM, "Manifestos e Carta de Dom Miguel sobre a Abrilada".

of the capital, with the troops gathered, sometimes with the presence of the Prince in the very early hours of 30 April, such was the case of the units quartered in the Castelo de São Jorge.⁽¹⁷⁾

In the letter addressed to his father,⁽¹⁸⁾ King John VI, Infante Dom Miguel justifies his decision to take up arms, citing the existence of a purported Masonic conspiracy aimed at undermining the House of Braganza and the Kingdom of Portugal. He reflects on the earlier Vilafrancada uprising of 27 May 1823, acknowledging that its outcome fell short of expectations, thus necessitating a continuation of his efforts to safeguard the monarchy, the royal family, and the nation. Miguel frames his actions as a heroic and loyal endeavour, asserting that they were undertaken to shield the King from the “clutches of the infamous” individuals who, he alleges, surrounded and manipulated the monarch. He appeals to the King for approval of his acts, articulating his impatience for a response to legitimise and support his military initiatives. Concluding his plea, Miguel reaffirms his loyalty, imploring the King to recognise the urgency of his cause while praying to God for the King’s prosperity and long life. The letter encapsulates Miguel’s narrative of self-justification and his attempt to frame his rebellion within a context of loyalty and filial duty. This letter was in his father’s possession by the early morning of 30 April, delivered at the Palace of Bemposta,⁽¹⁹⁾ and was also printed by Imprensa Régia.⁽²⁰⁾

Later the same day, a supplement to the *Gazeta de Lisboa* contradicted the earlier report, explicitly stating, “*The report of the appointment of ministers mentioned there is inaccurate, and up until this moment, we do not have confirmation that it has been verified.*”⁽²¹⁾ This correction highlights the challenges of obtaining reliable information while such politically charged events unfolded and where misinformation and propaganda played significant roles in shaping public understanding.

However, even these official documents must be carefully read; as Owen says, “... it was now that the opposite parties waged private war against each other. The liberals wrote proclamations for their opponents, and vice versa; each endeavouring to render the other party odious by thus imputing to them violent language and opinions; and these elegant productions were thrust under the doors of houses, and thrown into the streets during the night, and prepared

17. Maximiano de Brito Mozinho, *Processo do Tenente-general Manuel de Brito Mozinho copiado literalmente por seu irmão o Marechal de Campo graduado Maximiano de Brito Mozinho, do grande processo que se formou em consequências dos acontecimentos do dia 30 de Abril de 1824*, (Lisboa: Imprensa Régia, 1828), 20-21.

18. “*Gazeta de Lisboa*” 103 (1 May 1824): 474-475.

19. WP, “Letter from Lord Beresford to Arthur Wellesley, First Duke of Wellington, Giving an Account of the Attempted Coup on 30 April at Lisbon”

20. AHM, “Manifestos e Carta de Dom Miguel sobre a Abrilada”.

21. “*Gazeta de Lisboa*” 103, Suplemento (1 May 1824): 479

the public mind for Don Miguel's violence..."⁽²²⁾ Typically, the intensity of the rhetoric did not align with the reality of the events. But anyway these three documents are legitimate.

The King initially publicly supported the positions of Dom Miguel in a document dated 3 May, where Dom João endorses Dom Miguel's decisions regarding the "*indefectible necessity of resorting to arms*" in order "*to prevent evils of the highest order, which, due to their enormity and execrable nature, would not only shake but destroy, in the present time, the Political Edifice of the Monarchy*" even without having had the time to secure "*the necessary resolutions*" from the King. Additionally, he understands and forgives his son, responding favourably to the request "*to absolve him of the excesses of jurisdiction which he exercised without My Royal Authority, which indeed I am inclined to absolve.*" In this decree, Dom João orders the trial of all suspects and imprisoned individuals involved through summary and verbal proceedings "*with the pronouncement of the guilty, so that the punishment follows the crime, without the inconveniences of lengthy detentions.*". The *Gazeta de Lisboa*⁽²³⁾ publishes this decree on Tuesday, 4 May and was also printed in the *Imprensa Régia*.⁽²⁴⁾

The *Gazeta* of 4 May, in an editorial, further informs the public that:

"The inhabitants of this capital celebrated with spontaneous general illumination the joyful outcome of the heroic resolution of His Serene Highness, the Infante Dom Miguel, both on 30 April and 1 May, and nearly to the same extent on 2 May. On the afternoon of the 1st of the current month, as His Majesty the King, accompanied by Their Serene Highnesses, the Infantas D. Isabel Maria and D. Maria da Assumpção, departed from the Royal Palace of Bemposta and proceeded through the Rocio and Rua Augusta to the Royal Church of Nossa Senhora Madre de Deus, he was met everywhere by the most expressive and energetic demonstrations of affection from people of all classes, who gathered in crowds to cheer His Majesty, exulting in the liberation of His August Person, the entire Royal Family, and the Nation from the sinister machinations of the irreconcilable enemies of the Throne and the Altar."⁽²⁵⁾

Viscount Beresford corroborates all these facts. In the tumultuous period following the 30 April, he wrote several letters and a memorandum⁽²⁶⁾ to Wellington,⁽²⁷⁾ informing

22. Hugh Owen, *The Civil War in Portugal, and the Siege of Oporto: by a British Officer of Hussars, Who Served in the Portuguese Army during the Peninsular War*, (London: Edward Moxon, 1836), 17.

23. "*Gazeta de Lisboa*" 105 (4 May 1824): 489.

24. Arquivo Histórico-Militar (AHM), "Decreto Dom João VI", 3 May 1824, PT/AHM/DIV/1/18/079/17.

25. "*Gazeta de Lisboa*" 105 (4 May 1824): 489.

26. On 30 April 1824, he was the first to arrive at Bemposta Palace to support the King during the time of crisis. In the days following the coup, he wrote several letters and produced a detailed memorandum on the events, now preserved in the Wellington Papers Archive (WP) at the University of Southampton. The most important letters are dated 5 May, 12 and 14 May, 20 and 21 May, 24 May, 19 June and 3 July. The Memorandum is dated 26 June.

27. Wellington Papers (WP), University of Southampton, Special Collections, "Memorandum from Lord Beresford to Arthur Wellesley, First Duke of Wellington, on the Attempted Coup by the Infante at Lisbon on 30 April and the Subsequent Events", ca. 26 June 1824, MS61/WP1/794/17.

London of the events in Lisbon; however, his narrative was never referenced in history books⁽²⁸⁾. Hyde de Neuville's account, reproduced in his memoirs⁽²⁹⁾ and published by two of his descendants, has predominantly shaped the description of events. This account is the foundation for the only book dedicated to the *Abrilada*.⁽³⁰⁾

The coup was highly complex and contradictory, with the decisions of its principal actors made under immense pressure and a significant lack of information. The accounts of witnesses suggest that the Prince genuinely believed that a liberal coup, staged by "*freemasons and constitutionalists*", was being prepared to overthrow the House of Braganza, that the entire royal family was at risk, and that it was necessary to pre-empt this threat to preserve the integrity and sovereignty of the Royal House.⁽³¹⁾

Although the coup did not result in any fatalities or even gunfire, a significant number of arrests were made, and the prisoners endured harsh conditions during their incarceration, including a lack of food and sleep, poor hygiene standards, and discomfort in overcrowded cells. While the figure of eighteen thousand arrest warrants mentioned by Carlos Selvagem in his book is overly exaggerated, dozens of officers and civilians were inevitably detained in Lisbon, incarcerated in locations such as the Tower of Belém, the Castelo, São Julião da Barra, and Limoeiro⁽³²⁾.

The cruellest event recorded relates to the General Superintendent of the Police, Baron de Rendufe⁽³³⁾, who was pursued, captured, and taken to the woods near Queluz Palace: "*Of all the victims of the infamous Abrilada, none was more cruelly and barbarously treated than the Baron of Rendufe.*"⁽³⁴⁾ Coerced into revealing information and signing documents implicating military and civilian individuals in the alleged assassination attempt against the King, he refused, so he was subjected to a staged execution. Subsequently, he was imprisoned at Queluz Palace and later transferred to São Julião da Barra.⁽³⁵⁾

28. The only exception is an excellent article by Marcus de la Poer Beresford ("Marshal William Carr Beresford and the Return to Portugal of the Portuguese Royal Family (1814–1830)". *Journal of Anglo-Portuguese Studies*, no. 29 (2020): 67–87), an Irish author and biographer of the Marshal, covering the period of Viscount Beresford's life between 1814 and 1820 concerning Portugal. However, the event of the *Abrilada* is referenced using information only from the first letter, dated 5 May.

29. Jean Guillaume Hyde de Neuville, baron, *Mémoires et souvenirs du baron Hyde de Neuville*, Vol. 3, (Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit et cie, 1892).

30. Francisco José Rocha Martins, *A Abrilada: 1824 (Segundo o depoimento do Ministro de França Hyde de Neuville)*, Col. Cadernos históricos, (Lisboa: Edições Excelsior, 1946).

31. WP, "Memorandum ...", f. 11v.

32. José T.M. Barreto, *Memórias do Marquês de Fronteira e Alorna: Parte Primeira e Segunda (1802-1824)*, (Edited by E. de C. de Andrada), (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1926), 394-395.

33. 1st Baron de Rendufe (1795-1857) - Simão da Silva Ferraz de Lima e Castro, General Superintendent of the Police of the Court and Kingdom and elevated to the Council of His Most Faithful Majesty.

34. Simão José da Luz Soriano, *Revelações da minha vida, e memórias de alguns factos e homens meus contemporâneos*, (Lisboa: Typographia Universal, 1860), 55-56.

35. Barreto, *Memórias do Marquês de Fronteira e Alorna*, 396.

Paradoxically, even some of the most dedicated supporters of absolutism and allies of Dom Miguel were imprisoned during the coup. These individuals had been long-time supporters and later would continue their allegiance during Dom Miguel's exile in Vienna (1824-27), his absolute rule (1828-34), and the Civil War (1832-1834). These supporters of Dom Miguel were detained at locations including the Castelo and Limoeiro, and amongst them were the Viscount de Santa Marta⁽³⁶⁾, the Viscount do Peso da Régua⁽³⁷⁾, the Baron da Portela⁽³⁸⁾, and the Brigadier General Teles Jordão⁽³⁹⁾, all far from being known as constitutionalists or freemasons.⁽⁴⁰⁾

The imprisonment of the two most influential ministers of the Government of Dom João, Suberra and Palmela, who were with Miguel one year before during the Vilafrancada Coup, was one of the main objectives of the coup. The Count de Suberra, the prime minister, alerted the King to the events unfolding in Lisbon during the very early hours at the Bemposta Palace. Before dawn, he sought refuge within the protection of the French Embassy,⁽⁴¹⁾ retreating with his family to an English vessel anchored in the Tagus River some days later. The Marquess de Palmela⁽⁴²⁾, Minister of Foreign Affairs, was taken prisoner at his house and imprisoned in the early morning in the Tower of Belém.⁽⁴³⁾

However, whenever Prince Miguel was summoned to his father's presence, he always appeared voluntarily, was highly respectful and subservient to his father and consistently followed any directives he received. Dom Miguel was always reverent to his father, obeying him at all times: "... declaring that he was for whatever his father desired ... and concluded by saying, 'Will my father give me any orders?'"⁽⁴⁴⁾

There are no records of Dom Miguel's interactions with his principal advisors and supporters during the crisis. However, the King's requests and orders were followed, although the arrests of all kinds of people, including officers, politicians, and even ordinary citizens, continued to occur in the first few days of the crisis. The king never explicitly ordered the arrests to stop.

36. 1st Viscount de Santa Marta (1766-1844) - General Manuel Gregório de Sousa Pereira de Sampaio, absolutista.

37. Viscount do Peso da Régua (1763-1838) – General Gaspar Teixeira de Magalhães e Lacerda, absolutist

38. 1st Baron da Portela (1789-1876) - Bernardo Doutel de Almeida, absolutist.

39. Joaquim Teles Jordão (1777-1833) – future executioner of São Julião da Barra, killed in the battle of Cacilhas (1833) in the Civil War, absolutist.

40. Barreto, *Memórias do Marquês de Fronteira e Alorna*, 396.

41. Barreto, *Memórias do Marquês de Fronteira e Alorna*, 396.

42. Pedro de Sousa e Holstein (1781-1850), diplomat and politician, was Minister of Foreign Affairs in several governments from 1823 to 1846, prime minister on three occasions, ambassador to Copenhagen, Berlin, Rome, Madrid and London. 1st Count, 1st Marquess and 1st Duke de Palmela.

43. Barreto, *Memórias do Marquês de Fronteira e Alorna*, 396.

44. Statement of Dom Miguel in the meeting between the Prince and the King at the Palácio da Bemposta on the night of 1 May, in the presence of Beresford and the King's ministers and chamberlains, including the presence of Palmela, already released from prison. WP, "Memorandum ...", f 15r.

On the morning of 30 April, the King, directly or through Beresford, ordered the release of the Marquess of Palmela. The memoirs of the Marquess of Fronteira describe how the Count was leisurely reading the Times newspaper in a room of the Tower, where military prisoners of all ranks were gathered.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Palmela's release was carried out that night. The King also ordered the dispersal of the troops from Rossio; Dom Miguel ordered the regiments to return to their barracks and remain on high alert. Lastly, the King requested the demobilisation of the battalion of caçadores, reinforcing the security of the Bemposta Palace, which was duly executed. In fact, on several occasions in the subsequent days, the Prince requested direct orders from his father, but King John seldom was assertive, fearing for his life and that of his ministers.⁽⁴⁶⁾

In the early hours of the morning of 30 April, Marshal William Carr Beresford rode from his residence at the Palace of *Patio do Saldanha*,⁽⁴⁷⁾ unaware of the events unfolding in Lisbon. Crossing the city, he received scattered and contradictory information as he approached the Royal Palace of Bemposta. Avoiding Rossio, he reached the Royal Palace, which he found heavily guarded by soldiers from the 8th Battalion of Caçadores (Chaves) reinforcing the guard. Despite being recognised by the military as the former commander of the Army, he was denied access to the King. On learning of his presence, the King requested his entry. However, the sentinels did not allow it, and the guard commander respectfully informed the Marshal that only an express order from Dom Miguel could grant him access. As the messenger who had gone to Rossio was taking too much time, the guard commander provided Beresford with the text of Dom Miguel's proclamation to the Portuguese people and went to Rossio himself.⁽⁴⁸⁾ The authorisation from Dom Miguel finally arrived, granting Beresford access to the King. The King, accompanied by two of his daughters and a few courtiers, was in a highly anxious state, doubting the development of events. He showed Beresford the letter from his son and earnestly requested that the Marshal always remain by his side.

Common threads among all accounts are the information that the young Prince Miguel was surrounded by ultra-conservative and absolutist advisors, who manipulated his actions and decisions, that the Prince was heavily influenced by his mother, Queen Carlota Joaquina, and the belief that the Queen, living in exile in Queluz, was behind the coup.

The Holy See Ambassador in Lisbon, Monsignor Giacomo Filippo Fransoni, Archbishop Nanziano, in a Letter to Rome dated 1 May, reporting the events of the day, included one encrypted paragraph: "*The Diplomatic Corps believes that the Queen, in*

45. Barreto, *Memórias do Marquês de Fronteira e Alorna*, 392.

46. WP, "Memorandum ...", f. 6v.

47. It is also known as the Palace da Ega, in Calçada da Boa Hora, in Junqueira, where the Historical Ultramarine Archive is currently located.

48. WP, "Letter from Lord Beresford to Arthur Wellesley, First Duke of Wellington, Giving an Account of the Attempted Coup on 30 April at Lisbon".

order to take the (throne) from His Majesty, may have given cause for this, which cannot be reconciled with her deep religious faith.”⁽⁴⁹⁾ Beresford also recounts that “...in about an hour after my arrival Her Majesty the Queen arrived, who I could not now doubt was at the bottom of this business.”⁽⁵⁰⁾ and that “no-one doubting that the Queen was the chief instigator...”⁽⁵¹⁾

Prince Miguel was highly susceptible to influence and subject to pressures from his close circle of friends, who had remained by his side since the Vilafrancada. The Marquess of Abrantes, Dom José⁽⁵²⁾, stood out among them. According to Fronteira, he was “*the true leader of the sicarios [sic] and murderers*.”⁽⁵³⁾ Additionally, General Viscount of Veiros⁽⁵⁴⁾, the Marquess of Chaves,⁽⁵⁵⁾ and the Paiva Raposos, both father and son⁽⁵⁶⁾, were notable figures. He was known to be “*accompanied by the most vile and lowly individuals in the capital*.”⁽⁵⁷⁾ All Army officers obeyed Dom Miguel, as he was the Commander-in-Chief of the Army since 1823, regardless of whether they agreed with his ideas. Most of the prisoners were taken by surprise, one by one, and did not resist their capture, while others accepted assignments and appointments without questioning.

A private account, dictated in 1851, documents in great detail the experiences of a young lieutenant of the 7th regiment of cavalry, who witnessed the events of 30 April, the Viscount of Fronteira e Alorna⁽⁵⁸⁾. He recounts gathering with his regiment at Rossio, where he was subsequently arrested and transported to the prison in the Tower of Belém. After six days, he was transferred to the prison in Peniche and later released. The Marquess of Fronteira and Alorna notes that, at Rossio, before his arrest, he received news “*... at every moment, comrades from other units approached me, announcing the arrest of individuals from all parties and all classes of society, from the highest to the lowest ... it was the extermination of Portuguese Freemasonry*.”⁽⁵⁹⁾

49. Arquivo Secreto do Vaticano, Segredo de Estado, “Relatório e Cartas do Núncio Apostólico junto de S.M. Fidelíssima, em Lisboa para o Secretário de Estado do Vaticano”, Rubrica 250 - Ano 1824, 1 May 1824

50. WP, “Letter from Lord Beresford to Arthur Wellesley, First Duke of Wellington, Giving an Account of the Attempted Coup on 30 April at Lisbon”.

51. Wellington Papers (WP), University of Southampton, Special Collections, “Letters from Lord Beresford to Arthur Wellesley, First Duke of Wellington, on the State of Affairs in Portugal after the Banishment of the Infante and the Return to Power of Suberra and Palmela”, 20 and 21 May 1824, MS61/WP1/792/20, f. 2r.

52. Dom José Maria da Piedade de Lancastre, 6th Marquess de Abrantes (1784-1827)

53. Mozinho, Processo do Tenente-general Manuel de Brito Mozinho, 396.

54. Dom Francisco de Paula Leite de Sousa (1747-1833), 1st Viscount de Veiros, the most senior lieutenant-general of the Army (1807 promotion)

55. Manuel da Silveira Pinto da Fonseca Teixeira (1792-1830), 1st Marquess de Chaves, at the time Major General, 2nd Count of Amarante.

56. António de Paiva Raposo, lawyer, and his son Inácio António de Paiva Raposo, Caçadores 2 lieutenant.

57. Mozinho, Processo do Tenente-general Manuel de Brito Mozinho, 396.

58. The Marquess de Fronteira and Alorna, Dom José Trazimundo Mascarenhas Barreto, obeyed the order to join his regiment (Cavalry 7) in Rossio, which he did in good faith. However, after some time, he was ordered to be arrested by another Regimental officer and taken to the Torre de Belém.(Barreto, 1926, pp. 390-391)

59. Barreto, Memórias do Marquês de Fronteira e Alorna, 390.

Many military and civilian individuals in Lisbon were arrested and transported to various prisons, including the Tower of Belém, the Castelo, and the Limoeiro. Subsequently, some were transferred to the Fort of São Julião da Barra. On 6 May, long columns of horse-pulled coaches with prisoners headed to Peniche from all prisons.⁽⁶⁰⁾

Among those arrested, besides the Marquess of Palmela, were the King's chamberlains, the Counts of Vila Flor⁽⁶¹⁾ and Paraty⁽⁶²⁾, general officers such as General Azeredo, and numerous colonels, including the Count of Taipa and the Baron de Sabroso. The Colonel of the Royal Guard Police and the General Superintendent of Police, Baron de Rendufe, were also imprisoned.⁽⁶³⁾

Beresford's memorandum sent to London, is, bar none, the most detailed account we have of this period. Besides recounting events firsthand as a privileged witness, since he was almost always by the King's side, the account was written about the events unfolding, giving it far greater value than memoirs written many years later. In addition to reporting the various events, Beresford comments on the events and provides his political analysis. He was not involved in the coup nor on Dom Miguel's side, despite being accused of it by Hyde de Neuville. Initially supported by Palmela, Beresford's position was to defend the King and his sovereign position at all costs. To this end, he tried to reconcile father and son as much as possible. He opposed Hyde de Neuville's stance, which advocated for Miguel's exemplary punishment for his actions, with no clemency.

In turn, Beresford tried to counter the highly controversial move to the *Windsor Castle*, a British warship in the Tagus, proposed by the diplomatic corps, as this would mean abandoning the people of Lisbon and the troops, who were very supportive of the King, leaving Lisbon at the mercy of Miguel and his followers, and seeking refuge on a ship under a foreign flag. This would give arguments that the King had abandoned the country and, finally, the decision was a complete security folly, as the anchored ship in the Tagus could be bombarded by artillery pieces from both banks. Beresford was acting in what he perceived to be the best interests of the Portuguese Crown, as demonstrated by his opposition to Dom João boarding the *Windsor Castle*. If he had intended to secure British control or influence, the most effective means of achieving this would have been to ensure the King's presence on board a Royal Navy ship.

The option of going to the English ship was postponed several days in a row. Still, it was finally taken by the King due to the enormous daily pressure from the diplomatic corps, but eventually by Palmela himself, who had changed his mind. The French

60. Barreto, *Memórias do Marquês de Fronteira e Alorna*, 401.

61. Count de Vila Flor (1792-1860) – later Duke and Marquess de Terceira, Dom António José de Sousa Manuel e Meneses Severim de Noronha, liberal.

62. Count de Paraty (1784-1849) – cavalry colonel, Dom Miguel Rafael António do Carmo de Noronha Abranches Castelo Branco, liberal.

63. Barreto, *Memórias do Marquês de Fronteira e Alorna*, 393-394.

ambassador manipulated his British counterpart, Sir Edward Thornton, who always avoided Beresford's moderate and balanced solutions. The King's move to the *Windsor Castle* under the protection of the British flag, supported by the English ambassador, was also very poorly received in London and resulted, weeks later, in Thornton being recalled to London and replaced by William A'Court at the head of the Lisbon embassy.

Beresford's memorandum

In his memorandum, dated circa 26 June 1824, Viscount William Carr Beresford provides a detailed account of the events surrounding Infante Dom Miguel's attempted coup. This original account, never referenced before, provides a fresh view of the events unfolding after 30 April, from which a summary will be made in this chapter.

On the entry for 30 April, the narrative begins at dawn when Beresford is informed of an insurrection at the royal palace of Bemposta and Dom Miguel's actions. Observing the mobilisation of troops, he quickly deduces the seriousness of the situation and proceeds to verify the king's safety. Upon attempting to enter the palace, Beresford is denied entry by the sentries, indicating the extent of the Infante's control. He subsequently requests permission to meet the King, which Dom Miguel eventually grants.

Upon his audience with King João VI, Beresford learns of the King's confusion regarding the rebellion. The King expressed disbelief in the supposed conspiracy to assassinate the royal family, which had been used as a pretext for Dom Miguel's actions. Meanwhile, the Queen arrives at the palace, feigning ignorance of the uprising but subtly indicating the arrest of several key figures, including the Marquess of Palmela. This suggests political manoeuvring within the royal circle. As the day unfolds, Beresford plays a crucial role in mediating between the King and the diplomatic corps, particularly countering the aggressive interventions of the French ambassador, Monsieur de Neuville. The latter demands immediate action, including the King's direct intervention with the troops and the release of the Marquess of Palmela. Beresford, however, advocates for prudence, cautioning against impulsive decisions given the uncertainty surrounding the motivations and loyalty of the troops, but supports the immediate freeing of Palmela.

Called by his father, Dom Miguel eventually arrives at the palace around noon and declares his actions were solely to protect the King, professing obedience to the crown. At Beresford's insistence, Dom Miguel orders the troops to disperse, restoring a semblance of normality. Nonetheless, the King remains apprehensive, hesitating to fully reassert his authority. Beresford's role extends beyond that of an observer; he actively advises the King on state matters, urging him to re-establish control and make strategic decisions. This includes persuading Dom Miguel to release the Marquess of Palmela, a move reluctantly endorsed by the King.

Throughout the crisis, Beresford emerges as a stabilising force, navigating political intrigue and diplomatic pressures while remaining steadfast in his commitment to royal authority and governance. Despite repeated offers from the King, his reluctance to assume an official ministerial role underscores his prioritisation of order over personal advancement. The events illustrate the fragility of Portuguese political stability and the King's dependence on foreign allies and advisors, with Beresford acting as both mediator and protector of monarchical legitimacy in a moment of political turbulence.

On 1 May, Viscount William Carr Beresford continued his crucial role in advising King João VI during the ongoing political crisis. Arriving at the palace at 9 a.m., he found the King melancholy and indecisive, having slept poorly and eaten little. The Infante Dom Miguel maintained control over the military, keeping them on high alert while continuing to imprison both civil and military officials. A key development of the day was receiving a letter from the Marquess of Palmela, expressing grievances about his treatment and demanding redress. Beresford acknowledged the validity of Palmela's concerns but also emphasised his importance in government. The Marquess later appeared at the palace that night following a royal summons.

Diplomatic tensions also evolved during the day. The French ambassador, Monsieur de Neuville, who had previously urged the King to rely on popular support and military loyalty, reversed his stance, now advocating for the King to take refuge on the *Windsor Castle*. Beresford perceived this as a strategy to separate the King from Dom Miguel and potentially instigate foreign intervention, a longstanding objective of the French envoy⁽⁶⁴⁾. He was also surprised by the alignment of the British ambassador, Sir Edward Thornton, with this view, though he suspected differing motivations.

Despite the uncertainty, public sentiment toward the King appeared supportive. In the evening, King João VI toured the city in an open carriage, receiving enthusiastic cheers, particularly from areas historically opposed to his rule. Beresford interpreted this as indicating that Dom Miguel's authority was weakened, particularly given the army's unclear stance. Nonetheless, the day ended with continued ambiguity, as the general public remained uncertain about the true nature of the political developments. Many, believing the King ordered the arrests, celebrated with widespread illumination at night.

Beresford's observations and strategic counsel throughout the crisis reflect his commitment to stabilising the monarchy and preventing external interference. He opposed rash decisions that could lead to open conflict, advocating for cautious but firm actions to restore the King's authority. His interactions with foreign diplomats also reveal his acute awareness of their political manoeuvres, ensuring that Portugal's internal matters remained free from undue foreign influence.

64. A French force was stationed next to the border with Portugal, at Badajoz, by influence of Hyde de Neuville and Subsera, and a French fleet was in Cadiz.

On 2 May, Beresford continued to play a pivotal role in advising King João VI during the ongoing political crisis. The King convened his ministers, including Beresford, at the Ajuda Palace at noon, where they were to discuss the alleged conspiracy against the royal family. The Infante Dom Miguel had presented documents that purportedly proved the existence of a plot, and these were to be examined.

The primary discussion centred on the King's course of action, with considerable pressure from the diplomatic corps, particularly the French ambassador, urging him to seek refuge aboard *Windsor Castle*. Beresford staunchly opposed this suggestion, arguing that it was unnecessary and would damage the King's dignity and credibility, portraying a lack of confidence in his people and the army. Instead, Beresford advocated for testing Dom Miguel's sincerity by instructing him to cease his extrajudicial arrests and to regulate his conduct concerning the military. This was agreed upon, but no immediate decision was made beyond delaying the King's potential departure.

To address public confusion over the recent arrests and political turmoil, a royal decree was decided to be issued. This decree would acknowledge recent events while preserving the Infante's dignity, as the consensus among ministers was that he had been manipulated rather than acting with direct malice against his father. Desembargador Leite⁽⁶⁵⁾ was tasked with drafting this decree.

While the ministers were examining the conspiracy papers, Dom Miguel arrived unexpectedly at the palace. His presence unsettled the King, who feared that discussions about him would be exposed. Upon reviewing the documents, it became evident that they did not substantiate the existence of a coordinated conspiracy, though many arrested individuals were implicated as freemasons or constitutionalists. Questioned, the Infante appeared uninformed about the details, indicating that he had been misled.

During a private conversation, Beresford confronted Dom Miguel about his actions' illegality and harmful consequences. He emphasised that while the Infante intended to protect the King, his conduct suggested otherwise. Beresford urged Dom Miguel to declare to his father his willingness to act solely under royal orders and to dismiss any advisers deemed undesirable by the King. Dom Miguel agreed to make this declaration before the ministers but postponed doing so until later that night at Bemposta Palace.

At Bemposta, Dom Miguel returned from a visit to the Queen at Queluz and engaged in informal conversation with the ministers while awaiting the King. At around 11 p.m., after the King finished his other engagements, Dom Miguel formally declared obedience to his father. However, his discomfort and lack of experience in court discussions were

65. José António de Oliveira Leite de Barros, Minister and Secretary of State of the Kingdom (Interior) and Minister of War (in the absence of Pamplona), absolutist, later Count de Basto and prime minister of Dom Miguel. He was part of the close circle of advisors to Dom Miguel in 1824.

evident. Ministers, including the Marquess of Palmela, questioned him regarding his actions, and he responded affirmatively, indicating compliance with royal authority.

Beresford once again urged the necessity of demonstrating the King's entire exercise of authority to the public and the diplomatic corps. However, any decisive action was deferred until the formal proclamation was issued. The night concluded without immediate resolutions but with Dom Miguel's verbal commitment to royal obedience.

On 3 May, the day began with a ministerial meeting at Bemposta Palace, where the Minister of the Interior presented the draft decree intended to clarify recent events to the public. Beresford, along with the Marquess of Palmela, found the decree insufficient in asserting the authority and dignity of the crown. They sought amendments to ensure the King's sovereignty was not undermined while maintaining a path for reconciliation with the Infante Dom Miguel.

A conference with Dom Miguel was arranged to clarify his intentions. The ministers questioned him about his continued assumption of sovereign powers, including the arrests of civilians and the military's state of readiness, despite his repeated assurances of obedience to the King. Dom Miguel reaffirmed his opposition to freemasonry, viewing it as a subversive force against the monarchy, and insisted that those arrested should be tried according to law. He claimed no interest in civil affairs, stating that his past interventions were out of necessity. However, he remained adamant about purging freemasons from the army, even declaring that if the King opposed this, he would resign his command and live at the palace to protect his father personally⁽⁶⁶⁾. His strong declarations left a positive impression on the ministers, and he promised to halt further arrests.

During the meeting, Dom Miguel presented his own proposed decree, which was deemed unacceptable. Instead, he agreed to the draft decree read to the King earlier in the day, allowing its publication. A surprising revelation emerged when Dom Miguel claimed that on 30 April, the King, via the Marquess of Loulé⁽⁶⁷⁾, had expressed approval of his actions for the kingdom's good. This claim led to confusion among the ministers, prompting Loulé's presence to clarify the matter. Loulé confirmed relaying a message of royal approval for any measures benefiting the kingdom. Still, he also stated that the King had been unaware of Dom Miguel's specific actions and had requested information. Despite this, Dom Miguel interpreted the message as validating his previous conduct.

Further complications arose when Dom Miguel's order of the day, reinforcing his perceived royal mandate, was mistakenly published in the *Gazeta* alongside the

66. Dom Miguel slept all nights of the period at Bemposta Palace and was often at meals with his father, the ministers and the diplomatic corps, at Ajuda and Bemposta Palaces.

67. Nuno José Severo de Mendonça Rolim de Moura Barreto (1804-1875). Military and politician. 2nd Marquess de Loulé, later 1st Duke de Loulé and prime minister in three different occasions, was ADC to Dom Miguel after the Vilafrancada.

King's decree, creating a contradiction in the official narrative. This occurred due to miscommunication between the Marquess of Palmela and Antonio de Oliveira Leite.

Meanwhile, discussions continued on whether the King should seek refuge aboard the *Windsor Castle*. Beresford strongly opposed this move, arguing that the King should test Dom Miguel's sincerity before considering such a drastic step. Initially uncertain, the King visibly leaned towards the advice of the diplomatic corps, who, except for the Dutch chargé d'affaires, strongly urged him to embark. However, Beresford's persistence, eventually supported by Palmela and other ministers, led to a temporary postponement of the decision.

The ministers attended the palace again that evening, but the King's engagements with foreign diplomats delayed their audience. The diplomatic corps continued dominating his time, leaving his ministers little influence over his decisions. The day ended with the ministers receiving an order to return the following day, leaving the matter unresolved.

On 4 May, Viscount William Carr Beresford took decisive action to formalise royal commands amidst ongoing instability. He noted that previous meetings with the King and ministers had lacked structure, leading to discussions without tangible results. To address this, he prepared written orders in English for the King to issue to the Infante, which were read in Portuguese by the Marquess of Palmela and subsequently approved. The orders were then translated for the Minister of War, Desembargador Leite, and prepared for dispatch.

Beresford also reiterated his proposal for a broader decree, extending the principles of the 3 May decree to all governmental institutions. This decree would grant amnesty to those who had obeyed the Infante's orders under misapprehension but firmly state that any future disobedience to the King's direct authority would be punished. The King approved the drafting of this decree, temporarily setting aside discussions of embarking on a British warship until the effectiveness of these measures could be assessed.

New arrests were reported despite Dom Miguel's assurances from the previous day. Beresford personally confronted the Infante, who denied issuing fresh orders and insisted that any ongoing arrests were based on prior directives. The King's decision to delay sending the formal orders to Dom Miguel until the following day, along with their intended publication in the *Gazeta*, indicated his deference to the diplomatic corps, whose influence often stalled ministerial efforts. Despite his usual indecisiveness, Palmela ultimately aligned with Beresford's position.

That evening, while at the gardens of Belém, the King privately informed Beresford of a concerning development: Dom Miguel had allegedly ordered, via a royal coachman, the release of a suspect imprisoned before for involvement in a high-profile murder. The King expressed unease, mainly as another suspect had been seen freely roaming

Bemposta's grounds. This incident suggested a serious breach of trust, raising concerns for the King's security.

Beresford proposed directly questioning Dom Miguel to confirm the order's authenticity, but the Marquess of Loulé, involved in the case, feared his position would be compromised. Instead, Loulé visited the Infante, who immediately claimed that the coachman had misunderstood his words. Dom Miguel asserted that he had merely requested confirmation of the suspect's release, not ordered it. This clarification alleviated some of the King's fears, rendering further intervention unnecessary.

On 5 May, Beresford continued to push for decisive action from King João VI in response to the political crisis. At the palace of Bemposta, Beresford reiterated the urgency of promulgating the projected decree to the constituted authorities and the general public. He also urged the immediate dispatch of prepared orders to the Infante Dom Miguel, emphasising the importance of asserting royal authority.

Beresford presented a letter from João Gaudencio Torres, the assistant to the new Intendant General of Police, which indicated that the populace had well received the decree of 3 May. However, anti-freemason sentiment remained strong in the population. Despite this positive reception, the King remained hesitant, delaying the dispatch of the orders to the Infante once again. The orders were initially scheduled to be sent early in the evening but were postponed again.

At the evening meeting with the King, following his audience with the diplomatic corps, Beresford discovered that the orders were still undelivered. The King postponed their dispatch until the following day, citing concerns that the Infante might react negatively and disrupt his scheduled public audience. Beresford attempted to reassure the King that no such danger existed, but the King remained influenced by fears regarding Dom Miguel's intentions.

Beresford attributed the King's reluctance to the longstanding influence of the Count de Suberra, who had fostered suspicions against both the Queen and the Infante. This manipulation had been reinforced by the French ambassador, who assured the King that the French army in Spain would support him against any insurrection – so long as he retained Suberra as minister and remained aligned with French interests. This external pressure further paralysed the King's decision-making.

Meanwhile, Dom Miguel ordered imprisoned officers to be transferred from the Tower of Belém to the fortress of Peniche, a remote coastal stronghold a hundred kilometres from Lisbon. As these individuals were military personnel and few, their removal did not attract significant public attention⁽⁶⁸⁾.

68. Fronteira recounts his apprehension regarding the fact that, along the road where the column of carriages transporting the prisoners passed, rural populations gathered, hurling insults and throwing stones at them (Barreto, 1926, p. 401).

Beresford's frustrations with the King's procrastination and susceptibility to external influence were evident. He remained steadfast in his position that the monarchy should act decisively to affirm its authority, counteract Dom Miguel's independent actions, and diminish foreign interference in Portuguese affairs.

On 6 May, Viscount William Carr Beresford continued his efforts to assert royal authority amidst growing tensions. The day began with King João VI holding his public audience, leading to the postponement of ministerial meetings until the evening. Early in the day, Beresford learned that all prisoners confined in the Tower of Belém and those in Lisbon Castle had been secretly transferred to the fortress of Peniche by Dom Miguel's orders. Recognising the gravity of this move, he proposed an urgent meeting at Bemposta Palace with the Marquess de Palmela, Count da Póvoa⁽⁶⁹⁾, and Desembargador Leite to consult the King on a suitable response. Beresford deemed this an opportune moment for the King to assert his authority.

Before the meeting, Beresford sought out Dom Miguel to ascertain the rationale behind the prisoner transfers. On his way, he learned that the Infante had ridden to stop an English packet ship, allegedly to remove Count de Suberra, whom the Infante suspected of boarding. Upon reaching Ajuda Palace, Beresford found the King and the Infante in separate areas, with João VI visibly apprehensive of his son's presence. When Beresford questioned Dom Miguel about the removals, the Infante insisted that only military personnel had been transferred, adhering to his jurisdiction. However, Beresford pointed out that the detainees had already been handed over for civil trials, making their forced transfer a breach of judicial proceedings and a direct challenge to the King's authority.

Beresford forcefully argued that Dom Miguel was effectively stripping the King of his sovereignty, warning him that assuming unchecked authority was tantamount to seizing the crown. The Infante reacted with shock, but Beresford pressed further, urging him to order the return of the prisoners. Dom Miguel, while non-committal, showed signs of compliance. Beresford maintained that the Infante was being manipulated by his advisers, suggesting that if kept away from these influences, he would likely adhere to royal authority. However, the King's reluctance to assert control over his son hindered decisive action.

Meanwhile, Dom Miguel admitted to halting the English packet, justifying it by claiming he wanted to prevent Count de Suberra's escape. Beresford criticised this act as exceeding the powers of a Commander-in-Chief and warned of diplomatic repercussions. Upon confirming that Count de Suberra was already aboard the British frigate *Lively*, Beresford sought to prevent further escalation.

69. Henrique Teixeira de Sampaio (1774-1833), 1st Baron de Sampaio, 1st Count da Póvoa, A prominent merchant, wealthy capitalist, and Portuguese politician who exerted significant influence as the principal creditor of the State.

In a subsequent ministerial meeting attended by Beresford, Palmela, and British envoy Sir Edward Thornton, the debate over the King's potential embarkation resurfaced. Thornton advocated for the King to take refuge on a British warship, while Beresford remained firmly opposed. He argued that the populace and military remained loyal to the King and that Dom Miguel's reckless actions had alienated public support. Abandoning the capital, Beresford contended would be perceived as a betrayal of a loyal nation and could embolden those seeking to undermine royal authority. Furthermore, he warned that if the King fled, his ability to command troops and communicate with the people would be severely compromised, potentially leaving the Infante unopposed.

Beresford proposed that instead of embarking, the King should relocate to Alfeite, a secure royal estate across the harbour from Lisbon, where naval support could be positioned to prevent military interference. If necessary, the King could still embark from there, but this option would maintain his authority without the stigma of foreign protection. Eventually, Thornton and Palmela conceded that a trial of authority should first be attempted by implementing the already-signed decree and issuing orders to Dom Miguel.

That evening, the foreign ministers monopolised the King's attention, delaying ministerial discussions until late at night. Frustrated by these inefficiencies, Beresford and his colleagues resolved to cease attending nightly meetings unless explicitly summoned or in the case of an urgent development. They also pressured the King to establish a fixed time for governmental meetings, leading João VI to agree to convene at 11 a.m. the next day, with the formal issuance of orders to Dom Miguel set to follow.

Beresford left the meeting reassured that his recommended course of action would finally be executed. His persistent opposition to the King's embarkation and his insistence on testing Dom Miguel's obedience first through royal decrees underscored his strategic vision for maintaining stability. His influence remained crucial in countering foreign diplomatic pressure and advocating for a resolution that upheld the King's dignity and national sovereignty.

On 7 May, Beresford arrived at Bemposta Palace as scheduled for a crucial ministerial meeting. Desembargador Leite was already with King João VI, handling his routine dispatches, while Count de Póvoa arrived shortly after. However, the absence of the Marquess of Palmela caused increasing concern, as he had played a central role in previous discussions. Beresford initially expressed frustration at Palmela's apparent negligence, but when Sir Edward Thornton arrived, he informed Beresford that Palmela was unwell. Doubtful of the severity of Palmela's illness, given his presence at the prior night's discussions, Beresford insisted that, at the very least, Palmela should have informed his colleagues to prevent unnecessary delays.

When Beresford met the King, João VI confirmed receiving a letter from Palmela explaining his absence due to illness. The King acknowledged that he had been unwell but had continued his duties regardless. Nonetheless, the King used Palmela's absence to justify postponing significant discussions until the following day. Beresford objected to this delay, warning that deferring decisions could jeopardise the monarchy's stability. However, the King remained steadfast, arguing that Palmela's presence was necessary before proceeding.

Attempting to salvage the meeting, Beresford pushed the King to at least issue the long-delayed orders to Infante Dom Miguel. Once again, Dom João VI postponed the dispatch until the evening. Beresford further urged the King to order the return of the officers Dom Miguel had sent to Peniche, fearing that further delay would make their retrieval more difficult. However, Desembargador Leite countered that it would be prudent to wait and observe the effects of the orders to Dom Miguel before recalling the prisoners. This argument aligned with the King's inclination for inaction, and Beresford's proposal was ultimately overruled.

After the meeting, Beresford remained troubled by Palmela's absence. Expecting that his illness was minor, he decided to visit Palmela's residence but discovered from his own and Palmela's servants that Palmela had not been home since the previous night. Beresford suspected he was staying with his sister, Countess D'Alva, in a location closer to the palace and safer, given the security risks at night. As he prepared to verify this, the King passed by his house en route to Belém. Given João VI's request that Beresford remain available for any urgent matters, he deferred his plan to check on Palmela and stayed near the palace.

On 8 May, Beresford uncovered a significant political development when he attempted to visit the Marquess of Palmela at the residence of the Countess D'Alva. Upon learning that Palmela had not spent the night there, Beresford became suspicious and inquired further, only to discover that Palmela had embarked on *Windsor Castle* the previous day. This revelation deeply unsettled him, mainly as no prior indication of such a plan existed.

Proceeding to Bemposta Palace, Beresford confronted King João VI, who confirmed that he had been aware of Palmela's departure and that Sir Edward Thornton had informed him the previous day. The King attempted to placate Beresford, insisting that Palmela had been his supporter. However, Beresford saw the situation differently, feeling deceived and betrayed, particularly by Palmela, whom he accused of abandoning his colleagues.

Beresford noted a marked change in the King's demeanour – from previous melancholy to a newfound cheerfulness – which led him to suspect that João VI had resolved to embark. He deduced that the diplomatic corps had successfully persuaded the King to leave Portugal, fostering his fears and convincing him of imminent danger. When he inquired whether the long-awaited orders to Infante Dom Miguel had been sent or if

the imprisoned officers sent to Peniche were to be recalled, the King responded that neither had been done. Frustrated, Beresford formally requested permission to retire, declaring that he would not return unless specifically summoned. The King, in good humour, agreed, saying he would send for him.

Returning home, Beresford reflected on the role of Sir Edward Thornton, whom he now believed had actively participated in misleading him regarding Palmela's absence and the King's intentions. Concerned for his safety, he took precautions to secure his papers and informed his family of his expectations, anticipating potential arrest or reprisal from the King's circle. He clarified that his concern was not with the Infante himself but with those surrounding him, whom Beresford considered his direct enemies.

Later that day, Beresford observed telltale signs of the King's impending embarkation. At around four o'clock, he saw the longboats of the *Windsor Castle* heading towards Belém. Reports circulated in the city that the King would embark at four o'clock, with the Infante allegedly watching from the Chagas church. By early evening, Beresford saw the King's carriage pass by towards Belém. When the carriages returned in darkness without lights – contrary to custom – Beresford concluded that João VI had indeed embarked.

On 9 May, Viscount William Carr Beresford learned that King João VI had not embarked as expected the previous night but returned to Bemposta Palace. This marked the first time since 30 April that Beresford had not visited the palace. While on his way to the English church, he encountered the King en route to Belém and saluted him, receiving a gracious response. Later, upon leaving the church, Beresford was informed by Baron de Beduído⁽⁷⁰⁾, one of the Infante's aides-de-camp, that the King had now boarded *Windsor Castle*.

Shortly after returning home, Beresford witnessed Dom Miguel galloping towards Belém, passing through key military quarters. Recognising the potential consequences of the King's embarkation, Beresford anticipated an immediate response from the Infante. While awaiting developments, he received an urgent summons from the King, brought by a lieutenant from *Windsor Castle*. En route to the ship, Beresford observed Dom Miguel steering a smaller boat in the same direction. Following protocol, he ensured his boat did not overtake the Infante's vessel. Upon arrival on board, the King received Beresford warmly and found the Marquess of Palmela already present.

Dom Miguel was simultaneously ordered to join his father. Although he had embarked voluntarily, his compliance with the King's summons reinforced Beresford's belief in the Infante's genuine respect for his father. When the Infante entered the King's presence, João VI confronted him with anger, stating that he had not spoken openly on shore due to safety concerns but now, feeling secure on board, would express his true thoughts. In response to the King's suggestion that abdication was his only alternative, Dom Miguel

70. 2nd Baron de Beduído. João Maria de Figueiredo de Lacerda Castelo-Branco (1796-1858).

passionately declared that had his father abdicated, he would have thrown himself into the sea. The Marquess of Palmela viewed this statement as a clear sign of Dom Miguel's sincerity and insisted that it should be publicised.

After the Infante withdrew, Beresford learned it had already been decided before his arrival to transfer Dom Miguel to the British frigate *Lively*. Initially considering this a matter of convenience, Beresford later raised concerns that separating the royal family could create the perception that the Infante was a prisoner. He advised that the King intended to remain on board for only a short period, so the Infante should not be separated. Palmela accepted this reasoning and proposed it to the King, who reluctantly agreed but insisted that the Infante should not remain on the same ship. Beresford was subsequently tasked with arranging temporary accommodations for Dom Miguel in a different deck of *Windsor Castle*.

During these discussions, the issue of the Count de Suberra arose. Since he was already aboard the *Lively*, the French ambassador, Monsieur de Neuville, was asked to accommodate him on a French vessel. De Neuville refused, instead delivering a vehement defence of Suberra's political legitimacy. Beresford openly challenged de Neuville for the first time, rejecting his claims that Suberra was popular or respected in Portugal. The Marquess of Palmela intervened to end the argument, prompting an outraged de Neuville to storm out.

Later that evening, Palmela and Beresford remained with the King to discuss governance. Reports surfaced of growing unrest among the troops, fuelled by rumours that both the King and Infante were prisoners aboard English ships. A regiment influenced by Paiva Raposo, a key instigator of Dom Miguel's actions, showed signs of insubordination. João VI announced his intention to form a new ministry amid this instability. Palmela supported this move, adding that Beresford should immediately take office. The King concurred, but Palmela suggested delaying the public declaration for a few days, a proposal Beresford agreed with, believing it would appear more deliberate and less reactionary.

Beresford noted the inconsistency in Palmela's stance, recalling that earlier in May, Palmela had actively lobbied for his appointment to the War Ministry. This discrepancy raised doubts about Palmela's true intentions. That night, Beresford went ashore to sleep while Palmela remained aboard with Suberra and de Neuville, engaging in further political discussions.

On 10 May, Beresford attended a series of meetings on board *Windsor Castle* with King João VI and the Marquess of Palmela to discuss public affairs. Initially, Beresford observed a change in Palmela's conduct, noting a lack of open communication and collaboration. The decrees concerning Infante Dom Miguel, drafted the previous day and amended by Beresford, were ultimately published without his corrections, raising further concerns about his influence being sidelined.

Throughout the day, Beresford noted extensive interactions between Palmela, the French ambassador Monsieur de Neuville, and the Count de Suberra. The latter appeared to have resumed his role as a minister despite assurances to the contrary. Palmela justified Suberra's temporary presence in government as a mere formality, stating that he would not sign any documents and that his presence was only to maintain appearances. However, Beresford found this explanation unsatisfactory and remained wary of the political manoeuvring.

As the day progressed, it became evident to Beresford that stronger measures were being considered regarding Infante Dom Miguel, culminating in a decision to send him into exile. Beresford was neither consulted on this decision nor adequately informed about the reports from military authorities or the orders being issued onshore. This exclusion from key discussions deepened his dissatisfaction with how events unfolded.

Beresford left the ship in the evening feeling increasingly alienated from Palmela and distrustful of Suberra and Neuville's growing influence. Reflecting on the developments, he resolved to formally request permission from the King to withdraw from his appointed position, believing that his role had been undermined and that his ability to contribute effectively to Portugal's governance was now compromised.

On 11 May, Viscount William Carr Beresford fully confirmed his concerns regarding the political manoeuvres around King João VI. Reflecting on the previous day's events, he recognised a growing coalition against him, particularly involving the French ambassador, Monsieur de Neuville, and the Count de Suberra, with whom the Marquess of Palmela was increasingly aligned. Still, Beresford sought an intermediary to submit his wish to withdraw from his position, choosing Sir Edward Thornton, the British minister, for this purpose. However, he was met with unexpected hostility upon meeting Thornton on the *Windsor Castle*. Thornton abruptly refused any involvement, starkly contrasting his previous eagerness to influence Portuguese affairs.

Beresford then went directly to the King, informing him of his suspicions of an organised effort to exclude him from government. He reminded João VI of de Neuville's prior declaration that he would leave Portugal if Beresford were appointed minister or retained army command. While acknowledging the absurdity of such a threat, Beresford insisted he did not wish to be an obstacle to the King's preferred course of action. He reiterated that his recent actions had been solely in service of the monarchy during a crisis. Now that stability had seemingly been restored, he formally requested permission to retire. The King, visibly surprised, responded emotionally, dismissing Beresford's request and playfully reprimanding him for his supposed foolishness. Beresford, however, maintained that he would observe further developments but feared that his withdrawal would remain inevitable.

Later that day, Beresford confronted Palmela regarding his concerns, particularly about the evident resurgence of Count de Suberra's influence. Palmela dismissed these worries, explaining that the decree dismissing the existing ministry would be issued imminently – though Beresford noted that this action had been delayed repeatedly. Towards the evening, further confirmation of Suberra's growing authority emerged when Duarte Gorjão, a known royalist, received a direct order from the Count to leave the royal presence. This act, seemingly driven by personal revenge, reinforced Beresford's conviction that Suberra was once again dictating policy.

When Beresford reported this development to Palmela, the latter reacted indifferently, arguing that Gorjão's writings had caused trouble. Beresford countered that the pamphlet was firmly royalist and criticised Suberra, not the King. He warned that suppressing public criticism of ministers was both politically unwise and morally indefensible, stating that he could not serve in a government that operated under such constraints. The conversation ended inconclusively, but Beresford resolved that his association with Palmela and the administration had ended.

Additionally, Palmela informed Beresford that the King had decided to send Infante Dom Miguel into exile. Paris had been chosen over England due to legal restrictions in Britain. Beresford strongly objected to Paris as a destination, arguing that its political and moral environment was unsuitable for an impressionable young Prince. Instead, he recommended that Dom Miguel spend time in the smaller German courts, where he could receive a structured education before potentially moving to Vienna. However, Beresford suspected the decision had already been finalised in consultation with Neuville, who was eager to remove Dom Miguel from Portugal. Sir Edward Thornton also appeared to support this outcome, suggesting that British diplomacy had aligned with French interests in this matter.

By the end of the day, Beresford's sense of isolation was complete. His exclusion from key decisions, the resurgence of his political opponents, and his realisation that foreign influences had significantly shaped the outcome of events led him to accept that his withdrawal from government was inevitable. His proposals, grounded in pragmatism and national interest, were ignored in favour of expedient diplomatic arrangements. Thus, 11 May marked the final stage of Beresford's disengagement from Portuguese affairs, as he saw the government moving in a direction he could neither support nor influence.

On 13 May 1824, King João VI celebrated his birthday aboard *Windsor Castle*, having resolved not to return to shore until Infante Dom Miguel had left the port. The decision to send Dom Miguel into exile had already been finalised by the King and his advisers, with initial discussions suggesting he be transported on the British frigate *Lively*. This arrangement, which the British minister sought as an honour, was ultimately rejected by the Infante, who insisted on travelling aboard a Portuguese vessel. As a result, the Portuguese frigate *Perola* was selected, with Captain Vasconcellos assuming command.

However, while Vasconcellos guaranteed the loyalty of his officers, he could not make the same assurances for the crew, given the presence of the Infante.

To ensure Dom Miguel's departure proceeded without interference, *Lively* and a recently arrived French brig of war were assigned to accompany *Perola*. The King also ordered British naval boats to patrol the waters around *Perola* throughout the night, preventing unauthorised communication. Having personally transferred Dom Miguel from *Windsor Castle* to *Perola*, Captain Dashwood was entrusted with overseeing this operation at the King's request. His Majesty, expressing concern about the possibility of dissent among the crew, asked Dashwood whether he would personally supervise the watch, to which he readily agreed.

With the frigates departing that morning, including the escorting French corvette, the King's birthday celebrations proceeded aboard *Windsor Castle*. The occasion was marked with a grand ceremony and an exceptional number of attendees, making it one of the most highly attended royal birthdays. After paying his respects to the King, Beresford withdrew from the gathering.

On 14 May, it was widely expected that King João VI would finally disembark. Viscount William Carr Beresford, as was customary, boarded *Windsor Castle* and was warmly received by the King. After discussing various minor matters, Beresford realised that the King would not formally return to shore and, therefore, withdrew to his residence. Later that evening, the King did disembark, receiving an overwhelmingly enthusiastic reception from the people. At the same time, his palace was crowded with nobility, gentry, and military officers eager to pay their respects.

During his time on board, Beresford had a notable conversation with Sir Edward Thornton, to whom he expressed relief at having distanced himself from political affairs, particularly citing the Marquess of Palmela's betrayal. Thornton, however, responded sharply, asserting that Palmela had not betrayed Beresford but rather that Beresford had undermined himself by failing to seize control of events. Offended by this unsolicited rebuke, Beresford terminated the conversation and resolved to cut ties with Thornton entirely. Later that day, the publication of a list of awards to the diplomatic corps deepened Beresford's disillusionment.

With the King's return to shore and the exile of Infante Dom Miguel, Beresford recognised that the immediate political crisis initiated on 30 April had effectively concluded. However, he remained deeply sceptical about the long-term consequences of these events. In closing his account of the political turmoil, he underscored that he had aimed to document only those events directly linked to his own knowledge, advice, or involvement, avoiding, as much as possible, subjective reasoning or conjecture. Nonetheless, he signalled his intention to provide a final analysis of the events and their implications.

Viscount William Carr Beresford's role during the Abrilada coup of 1824 was characterised by his unwavering advocacy for decisive governance and the reinforcement of royal authority. His frustrations with delays and external interference highlighted his belief in prompt action, yet the King's hesitancy often undermined his strategic efforts to stabilise the monarchy. His opposition to foreign influence, scepticism towards key political figures, and insistence on maintaining national legitimacy ultimately positioned him as a crucial but increasingly isolated figure in Portugal's turbulent political landscape.

The Auto de Devassa (inquiry)

Another fundamental document for understanding the reality of the *Abrilada* is the *Auto de Devassa* (inquiry), which is described and, to a large extent, transcribed in the book by General Maximiano Mozinho (1828). The collected testimonies recount the events, corroborating the information reported by Beresford to a considerable extent. A "Plan of the Revolution" is included.

Extraordinarily, on 5 May, the Marquess of Palmela sent the King a letter outlining the so-called "Plan of the Revolution", signed by Manoel Teixeira do Amaral.⁽⁷¹⁾ This plan, consisting of just a few paragraphs, contained the following opening text: "*The advanced age of His Majesty, and his lack of energy to govern, necessitates the appointment of a Regency composed of Her Majesty the Queen and the Infante, and that His Majesty be deposed and imprisoned in the Convent of Mafra, until his supporters are annihilated.*"⁽⁷²⁾ The letter and plan were sent on 19 May by Palmela to João Carvalho Martins da Silva Ferrão, Corregedor of Criminal Affairs of the Court, who was in charge of the "*Inquiry into the events that took place on 30 April last*".⁽⁷³⁾ The author of the letter, Manoel Teixeira do Amaral, was never found, and the clerk of the proceedings declared that the handwriting of the Letter and the Plan were forged.⁽⁷⁴⁾ Interestingly, all witnesses who referred to the Plan of the Revolution during the inquiry signed their statements with a cross, as they were illiterate. When hearing them a second time during the proceedings was necessary, they could never be found.⁽⁷⁵⁾ Definitely the Plan of the Revolution is a forged document.

The coup inquiry led to the imprisonment, exile, or banishment of all those who surrounded Dom Miguel during the events, as well as those deemed troublesome or victims of the animosities of Count of Suberra or Palmela, who resumed positions as prime minister and foreign minister after the coup. Army officers who had close associations with Beresford and participated with him in the Peninsular War were subjected to imprisonment or exile, with or without formal charges, merely for having

71. Mozinho, *Processo do Tenente-general Manuel de Brito Mozinho*, 162.

72. Mozinho, *Processo do Tenente-general Manuel de Brito Mozinho*, 162.

73. Mozinho, *Processo do Tenente-general Manuel de Brito Mozinho*, 16.

74. Mozinho, *Processo do Tenente-general Manuel de Brito Mozinho*, 163.

75. Mozinho, *Processo do Tenente-general Manuel de Brito Mozinho*, 13.

served under the command of Dom Miguel. This created a great disparity in treatment, but Subserra utilised the opportunity to purge the Army's senior ranks, installing his supporters and removing all those who might oppose him. For instance, Lieutenant Generals Manoel de Brito Mozinho and the Viscount of Jeromenha, who had respectively served as Adjutant General of the Army from 1808 to 1820 and Military Secretary to the Commander of the Army, suffered Subserra's resentment. The former was imprisoned for fourteen months in the Castelo of São Jorge, eventually dying from illness due to the unsanitary conditions of his incarceration,⁽⁷⁶⁾ while the latter was exiled to Silves, along with his family. Despite attempts made with the King, Beresford could not defend his friends, writing to Wellington: *"It is the first instance even in Portugal where accused people have been forbid to defend themselves till after the punishment was inflicted."*⁽⁷⁷⁾

Also, one of Dom Miguel's major civilian supporters, the judge and historian José Acúrsio das Neves, was imprisoned. He was detained in the Limoeiro prison on 10 May and spent three months incarcerated without formal charges or accusations. After being released, he lived in seclusion in his house in Lisbon for two years without any income from his public employment.⁽⁷⁸⁾

After these harsh punishments, the Marshal wrote to Wellington about the situation in Lisbon: *"He [Jeromenha] is unlikely to have acted against the King, and no crime has been proved against him. His banishment is the revenge of the Condessa de Subserra. Palmela and Subserra are behind these acts. It is impossible that any reasonable and moderate man can but foresee the great likelihood of confusion and strife; not only liberty of writing, but of speech, is entirely prohibited, and people dare scarcely confide in their nearest relations."*⁽⁷⁹⁾ Adding: *"Jerumenha's wife and seven children have also been banished, on suspicion of something they are not to know."*⁽⁸⁰⁾

Conclusion

Dom Miguel never really imprisoned his father, neither declared him an idiot nor declared his mother's regency, as some authors have written⁽⁸¹⁾. On all occasions, Dom

76. Mozinho, *Processo do Tenente-general Manuel de Brito Mozinho*, 4.

77. Wellington Papers (WP), University of Southampton, Special Collections, "Letter from Lord Beresford to Arthur Wellesley, first Duke of Wellington, on the banishment of Jerumenha and his family and the political state of Portugal", 26 June 1824, MS61/WP1/794/16.

78. José Inácio Cardoso, *Notícias Biographicas do Desembargador José Accursio das Neves por J.I.C.*, (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1849), 6.

79. Wellington Papers (WP), University of Southampton, Special Collections, "Letter from Lord Beresford to Arthur Wellesley, First Duke of Wellington, Blaming Thornton for His Exclusion from the Command of the Army, Reporting on the State of Portugal, the Loyalty of the Army to the Infante, and the Banishment of the Visconde de Jerumenha", 19 June 1824, MS61/WP1/794/14.

80. WP, "Letter from Lord Beresford to Arthur Wellesley, First Duke of Wellington, Blaming Thornton for His Exclusion from the Command of the Army".

81. José de Arriaga, *História da Revolução de Setembro*, Vol. 1, (Lisboa: Tip. da Companhia Nacional Editora, 18_), 5.

Miguel demonstrated reverence and obedience towards his father; however, the King failed to issue him decisive orders.

On *Windsor Castle* itself, Dom Miguel, in a letter addressed to his father on 12 May, acknowledges his error and apologises: “*Fearful that my presence now in Portugal might offer some pretext to ill-intentioned individuals for the renewal of disturbances and intrigues, quite contrary to the pure sentiments I have just truthfully expressed*”⁽⁸²⁾ and requests authorisation to travel: “*I beg Your Majesty to grant me permission to travel for some time in Europe*”,⁽⁸³⁾ a request that was granted. He was sent to Paris for his protection, not as an exile, from which city he could not leave without prior authorisation. However, in October 1824, of his own accord and without the authorisation of the King or the Portuguese Government, he left for Vienna, joining an ultra-conservative court where he was well received.⁽⁸⁴⁾

Overall, the Abrilada coup of 1824 in Lisbon had far-reaching political, social, and constitutional consequences for Portugal and its monarchy. The immediate result was Dom Miguel’s removal from Portugal, separated from his radical supporters. His departure marked a significant shift in Portuguese politics, as King João VI sought to consolidate power and suppress opposition, both in the constitutionalist and the radical absolutist fields.

One of the coup’s most significant legal consequences was the revocation of all laws from the constitutional period of 1820-1823. This decision effectively dismantled the constitutional framework established by the Liberal Revolution of 1820, restoring the absolutist rule of King João VI. In addition, the prohibition against masonic clubs was strictly enforced, and they were seen as subversive institutions that had played a crucial role in spreading liberal ideas. The King’s government produced no new constitutional text, reinforcing the monarchy’s autocratic authority.

The suppression of political dissent became a defining feature of the post-Abrilada period. Supporters of Dom Miguel faced imprisonment, departure from Lisbon, or banishment from Lisbon as part of a broader effort to neutralise opposition to the King’s rule. This repression underscored the monarchy’s determination to maintain absolutist governance, however isolating many radical absolutists who supported Dom Miguel.

Another significant political consequence of the coup was an unsuccessful attempt to reverse Brazil’s independence. King João VI, having accepted Brazil’s sovereignty under his son, Dom Pedro I, faced internal resistance from those who sought to reclaim

82. Clemente José Santos, *Documentos para a História das Cortes Geraes da Nação Portuguesa*, vol. 1: 1820–1825, (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1883), 865.

83. Clemente José Santos, *Documentos para a História das Cortes Geraes da Nação Portuguesa*, vol. 1: 1820–1825, (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1883), 865.

84. João Augusto Marques Gomes, *Luctas Caseiras – Portugal de 1834 a 1851*, Vol. 1, (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1894), 492-493.

the former colony. However, government efforts to reintegrate Brazil under Portuguese rule proved futile, cementing Brazil's status as an independent empire.

In the coup's aftermath, King João VI emerged with increased political power. The 1822 Constitution had been already annulled by a decree signed by King John VI on 18 June 1823. Subsequently, on 5 June 1824, all innovations, decrees, and laws enacted by the Cortes were declared "*null and void, as they were devoid of all authority, sovereign power, and legislative legitimacy*".⁽⁸⁵⁾ The King deemed the Cortes to be the product of "*rebellion and the usurpation of My Sovereign Authority*,"⁽⁸⁶⁾ so they were utterly outcasted.

Epilogue

Later, in January 1825, pressed by the foreign powers, he dismissed his key ministers, Subsera and Palmela. However, rather than removing them entirely from political influence, they were appointed ambassadors to Madrid and London, respectively, ensuring their continued diplomatic service while excluding them from domestic governance.

The stability under João VI's rule, however, was short-lived. In 1826, he died under suspicious circumstances, with contemporary accounts suggesting that he may have been poisoned with arsenic. His death triggered a succession crisis that significantly altered Portugal's political trajectory, as his oldest son, Dom Pedro, was Emperor of Brazil, and Dom Miguel, next in line of succession, was in Vienna.

Following the King's demise, a regency was established under Princess Isabel Maria. Meanwhile, Dom Pedro I of Brazil sought to resolve Portugal's constitutional dilemma by granting the Constitutional Charter of 1826-1828. This document sought to balance liberal and absolutist interests, establishing a constitutional monarchy. Shortly after issuing the charter, Dom Pedro abdicated the Portuguese throne in favour of his young daughter, Queen Maria II, who was only seven years old. Maria was to marry her uncle, Dom Miguel, with the latter serving as regent until the Queen reached the age of majority.

Political instability persisted as Dom Miguel returned to Portugal in 1828, ostensibly as regent for his niece. However, he was soon declared absolute King, ruling from 1828 to 1834. His assumption of power ignited violence and terror in Portugal, which resulted in a civil war (1832-1834) between absolutists and liberals. The conflict ultimately ended with the latter's victory, leading to the deposition and exile of Dom Miguel and the restoration of Queen Maria II as the legitimate monarch, with a prevalence of the Charter of 1826 over the Constitutional text of 1822.

85. Clemente José Santos, *Documentos para a História das Cortes Geraes da Nação Portuguesa*, vol. 1: 1820-1825, (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1883), 876-877.

86. Clemente José Santos, *Documentos para a História das Cortes Geraes da Nação Portuguesa*, vol. 1: 1820-1825, (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1883), 876-877.

Thus, the Abrilada coup of 1824 had profound and lasting consequences. It occurred in a turbulent decade of political conflict, constitutional experimentation, and civil war that ultimately shaped the future of the Portuguese monarchy. The coup and its suppression influenced immediate political outcomes and set the stage for future conflicts, including the Liberal Wars.

This study highlights the intricate interplay of domestic and international factors in shaping Portugal's political trajectory during the early 19th century.

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