

STORM OVER SAGRES;
OR,
HOW A BOOK REVIEW CAUSED A DUKE TO LOSE HIS COOL

Last summer, in the course of a research trip to Portugal, I chanced upon Peter Russell's long-awaited biography of Prince Henry of Portugal [called "the Navigator"] which I immediately purchased. It proved to be a marvelous read,---admirable, I thought, in virtually every respect, and I decided to spread word of its qualities by submitting a review of it to Portugal's principal English language newspaper [the Anglo-Portuguese News; hereafter "APN"].

This the editor, Mr. Nigel Batley, was kind enough to accept and print (APPENDIX I; APN, August 3).¹ Admittedly provocative, my review evidently came to the attention of the Duke of Braganza, claimant, I believe, to the presently vacant (or non-existent?) "throne" of Portugal; and he penned a spirited letter to the editor in response (APPENDIX II; APN, August 17). At the same time that the APN printed his rejoinder, it also included a second review of Russell's book by Malcolm Jack, the author of several things on William Beckford (APPENDIX III; APN, August 17).²

I thought the criticism of my views by the Duke as well as the "alternate" review by Jack merited a response from me, and therefore I sent in a letter [APPENDIX IV; APN, August 24] that the APN printed in the next issue of the paper. Subsequently, another reader, a Senhor Monteiro [or "Leite Monteiro" as he later informed me he prefers to be called³] weighed in with a letter supporting the Duke [APPENDIX V; APN, August 31], as did another reader, a C. Young, soon afterward [APPENDIX VI; APN, September 7].

These documents, I think, basically speak for themselves. Nevertheless, though I had originally thought to let the matter rest with my response of August 24th, I cannot forego the pleasure of making some additional comment, especially since I found myself a bit hampered in responding as fully as I wished in the context of the APN's editorial page.

¹ I also wrote a second review, an expanded variant of this one, at the solicitation of Professor Douglas Wheeler to appear in Portuguese Studies Review (Winter-Spring, 2000-2001).

² Apparently the APN had already requested a review of the book from Jack before receiving mine. However, I was not told of this and consequently when Jack's review appeared along with the Duke's letter a couple of weeks after mine I supposed that the newspaper had solicited the second review to "counterbalance" mine. I only learned of the real situation some time later.

³ Since the Portuguese rule, as I know it, is that people go by their final name, I have to suspect that there is a certain additional social "cachet" to double last names in Portugal (as in England).

I. First, I will offer some additional comments on the Duke's letter.

A) Needless to say, I found his letter highly instructive. It had the merit of setting me straight on many aspects of Portuguese and indeed world history which I had previously, apparently, misunderstood. I had thought that the Portuguese Cortes of the 15th century represented essentially various important interest groups in the kingdom and functioned in an advisory role to the Crown, being consulted on various questions as the Crown deemed necessary, but now I understand that it really represented the "people" [elected by universal suffrage?] and was able to make decisions contrary to the wishes of the king. Parenthetically, I must say that I did notice that the Duke's account of the Cortes and the role it played with regard to the question of ransoming Dom Fernando did not jibe with Russell's, but since the Duke has pointed out Russell's "ignorance" about the matter I can only lament the latter's wasting so much time on research that simply led him to the wrong conclusion.

B) When I gave Saunders' book a favorable review some years ago,⁴ I did not realize that it was part of a "war launched against Portugal a long time ago" so that "through the falsification of history....it [I am uncertain whether the Duke refers to Saunders' book or to the war] could be used as a political weapon." I had thought the book simply an excellent study of Portuguese slavery from 1441-1555, something at the time long overdue.

C) Nor did I realize that Prince Henry's slaving activities needed to be judged in the light of the America's treatment of the Indians, or that because "Turks and Arabs" enslaved Christians in Portugal "for centuries" that this was the reason that the Portuguese undertook to "kidnap" Muslims "to exchange" for them. I won't be so ignorant about these matters in the future.

D) Finally, as for Dom Duarte's⁵ belief that it was wrong for the APN to print my review of a book "insulting to Portugal," it occurred to me that under the Salazar regime, with its prior censorship, it most likely would not have appeared. I presume that this belief of mine is the "political prejudice" that D. Duarte attributes to me. If so, I openly confess my disapproval of the censorship practiced by the Estado Novo, something for which the Duke may still harbor saudades.

In sum, I can only express my gratitude to the Duke: so much for me to learn, and so little time left in which to do so.

II. Next, some additional comments on Jack's review, now that I understand that it was not a "response" to mine.

Although Jack was much more favorably disposed toward Russell's book than was the Duke, still he found various faults with it. First, he objected to Russell's portrayal of Prince Henry as, he claims, a "bigot." The fact is, of course, that Russell, throughout the book, never calls Henry a "bigot," but rather refers to his religious "zealotry"; it is Jack who says that Russell presents Henry as a "bigot." What Jack apparently has yet to learn is that the term "bigot" cannot be properly applied to personages of the 15th century. One can be a bigot only in the context of religious tolerance, or at least that of a society that regards it as the ideal. But since religious "tolerance" was not an operative concept in the 15th century (nor in the 16th for that matter) the term really has no relevance to Prince Henry's mind-set.⁶ Unlike Jack, Russell understands this and therefore he never

⁴ See the Canadian Historical Review (1983) .

⁵ The Duke's given name is Duarte.

⁶ Even as late as 1610 when Duplessis-Mornay argued for tolerance for Huguenots, this was the idea of only a tiny elite with no resonance in

used the word "bigot" in reference to the Prince nor did he ever think to paint him as such. The idea is entirely Jacks,---and entirely inappropriate.

Jack further reveals how ill at ease he is in a 15th century setting when he claims that "...it is naïve of Russell to persist in blaming a late-mediaeval prince for not pursuing an ethical foreign policy" (his odd phrase). He would appear to believe that "ethical" questions about courses of action were not present in the 15th century. If so, he is sadly mistaken.⁷ "Ethical" considerations regarding potential courses of action were considered at numerous junctures by the various Portuguese leaders of the time as Russell's study makes clear; indeed, King Duarte specifically consulted the Papacy about the legitimacy of Henry's campaigns and received back two consulta on the matter (Russell, pp. 161-166, ignored by Jack?). "Ethics" regarding relations with foreign peoples were alive and well at the time. All in all, one must conclude that although Jack may be familiar with the 18th century setting, he appears out of his element in the 15th century and his review shows it.

More amusing is his reference to Henry's "rather vulgar search for wealth," which appears to be the only defect of character that Jack will allow the Prince. He makes it sound as if the latter might run the risk of being blackballed were he to apply for membership in some exclusive men's club in Mayfair. In any case, Jack can relax; despite his "rather vulgar search for wealth," Henry managed to gain admittance to the Order of the Garter---and presumably found that stamp of approval more than sufficient.

III. As for Leite-Monteiro's letter (including the revisions) there is really little to say other than to savor its indignation and note his belief that "garbage" (such as my review?) should not be published lest the APN's respectability be compromised. I, for one, heartily agree with him providing that all Letters to the Editor be included in the category to which he refers.

IV. Finally, the last of the reactions, the letter from C. Young merits, I think, a few concluding remarks. She⁸ begins by telling the editor of the paper that freedom of the press is not the issue, nor should the "bad old days of the Estado Novo" be brought into it. Rather what she and her fellow complainants (the Duke and Leite Monteiro) are objecting to "a bad article, masquerading as a pseudo review." She further objects to the "screaming headlines"⁹ used to introduce my review as well as my "[request] for African leaders to return their Prince Henry decorations" which, for her, is to "[take] this affliction too far."¹⁰ As a corrective she encloses another review¹¹ of Russell's book with the

or significance whatsoever for general society. As Lebrun comments, the public at large still regarded religious tolerance as incompatible with the truth: see Jean Carpentier and François Lebrun, dir., Histoire de France (Paris, 1987), p. 192.

⁷ Jack could profit, I think, from reading Frederick H. Russell, The Just War in the Middle Ages (Cambridge; Cambridge U. Press, 1975), passim.

⁸ The use of an initial in place of a first name suggests, perhaps, a woman. I will therefore use "she" in reference to him/her with the proviso that the person might well be a man.

⁹ "New biography final nail in coffin of Prince Henry's mythical reputation."

¹⁰ Mr. Batley, the editor, appended a note to her letter pointing out that "There were no requests [i.e., in my review] for African leaders to return their...decorations."

comment that "Sumption understands a golden rule of reading history...don't judge by your society's rules but by the subject's own culture, ethics, and times." Further she asks, "Can you imagine if we demanded that all Socratic or Platonic societies change their names on account of Socrates and Plato having had their food cooked by slaves?" And, "Should the Sir in Sir Francis Drake be removed because he engaged in the odd bit of piracy?" "Or...closer to us than poor old Prince Henry, should we demand to have...Jefferson's name removed...because he kept slaves?"

While I can quite understand Ms. Young's discomfort¹² at having Prince Henry's warts put under the microscope, what she apparently failed to understand (being, I suspect, unfamiliar with Henrician historiography) was that the principal thrust of my review was to situate Russell's book in the context of the long tradition of Portuguese historiography about Henry in which many if not most of his negatives have been soft-pedaled, down-played, or silenced. On the other hand the Sumption review in the Spectator (August 5, 2000) of which she approves is not much more than an anodyne summary of the book's contents with little if any effort to put it into any historiographical context. Indeed, upon reading it after returning to the States, I have to wonder whether the author has any specialized knowledge of Portuguese history or historiography at all. He has written a couple of books on the Hundred Years' War, but nothing to my knowledge specifically on Portugal. Thus his review is, in my opinion, simply different from mine. Whether it is "better" or not, I will have to leave to others to judge.

Well, that is about it. What this small exchange illustrates, I think, is the degree to which Prince Henry and his image still agitate the Portuguese psyche. After having served for centuries as one of the nation's cultural heroes, and during much of the last century elevated to quasi-divine status by the Salazar regime, any perceived "depedestalization" of him is bound to upset traditionalists. For some, like the Duke, he symbolizes the African Empire that collapsed with the revolution of 1974 and for which saudades apparently are still felt. For others, less wed to the Estado Novo, he is nonetheless a culture hero immune from present-day judgments who should only be seen in the supposedly more flattering light of his own time.

But how representative are these viewpoints? As far as I know, there has never been any in-depth survey of how O Infante de Sagres is perceived by the Portuguese people in general. To date, his image and reputation have been almost entirely created and manipulated by a small elite of historians and intellectuals, many of whom served as propagandists for the Estado Novo¹³. The minor storm raised by my review, however,

¹¹ Jonathan Sumption, "Gold was the lure," The Spectator (5 August, 2000), pp.35-36. I was unable at the time to secure a copy of the review, but later in the USA I had an opportunity to take a look at it. It is a perfectly adequate review with which no sensible reader of the book could quarrel, except possibly for odd statement that Henry brought back from Africa "slaves and *other exotica* [italics mine]." There is also an obvious misprint in the review in which 1450 has been turned into 1350. A better review, although it still fails to put Russell's book into adequate historiographical context, is that of J. M. Roberts, "No passage to India," Times Literary Supplement (July 14, 2000); he pronounces it possibly "...the finest work of history to be published this year..." a judgment that will, I suspect, infuriate some of my Portuguese critics.

¹² She admits to romanticising "what you grew up with and is distant," something she has "suffered from...during my 26 years away from Portugal."

¹³ Significantly enough the last biography of him by a Portuguese with any pretensions to completeness is that of Vitorino Nemésio (written in

would suggest that a broad-based inquiry might well yield rich insights into many aspects of the contemporary Portuguese mentality; and especially the degree to which it has, or has not, come to terms with the profound changes that have taken place in the nation's life since 1975 and their implications with regard to how Portuguese view their past.

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1960 and reprinted several times since) which Russell does not even bother to list in his bibliography. The only recent biographies are those by a French historian, Michel Vergé-Franceschi (1994) and the one by Russell under discussion (2000). A study of the image of Prince Henry from the 15th century to the present would also be highly welcome. To be done, preferably, by a specialist in the intellectual history of modern Portugal (1500-2000).

APPENDIX I.

Prince Henry of Portugal [1394-1460], dubbed "the Navigator" by his first modern biographer, J. E. Wappaus in 1842, has long been regarded as one of the makers of the modern world. He is pictured as a chaste and visionary figure whose admirable curiosity and proselytizing zeal led him to undertake the first extra-European explorations that finally led the West (and its arms) to the far corners of the world. The reality, however, was quite different as well as darker and more complex, as Sir Peter Russell shows in this new and marvelously detailed biography, the work of over 40 years of research and reflection, Prince Henry 'the Navigator'; A Life (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

Russell, a retired professor of Oxford University, has, I suspect, long been viewed with a wary eye by much of the Portuguese historical establishment, uncertain exactly on whose side he is.

These misgivings probably originated in a lecture he gave in London in 1960 on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Prince Henry's death, in which he mentioned slaves in the same lecture as the Prince. Afterward the organizers of the event attempted to buy up all copies of his lecture to prevent this bit of heresy from reaching the public eye.

Things might have been expected to improve after the fall in 1974 of Portugal's fascist regime for which Prince Henry was The national icon, but the publication in 1982 by one of Russell's students of the first detailed study of slavery in metropolitan Portugal (A. C. de C. M. Saunders, A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedmen in Portugal, 1441-1555) cannot have helped.

Saunders' book took 11 years to be turned into Portuguese in spite of the fact that books that are welcome in Portugal usually receive far more timely translations.

Given all this, Russell's biography, like the thesis of his pupil, is not likely to find a Portuguese translator any time soon. For if, as Russell once wrote, his long-term aim has been to describe the rise and fall of this "cultural hero," his new biography represents, not merely the decline and fall, but the final nail in the coffin of Prince Henry's mythical reputation. Russell properly takes things in chronological order, exposing Henry's numerous warts as they appeared: a gung-ho crusader against Islam at the time of Portugal's conquest of Ceuta (1415); but a strategic bungler later during a failed attempt to conquer Tangier (1437).

Thereafter, the cynical betrayer of his younger brother, Fernando, whom Henry let languish in a North African prison for the rest of his life rather than fulfill the terms of the peace treaty he had negotiated and signed. Subsequently, a rapacious slave trader, whose series of raids on the populations of the Mauritanian coast he presented as admirable endeavors to lead Africans to Christianity.

This latter prompted Russell to one of his more delicious comments: "...in Henryspeak conversion and enslavement were interchangeable terms." (p. 84)

Henry was also a past-master at self-promotion whose singleness of purpose and unscrupulous methods might make even the Kennedys sit up and take notice. He personally supervised the laudatory accounts of his doings written during his lifetime and

spread word of his "virtues" abroad by suborning members of the Papal Curia, as well as bribing famous humanists such as Poggio Bracciolini to sing his praises.

All this "worked" in the 15th and 16th centuries and again in the 19th and the 20th, when his iconographic status as the greatest Portuguese of them all, the figure who started the process of European discovery, carried all before it.

The climax of adulation and flattery came with the bombastic Congress of the Discoveries held under Salazar's approving eyes in Lisbon in 1960, when Henry was elevated in speeches and discourses to a quasi-godlike status.

There have always been some dissenters, of course, including some objective Portuguese historians, but by and large Henry's iconic image as admirable pioneer has remained largely intact. Even as recently as 1994, on the occasion of the 600th anniversary of his birth, most of the articles appearing in Portugal treated him with traditional deference and a very obvious disinclination to discuss any of his shortcomings.

None of this will be possible now after Russell's book, which should put paid to Henry's legendary reputation. Indeed, in the light of this biography, it might be well to terminate the "Institute" established in his name and discontinue conferring the "Grã Cruz da Ordem do Infante Dom Henrique", Portugal's highest decoration, on naïve and/or uninformed recipients including, ironically enough, at least one African Head of State.¹⁴

Portugal's rich history contains numerous admirable figures such as Camões, Pessoa, and Egas Moniz, among others. These, I suggest, would make far better iconic figures for any future honors and decorations to be bestowed by the State than Prince Henry, the father-creator of the Afro-Atlantic slave trade.

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¹⁴ [added on January 22, 2001] I make this statement from memory. When in Portugal in the summer of 2000 I sent an e-mail message to the Office of the President asking where and/or how I might secure a list of all the recipients of the decoration, but received no reply. Later, back in the United States, I wrote two letters to the Cultural Section of the Portuguese Embassy in Washington making the same inquiry. The second letter received, after a month or so, a response suggesting that I contact the Office of Portuguese Communities in Portugal. I therefore wrote to that address which in turn referred me to the Ministério de Negócios Estrangeiros. My next letter to the Ministério produced a response referring me to the Chancellor of the Honorific Orders within the Office of the President, thus taking me back to the point at which I had started months before. But I never received a reply to the letter that I sent to the Grand Chancellor asking the same question: might I have a list of the names of the recipients of the decoration? I must therefore assume that either no record of the recipients exists or else, if it does, that the Order does not want the names released, at least not to me. Odd indeed. I also have seen on the Internet information that another recent recipient was Vartan Gregorian, president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, who was decorated at the Belém Palace by President Jorge Sampaio on November 16th, 1998.

APPENDIX II.

SIR-

Considering the excellent quality of the contents of the APN, I was astonished at the publication of the article of Mr. Harold Johnson (APN, August 3), which shows historic ignorance and political prejudice in what he wrote concerning the Infante D. Henrique.

The satisfaction with which he attacks the person who symbolises the Portuguese Discoveries can be noticed. This is in the tradition of "intellectual Anglo-Saxons" who do not speak in the manner of heirs of those who colonised North America, expelling or exterminating the native population; or the treatment they gave to the aborigines of Australia, not to forget the organised and institutionalised racism that until not too long ago was still practised in India and Africa.

It is enough to visit the American History Museum in Washington to see that the "native Indians" are almost forgotten, just like the Spanish and Mexicans, from whom, almost half the country which is today the United States of America, was stolen...

There, the slaves had no rights whatsoever nor were they legally "human beings." But in Brazil, fraternities (brotherhoods) were organised, and the Caixa Economica, Brazil's second bank, was created to administrate the economies of slaves and their organisations.

Although, as today, the law was never fully upheld, there did exist legislation which guaranteed the slaves the minimum rights which the Church demanded, and the fraternities safeguarded the upholding of these rights.

As for the decision not to surrender a Portuguese city in Morocco in exchange for the liberation of the Infante D. Fernando, "Prince Ferdinand the Martyr", it was a decision made by representatives of the Portuguese people, against the King's will. The Portuguese believed that a city, which cost so many lives to be conquered and defended, should not be turned over.

Regarding the "kidnapping of Muslims": the Turks and Arabs were kidnapping and enslaving Christians in Portugal and the Mediterranean Sea for centuries. Kidnapping Muslims was used to exchange them for Christian slaves.

I am not going to discuss the faults and human qualities of the Infante D. Henrique, Prince Henry The Navigator. Nor was it because of them that he became a symbol, but rather because of the great enterprise which he launched and which guided an entire nation for centuries.

It was necessary to reach the end of the 20th century in order that this political project be destroyed. I believe that the underlying spiritual project will survive and be fruitful once the political tempests, which have martyred peoples, those which the modern imperialist attempted to conquer, have calmed. The case of Timor is an example of this.

Saunders' book (referred to by Harold Johnson in his review) is listed in the war which some countries launched against Portugal a long time ago, so that through the falsification of history it could be used as a political weapon. I believe that Mr. Johnson is not dishonest, but yet another victim of this systematic dis-information.

What seems to me to be wrong is that the APN should give space to a review of a book which is so unjust and insulting to Portugal, as this is.

In the past of all nations, there are grave collective sins for which we should be repentant. Slavery was one of those crimes, as was the expulsion from Portugal of the Jesuits and other religious order who precisely educated and protected the colonised peoples with the competence and dedication which to this day, no government, colonial or independent, has equalled.

The mandatory conversion of the Portuguese of Jewish faith, and the expulsion of those who would not convert, was another crime with grave cultural and moral consequences, just like other acts of intolerance and injustice.

But the discoveries launched by Prince Henry the Navigator were probably the one historical occurrence which most contributed to human progress in permitting the exchange of cultures and the expansion of the teachings of Christ throughout the world.

Today, when the international community condemns certain nations for violating "human rights", in fact, what they condemn still is the disrespect for Christian principles, even if they do not want to admit this...

D. DUARTE DE BRAGANÇA,
Sintra

APPENDIX III.

Peter Russell has, on his own admission, spent more than five decades researching the life and times of Prince Henry - almost as long as the "Navigator" himself actually lived.

From years of such persistent hunting, one would expect intricate, detailed knowledge of the quarry and one gets it here. In an expansive tour of almost 450 pages, Russell shows close knowledge of all the important documentary sources in the various relevant languages - Latin, Portuguese, Castilian, English and French.

He is utterly at home among the contemporary, chronicle sources, such as Zurara, João de Barros and Cadamosto, even though he right warns the reader about their eulogising intentions toward the Prince.

Russell's handling of a vast body of material is impressively relaxed. He present his account in fluent, readable prose-with occasional, possibly deliberate lapses into the colloquial-so that the book is a fine example of mature, textured history, which is a pleasure to read.

Nevertheless...there is an odd conceit at the centre of Russell's enterprise which colours the entire book. It consists of an insistence, certainly as obsessive as the behaviour he ascribes to Henry, that the Prince is something of a fraud; or rather that the picture traditionally handed down of him is, in a vital respect, deeply flawed.

According the Russell, Henry was not the man of science whose detailed pursuit of nautical knowledge let to the foundation of the great Portuguese voyages of discovery, He was not even a navigator-hence the use of inverted commas in the book's title.

Nor may he have been the familiar, stern-face man with the broad-brimmed black hat who is depicted in the Polyptych of S. Vincente [sic] de For a, attributed to Nuno Gonçalves, which hangs in the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga in Lisbon. Finally, there was no school of nautical science at Sagres in the Algarve.

These misconceptions, first perpetrated by the Portuguese, were accepted uncritically by most British imperialist historians since they added to the legend of a heroic figure who was himself half-English and proud of his membership of the Order of the Garter.

By way of contrast, Russell's Henry is a faceless, religious bigot whose inspiration was actually a burning desire to achieve immortality as a Christian Prince. When that was not his motivation, then a rather vulgar search for wealth-in the form of gold but, in due course, slaves- puts him among a cast of nasty, rapacious imperialists who stalked the African scene throughout the centuries.

Russell insist upon this debunking of the Henrican myth even though, on his own account, "quite often one must intuit his motivation and intentions" (page 4) because of lack of direct knowledge of the Prince's personality.

Indeed the only direct evidence of what Henry was like comes from a single, surviving letter written to his father, the King, from Coimbra in 1428 on the occasion of his brother's nuptials which, Russell says, "unexpectedly reveals an amiable character of humorous inclination" (page 12).

The unexpectedness arises, of course, because Russell has already formed a deeply prejudiced view of the Prince's character which cannot accommodate the fact that the letter (usefully produced in an Appendix) shows him to have been a good-natured rather amusing, young fellow!

This view affects the entire reading of those actions - the capture of Ceuta, the debacle at Tangier, the acquisition of the Atlantic islands - Madeira, the Azores, part of the Canaries and Cape Verde - and above all, the exploration of the African coast which took Henry's caravels as far as Sierra Leone and modern Liberia - which form the subject matter of the substantive essays of the book.

Despite his obsessive, Anglo-Saxon fixation with private morality, Russell shows in ample detail what a publicly successful leader Henry was.

The discoveries which he inspired and also funded are considered at great length. We follow the voyages of the frail, but effective, caravels further and further South along the West African coast as they search for that elusive passage which, it was believed, would somehow lead to Prester John's fabled Christian kingdom of Ethiopia.

Mixed with the history is plenty of geography., navigation, technicalities about shipping, encounters with native peoples and the complicated politics of relations with Castile as well as with the Papacy and Henry's arch enemy, the Moors. Never provincial in his choice of navigators, Henry enlists anyone who will further the cause and several of the most important royal servants, like Cadamosto, are Italian.

At the end of all this richness, we would be prepared to forget Russell's niggling about the Prince's "dark" character. But he will not allow us to.

Henry is always portrayed as a tricky[sic], manipulative man. He was vicious enough, according to Russell, to prepare a martyrdom for his young brother, Dom Fernando whom he gave as a hostage to the Moors in return for getting the Portuguese army out of Tangier in one piece.

Of course, Henry had political and economic objectives but it is naïve of Russell to persist in blaming a late-medieval prince for not pursuing an ethical foreign policy.

When Russell began his research, all those years ago, it was courageous to debunk an imperial hero of the Salazar regime. But, in his present book, despite that dated baggage, he finally portrays, on a grand scale, an heroic, Machiavellian prince *avant la lettre!*

MALCOLM JACK

APPENDIX IV.

SIR-

First, I would like to thank those who took the time to comment on my review of Sir Peter Russell's biography of Prince Henry (O Infante Dom Henrique). Such a free and open expression of opinion is, to my mind, a heartening expression of the new atmosphere of discussion and debate in post-1974 Portugal; something that I suspect might not have occurred under the previous regime of the New State.

Now, if I might, I would like to respond more specifically to the two items that were printed in the APN on August 17th.

It was a singular honor to have my review noticed by the Duke of Braganza, and I thank him for his letter. I was distressed, however, to find that he seems to have confused the reviewer with the book reviewed.

If what I had written had been an "article" [as he terms my review] based on my own research, it might well have been called, rightly or wrongly, ignorant. However, since all the information about Prince Henry used in my review came from Sir Peter's biography, I have to suppose that the "historic ignorance and political prejudice" that Dom Duarte ascribes to me and/or my review must more properly be attributed to Peter Russell and/or his book.

Dom Duarte is fully entitled to his opinion in this regard, of course, but I myself would hesitate to call the (until his retirement) King Alfonso XIII Professor of Spanish Studies in Oxford University or his book "ignorant."

For example, in this regard, it might be noted here that Dom Duarte's statement that Fernando's fate was decided "by representatives of the Portuguese people against the King's will" does not agree with Russell's detailed presentation of the situation on pages 188 and 189 of his book.

Whether Russell is politically prejudiced or not is something I am not qualified to determine. His "take" on Prince Henry is debunking for sure; but after so much "bunk" having been written about the man, I think this approach quite justified.

Confusing the book with the book review is not an error made by Malcolm Jack (the distinguished author, I believe, of a couple of books on William Beckford). Indeed, with a few exceptions, I cannot find any vast disagreement between my "take" on Russell's book and that of Mr. Jack.

The exceptions are:

(1) Jack claims that Russell presents Prince Henry as a "bigot." I do not find this to be the case. Rather Russell, in my view, finds in Henry the zeal of a late-medieval crusader carried to an exaggerated and obsessive extreme. In fact he refers specifically to the Prince's "religious zealotry (p.158)," and concludes by saying that "...when all is said and done...[he] belonged wholly to the later Middle Ages." I have never thought zealotry, however obsessive, to be synonymous with bigotry, though Mr. Jack may, of course, disagree.

(2) Elsewhere Mr. Jack speaks of Prince Henry's "rather vulgar search for wealth." If so, then Jack must think most of humanity through the ages "rather vulgar"

since a search for wealth has, I submit, been a widespread human characteristic throughout history. The Prince, as I read the record, was notably greedy but far from unique in his "search for wealth" (indeed his guiding stars were the typical late-medieval duo of honor e proveito) and I would certainly not denounce him on those grounds alone.

(3) Mr. Jack also would appear not to have read the book with the care that might be wished or else not be familiar with the Henrician documentation. He maintains that "the only direct evidence of what Henry was like comes from" the letter that he wrote in 1428 to his father.

But Jack forgets that there is also Henry's parecer written or dictated in 1436 recommending the attack on Tangier. Russell terms it "incoherent and rambling" (p. 156); I have read it and would call it "addle-brained."

(4) Finally, whether or not Russell's overall presentation of Prince Henry is "prejudiced" is something, I think, that only an expert equally familiar with the documentation could decide. Perhaps Mr. Jack has such qualifications; if so, I am not aware of them.

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APPENDIX V.¹⁵

SIR-

I cannot resist writing to you in respect of the publication of the review (APN, August 3) of the book about Prince Henry the Navigator by Mr. Johnson of the University of Virginia (who I believe is American). In my view, he shows ignorance about history.¹⁶

My first impulse was to write to you and protest.¹⁷ However, in the meantime I read in the APN (August 17) a beautifully written letter¹⁸ from HRH Prince Duarte de Bragança. Needless to say, I entirely support his views and his reaction.¹⁹ Moreover, I want to express my disappointment that the APN published Mr. Johnson's review and to register my repugnance.

In this week's issue (APN, August 24) I have now read Mr. Johnson's somewhat pompous letter, reacting to the criticism. It explains a lot about his attitude.²⁰

He implies that the comments on his review are "a heartening demonstration of the new atmosphere of discussion and debate in post-1974 Portugal; something that I suspect might not have occurred under the previous regime of the New State".

He also admits not to be competent enough to²¹ decide if Peter Russell's picture of Prince Henry is prejudiced: "I think that only an expert equally familiar with the documentation could decide."²²

¹⁵ Senhor Leite Monteiro requested that the letter he sent to the APN include certain last minute alterations when I reprint it. I have indicated these in footnotes.

¹⁶ This paragraph was changed to read: "...the review of a certain Mr. Johnson..., who I believe is American and shows a blatant ignorance about past History."

¹⁷ This sentence was changed to "When I read the review, my first, etc...and protest against it. I further thought it would make more sense to show it someone better qualified on such a subject and I decided to refer it to a well-known and very respected Portuguese historian who might have or is about to send you his commentary." {As far as I know, this commentary never appeared in the APN}.

¹⁸ Changed to "...a letter beautifully written from etc.,...."

¹⁹ The words "... and, I think, perfectly demonstrates Mr. Johnson's ignorance" were added after "reaction."

²⁰ This was changed to "...in reaction to the letters published by APN the week before, which explains a lot his attitude."

²¹ After "to" is added "...go deeper in some respects when he condescendingly refutes the qualifications of the author of the letter published in APN, August 17. {This I suspect refers to Jack's review}.

²² Here Leite Monteiro goes on: "After all this, it is not really worthwhile to pay much attention to the whole issue and in fact there is a meaningful English word that beautifully summarises the impression one gets after reading Mr. Johnson' [sic] review and letter : RUBISH! [sic]."

I note what you say (APN, August 17), that "in no way do I act as a censor." I am certainly against censorship but I believe that as the Editor of APN you have a shared responsibility for what is published.

In my opinion, you have the right to refuse publication, as well as the right to edit the material you receive for publication. I believe you would certainly never publish any garbage that people might send to the APN and I am certain you are the first one to be keen to preserve the quality of the paper on which its respectability entirely depends.

I would like to emphasise my repugnance for Mr. Johnson's article.²³

F. P. LEITE MONTEIRO
S. João do Estoril

²³ Senhor Leite Monteiro omitted this final sentence in his revised letter.

APPENDIX VI.

SIR-

You say in your editor's note in answer to F. P. Leite Monteiro's letter (APN, August 31) that you do not want to be too pontifical or solemn about his and D. Duarte's views on the article about Prince Henry (APN, August 3).

I agree, you should not. Neither should you be, let's say, too ingenuous.

You say that you understand and to some extent sympathise with their protests but you don't tell us what it is that you understand, or what move you to be sympathetic. Instead you talk about freedom of the press in ringing tones.

This has nothing to do with freedom of the press or the bad old days of the Estado Novo. Don't bring that into this.

We are, D. Duarte, F. Leite Monteiro and myself, complaining in different ways about a bad article, masquerading as a pseudo review of Sir Peter Russell's, by all accounts, very good book.

I understand that when you are away from your country and culture, you tend to romanticise what you grew up with and is distant, and demonise what is near and foreign. I've suffered from this during my 26 years away from Portugal.

But that article, with its screaming headline of Last nail in the coffin and requests for African leaders to return their Prince Henry decorations, takes this affliction too far.

I regret that you published such an article in your newspaper. I don't regret that you tried to have a review of Sir Peter's book, and I'm enclosing the one published in the Spectator (August 5) by Jonathan Sumption.

It would seem that we were reading about different books. J. Sumption understand a golden rule of reading history - place it in its historical context, meaning don't judge by your society's rules but by the subject's own culture, ethics and times.

Can you imagine if we demanded that all Socratic or Platonic societies change their names on account of Socrates and Plato having had their food cooked by slaves? Should the Sir in Sir Francis Drake be removed because he engaged in the odd bit of piracy? Or, much, much closer to us than poor old Prince Henry, should we demand to have Thomas Jefferson's name removed as a Founder Father because he kept slaves?

Sir, your readers deserve to read a proper review of this book. I'm sure the Spectator would not mind, in the name of the Press's duty to inform well, if your printed their review.

C. YOUNG
Rua do Lago,
Estoril

