

SIDNEY SMITH... THE HEROIC SAILOR

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Brazilian historians have heard of Admiral Sir Sidney Smith principally and, almost exclusively, because of his participation in the journey of the Royal Family of Portugal to Brazil, in 1807-08. During that period he led the squadron that kept station off the coast of Portugal. Subsequent to the arrival of the Royal Family, he became the first commander-in-chief, during two years, of the naval base established in Rio de Janeiro. Whilst in Brazil he became interested in helping D. Carlota Joaquina in her ambition to rule a country of her own — Argentina. Abundant correspondence in the Imperial Museum, from him in French and from her in Spanish, testifies to this ambition.

But this period of a little over two years was, perhaps, the quietest in his agitated life.

A national hero in England whilst still alive, his accomplishments were the theme for many productions in the variety theatres of that time. His name was sung and recited in verse, in numerous pamphlets published in London, and distributed throughout the land.

No other naval commander, with the exception of Nelson killed at the Battle of Trafalgar, received so much glory, so soon.

Yet, whilst the hero Nelson was recognized as such on a scale never before or afterwards seen, the same did not happen to Sidney Smith. Nelson was remembered by a statue on a majestic pedestal in one of London's most important squares. His mortal remains were buried in St. Paul's Cathedral — a rare honour. His funeral procession was led by the six royal dukes and thirty two admirals! As he had no legitimate descendents, the honours and pecuniary rewards went to his brother, William; in addition to

being created an earl, he was given £99,000 to buy a suitable estate and an annual pension of £5,000 in perpetuity. These values today would be £4 million and £200,000, respectively!

England was slow to officially recognize Sidney Smith's triumphs. Other countries — Portugal, the Ottoman Empire, the Kingdom of Two Sicilies and Sweden — recognized his contribution and decorated him. Only in 1838, at the age of 74 and two years before his death, the young Queen Victoria made him Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath — at last he was an English knight! The last few years of his life were spent in Paris, where he died and was buried in a simple grave in the Père Lachaise cemetery.

Why these so evident differences?

We hope that, in describing his life, filled with many victories and a few defeats, and his complex character, we may contribute to answer this enigma.

The little known history of this hero, who so much contributed in the fight against Napoleon and who was closely connected with Brazil during the years 1807-10, began in London, in 1764, where he was born.

His first few years were very complicated. His father, Cornelius Smith, was considered an adventurer and a libertine. He met Sidney's mother, daughter of a rich City merchant, when she was over 30 — well past the age for arranging a husband, especially as life-spans, at that time, were much shorter than today. They eloped and her father, Pinkney Wilson, promptly disinherited her and renounced any contact with her and the three children that she bore.

The intervention of an aunt was needed in order to persuade the grandfather to pay for the education of his grandson. His parents were separated but, even then, Cornelius Smith did not give up writing to his father-in-law to beg for money — many times young Sidney was the bearer of this correspondence, in the hope of obtaining a favourable decision.

His naval career began at the age of thirteen. Today, this method of entering the royal navy appears strange; at that time, however, it was considered the most convenient way.

Every naval captain had the right to 4 servants for each 100 men, crew of the ship he commanded. In order for one to have a clearer idea, the most popular ship of the line, a 74 (gun) had a compliment of 600 men — so 24 servants! In practice the majority of these posts were kept for the captain's friends, who wanted to start off their sons in a naval career.

His first posting was to the *Tortoise*, a 32 gun store ship. Her captain acted as if he was in command of a frigate — on his first day they stopped three ships, firing across their bows. Three months later they left for America, escorting merchant ships.

There Smith was transferred to the *Unicorn* for the return journey. Whilst still off the American coast, he had his first exposure to battle. Whilst sailing in company with the *Experiment*, they sighted the American frigate *Raleigh* and gave chase. *Unicorn*, arriving first, faced the *Raleigh* alone during three hours, until the *Experiment* could reach them. The brig lost thirteen men and many wounded — including Smith whose forehead was opened by a splinter.

Smith's luck was only just beginning — during the journey, with a hard gale blowing, a squall laid the brig on her side. Smith, below in the sail locker, managed to scramble up to the top deck and help jettison the guns to right the ship!

His next transfer to the line-of-battle ship *Sandwich*, in September 1779, was very important — she was the flagship of the Channel squadron, under the command of one of England's most famous admirals, Rodney. In January they captured a convoy of 23 merchant ships together with her escorting Spanish battle ship. A week later, near Cape St. Vincent, in an action that lasted the whole night in a gale, they captured 5 Spanish ships of the line leaving another on fire, which subsequently blew up. The behaviour, during action, of the young Sidney Smith did not go unnoticed.

In September 1780 he successfully passed the examination for lieutenant. He must have lied about his age, as the legal lower age limit was 19; in addition 6 years of service were required. He was 16 and had had but 3 years of service. Now, as an officer, he was on the first rung of the ladder that would lead him to the post of admiral.

Next he participated, near Dominica, in an engagement known as 'All Saints', against 34 French ships of the line. This battle was important as, for the first time, the line attacked at an angle of 90°, instead of parallel lines. Smith's behaviour must again have been noted as he was given the command of the schooner *Fury* and the task of carrying dispatches with the news of the victory.

In February of 1784 he returned to England, now in command of the frigate *Alcmene*, 32 guns and a crew of 300. He was still short of his 20th birthday by 4 months! How would a 19 year old son of ours behave with that kind of responsibility?

A peace treaty had been signed in 1783; with hindsight we know that it would only be temporary. The need for officers was greatly reduced. However, those who so desired could continue with their careers, even though they would be temporarily laid off. They could place themselves at the disposal of the admiralty and, in exchange, receive half-pay. Not surprisingly Sidney Smith, whose heart was in the navy, did so. He thought that this would be a good opportunity to better his knowledge of the French language and try his hand as an amateur spy!

Whilst visiting Normandy he made notes of the coastline and of its defences. He verified that France was proposing to develop the port of Cherbourg as a naval base 'on the scale of Portsmouth' the main English base. He described, in detail, the method being used to construct a breakwater. His observations were sent to the admiralty. His French, that was already fairly good, became excellent.

Extending his activities as an amateur spy, he moved on to Morocco. There, in addition to reporting on the coastline and shipping, he suggested a change in strategy. No squadron based in Gibraltar, he wrote, could control both sides of the entrance to the Mediterranean. A second squadron was needed based, for instance, in Lagos (Portugal). In fact he was right — even today the wind blows alternatively from the East or from the West; and in those days of sailing ships, with a strong wind blowing, they could either not enter or not leave the Mediterranean.

But his overbearing manner, that was to be his 'Achilles Heal', was already beginning to show itself. He wrote to the Admiralty that he, Sidney Smith, with his unrivalled knowledge of Morocco's Atlantic coastline, would be the ideal person to command such a squadron. He did not mention that he was only 23 years old!

Always restless, his next target was Sweden. That country was at war with Russia but, due to winter with its frozen seas, their squadrons were temporarily useless.

I won't describe the battles in which he participated as I would like to concentrate on his character. I would only say that his help, in defeating Russia, earned him — from King Gustavus — a knighthood in the Order of the Sword and, with permission from the British government, he was allowed to use the title 'sir'. His style of acting, described below, reflected his character; it was repeated on numerous occasions throughout his career, with highly negative consequences.

With great difficulty he managed to reach the main naval base of Karlskrona and present himself to the commanding officer, the Duke of Södermanland. Reports indicate that he did not spare praise for himself, when offering his services! King Gustavus then invited 'Colonel Smith', as he became known, to join his forces. But, before accepting, he had to obtain permission from the admiralty. In peace times this permission was usually given for a period of six months, provided the navy in question was not that of a potential enemy. Next, he persuaded the British Minister in Stockholm to appoint him 'King's Messenger' and so set off for London. He imagined that he was the bearer of important documents, but on arrival the authorities virtually ignored him.

After 6 frustrating weeks of unsuccessfully trying to obtain permission and, fearing that the ice would be melting, so that hostilities would soon recommence, he set off to return to Sweden. To the same minister in Stockholm he wrote that he was the bearer of information — only for the ears of the king; which was untrue. Well impressed by the young British officer, the king appointed him chief naval adviser as well as commander of the flotilla of smaller ships. This appointment, as can be imagined, greatly upset Swedish officers. He then wrote another lie to the minister — he was following the king's ship onboard a small yacht and hoped that this did not constitute employment, for which he had not permission.

Even though his contribution had been recognized by the king, on his return to London he was strongly criticized — for disobeying the admiralty and for the deaths of 6 British naval captains that had sought employment in the Russian navy.

When war was renewed, in 1793, Smith was serving as a volunteer with the Turkish navy; a pretext for continuing his activities as an amateur spy in that corner of the Mediterranean Sea.

The news reached him when he was in the port of Smyrna. His immediate reaction, on noting that many unemployed British seamen were at the quay side, was typical. He purchased, with his own money, a small lateen sail boat, renamed her *Swallow* and, hiring a crew of 40 English sailors, set sail.

In December they reached the outskirts of Toulon, the principal French naval base in the Mediterranean. Under the command of Admiral Hood a British squadron was blockading the port. Smith was an unemployed naval officer on half pay and, for this reason, his plan was to make his way to London, present

himself to the admiralty and eventually be given command of a ship. Whilst outside the bay, waiting to start on this last lap of his journey, Hood invited him to participate at a meeting aboard his flagship, the *Victory*. The captains present were greatly offended by his presence. Not only was he unpopular but, as unemployed, he had no right to be there. He defended himself saying that whereas they commanded ships of the navy with sailors paid by that institution, he owned the ship he commanded and his sailor's were paid from his own pocket.

Even though he was officially unemployed, Hood appointed him commander of a small flotilla; he would have under him 2 captains, 14 lieutenants and 7 midshipmen. His orders, in writing, were to enter the harbour and set fire to as many French ships as possible. I won't describe the details of this operation, just its results. Hood and the monarchists on shore managed to capture and cut out 4 line of battle ships, 8 frigates and 7 corvettes. Smith destroyed 10 line of battle ships, 2 frigates and 2 corvettes. The squadron in the hands of republicans was now reduced to 18 line of battle ships, 4 frigates and 3 corvettes.

The number of ships destroyed by forces under Smith's command was greater than at any battle up to then; battles that had brought honours and riches to the admirals involved. Although Hood wrote that Smith had distinguished himself, many criticized him for not having destroyed all the ships.

In reality it was but a reflex of his immense unpopularity; product of his exaggerated self-confidence, his Swedish title, his disobedience of orders and his habit of corresponding direct with the most important person in the Admiralty or in government, thus passing over the head of his superiors.

In London Spencer, the first lord of the admiralty, pronounced himself satisfied with Smith's actions. He recognized his exceptional qualities but, at the same time, the difficulties of managing an individual with an almost insane desire to promote himself, that believed that only his opinion was correct and to have the conviction of implementing it, even though it meant disobeying orders from his superiors. Smith was proclaimed, by the people, the hero of the new war.

Smith, always alive with new ideas, now argued that the North coast of France should be attacked and, in order to be successful, boats of shallow draught should be employed. In this way they could get close to areas that were but weakly protected.

Spencer accepted his suggestions; Smith, during the next two years, in command of a flotilla of shallow vessels and fire

ships (boats that were set on fire and then, without a crew, directed at the enemy), constantly harassed the enemy. Spencer, knowing well his character, maintained him as a direct subordinate to the admiralty, rather than attaching him to the Channel Squadron.

I would like to relate just three of the many actions that took place during this period:

The first, in 1796, occurred when the admiralty received confidential information that the French Squadron had sailed from their home base, Brest. Smith received orders to check this information. As the harbour was not visible from the open sea, he would have to first sail through a narrow, well protected, channel before entering the port. Preparations included disguising the *Diamond*, so that she looked like a French frigate and likewise the officers' uniforms. Her identity suspected and then confirmed, whilst still in the port, it was through his excellent command of French and his extreme self-confidence, which enabled them to escape from being captured.

The following year Smith followed a convoy of 9 French ships into the port of Herqui, on the Brittany coast. He captured and then burnt them; then he captured the forts that protected the harbour and spiked their guns. The lieutenant who had led the capture of the forts sailed for London with dispatches describing the victory and, as a present for the admiralty, the captured ensign. People in the streets of London went wild with excitement. Convent Garden put on an Operetta '*The Point in Herqui or The Triumph of British Courage*'.

The third episode occurred because Smith believed that it would be possible to sail up the Seine and attack Bonaparte in his own capital, Paris. In April of that year he decided to enter the port of Le Havre, the estuary of the Seine. His plan was to reconnoitre the area — it would come in useful later should his plan to attack Paris reach maturity — and capture the *Vengeur* — a lugger privateer that occasionally attacked British merchant ships. During the night, in 4 small boats rowing silently, he led several officers and 24 seamen into the port. The lugger was quickly taken, but the lack of wind prevented them sailing her out of the harbour. Worse, her anchor cable had been cut and no spare anchor was to be found on board. In spite of their best efforts to tow her against the current, she was drifting to an area where various other French boats lay at anchor. The same lack of wind prevented the *Diamond* coming in to help. When daylight came, it was obvious to all what had happened. As several

vessels moved to attack the *Vengeur*, Smith put the crew on shore and prepared his defence. After an hour of firing, Smith decided that there was no way out; following a short speech to his crew, he took down the ensign. Smith was now a prisoner of war.

The next two years were, as far as Smith was concerned, a total waste of time. Imprisoned in Paris he ran the risk of going to the guillotine. Whereas as a naval officer he could expect to be treated decently and even be exchanged for one of the French officers held in England, as a spy, as was being claimed, his life was at risk.

In France, at that time, many royalists carried out a guerrilla fight against the republican regime. A small group began preparations to spring the 'Lion of the Seas', as he was known on both sides of the Channel, from his jail. They even rented a house that overlooked the window of Smith's cell; signal language had to be invented — and was used to communicate with him.

Depending on the warder of the jail, Smith had, at times, certain liberties. He was allowed out into the town, during daylight hours, without being accompanied. He had given his word, as an officer, that he would not escape — and that was more secure than handcuffs!

One day news reached him that he was going to be moved from his jail; this did not surprise him as he had already been moved several times. Once in the carriage his guards revealed that they were, in fact, monarchists. The haste to get away was very nearly their downfall; their carriage overturned in an accident which led to their discovery. Chased across Northern France to the coast, they managed to put him onboard a boat for the short crossing.

"The Lion has returned", the crowds shouted excitedly in the streets of London; once again his popularity was with the common people. Spencer received him in the Admiralty, Prime Minister William Pitt in Parliament and, at last, he was called to the presence of the King.

Meanwhile, at various ports in the Mediterranean, Bonaparte was collecting together a sizable army, whose destiny was unknown. There was, of course much speculation, but nothing definite. Mystery deepened when 'intelligence' was received that 167 'savants', as scientists were then known, were gathered ready to embark. Yes, this was the force with which Bonaparte planned to establish an empire in the East — first occupying Egypt and then taking the rich colony of India away from Britain.

Nelson, who was subordinate to Admiral Jervis and based in Lisbon, received orders to investigate what was being planned for these French forces. He arrived too late — they had already sailed! The next two months were spent looking for them. No mean task in such a wide area.

At last, on August 1st, 1798, he found them. The squadron lay in the Bay of Aboukir, between Alexandria and the Nile delta. In what must rank as one of the most extraordinary battles in all of naval history, combining the highest degree of daring, courage and seamanship, Nelson annihilated the squadron that had taken the troops to Egypt.

Now, they had no option. To reach India they must march up the coast through Syria (now Israel), and attack Constantinople then, turning eastward, cross Persia and so reach India.

In London, Smith's name was remembered as someone who had good connections with the Sublime Porte, as the Ottoman Empire was then known, because he had served in their navy.

Gathering together a crew, including seamen from the *Diamond*, French royalist friends and many others, Smith sailed in the line-of-battle ship *Tigre*. His orders were to put himself under the command of Admiral St. Vincent, off Cadiz or in Gibraltar. Before leaving, the Foreign Minister nominated him joint Minister Plenipotentiary to the Ottoman Empire (the other minister was his younger brother, Spencer).

The strategy was to take advantage of the fact that French forces had invaded Egypt, part of the Ottoman Empire, and so make the Sultan an ally. Hopefully his forces would then become available to fight the French invaders.

In normal times the two functions, captain in the navy and minister plenipotentiary, would be complicated to manage. With Smith's character it was foreseeable that confusion on a grand scale was inevitable!

And so it happened! Everyone complained of Sidney Smith. Some, like Nelson, complained that he did not show, when writing, the respect required from a junior officer to an Admiral; but Smith believed that as a senior diplomat, he was of a higher rank than admiral! Others, that he did not respect the central command, that he took over ships which belonged to other squadrons, that he flew the ensign of a commodore — without having received the appointment. He wrote directly to the admiralty when, within the Mediterranean, there were officers two ranks above him.

But his relationship with Turkish authorities was a complete success. Wearing the typical clothes, complete with turban and long moustaches, he participated as an elected member of their highest council — the Divan.

Meanwhile Bonaparte, after an easy victory over the Mamelukes, proceeded to occupy Egypt. It was not long before his original plan began to be implemented. An army comprising some 10,000 infantry, 800 horses, and several hundred dromedaries set off, marching East and then North. As towns were captured — Gaza, Jaffa, El Arish — their inhabitants were put to the sword. The next town that stood in their way was Acre (today near the frontier between Israel and Lebanon). They expected to take it easily, in the same way that they had captured other towns.

It was here in this fortress-town of 15,000 souls that Sidney Smith decided to make his stand. Commanding in person — many times during the day and at night on the fortified walls of the town — he led Turkish troops, Albanese mercenaries, Syrians, Kurds, British sailors and marines, and managed to halt the advance of the French.

Cannons, gun powder and shot were landed from the ships, to reinforce the defences of this town, dating back to the crusades. At sea, ships under his command destroyed reinforcements and provisions, for the French troops, and equipment being brought up to breach the town's walls.

The siege lasted two months. At first long-distant shots were fired to try and breach the walls so that infantry could get into the town. When this proved unsuccessful, a more direct approach was tried, digging adjacent to and under the walls, to place explosives. Many times this led to hand-to-hand fighting outside the walls and, when these were breached, even inside the first line of defence. Bonaparte watched and gave his orders from a distance. In the end, having lost half the army, in the fighting and through disease, he gave up and started the march back. It was the greatest feat in Sidney Smith's career. Many compare this victory with that of Nelson, at Trafalgar!

In fairness to Nelson, he heard of the result of the siege of Acre at the same time as he learnt of Smith's diplomatic responsibilities (a failure of communication). Now he understood that Smith was not lacking in respect when writing to him. Nelson, as was his character, was extremely generous with his praise — *'... the immense fatigue you have had in defending Acre... has never been exceeded and the bravery shown by you*

and your companions merit every encomium that the civilized world can bestow... Be assured, dear Sir Sidney of my esteem and regard...'

The Sultan bestowed upon him the chelengk (a cluster of feathers, covered in diamonds, mounted on a rosette of diamonds that could be made to rotate by winding a clockwork motor; this, to be worn on a turban), and made him Companion of the Imperial Ottoman Order of the Crescent.

The months that followed were the most confused in Sidney Smith's career. In the unsuccessful fight to take Acre, Bonaparte lost so many men that he now realized that his Eastern Empire project would have to wait. In spite of Smith's warnings to the Admiralty, to be on the look-out, Bonaparte sailed in the frigate *Murion* and reached France.

Smith was again caught in a dilemma: Nelson, his naval commander, had made it clear that there was to be no negotiation and that not a single French soldier should be allowed to return to France; his instructions, as minister, from London and reinforced by the Sultan, were to get the French out of Egypt and the Levant, by any means possible.

After intense diplomatic activity, led by Smith, the treaty of El Arish was agreed between France and Turkey — although not signed by Smith. The French army would be allowed to return home.

When news reached the British government, it repudiated the treaty. Seen as the only solution, troops were landed and, at the Battle of Alexandria, the British army triumphed. It was their first land victory over the French. The cease-fire then agreed was very similar to that negotiated by Smith and signed at El Arish; had it then been accepted, by Britain, countless lives would have been saved.

Smith now sailed home, carrying the news of his victory.

Had he been an admiral, the defence of Acre would have warranted an earldom and a substantial sum of money. As there were still 100 names before his, in the official seniority list for promotion to admiral, he had to be content with less. Both Houses of Parliament formally recognized the greatness of his victory and voted him an annual sum of £1,000 (some £20,000 at today's values). Smith and Nelson were now firmly established as heroes of the war.

The following year he was invited to represent the town of Rochester, in Parliament. Although it was not really what he

enjoyed doing he took the opportunity of defending, with much energy, the naval budget.

At this time Smith lived in Blackheath, a London suburb. Not far away lived the estranged wife of the Prince of Wales and future King George IV, Princess Caroline of Brunswick. Reports from her servants and those that frequented her court appear to confirm that, in 1802, Sidney Smith became her lover. The following year a child was born; not necessarily his as she entertained many men friends.

He dedicated the next period of his life to inventions and inventors. Firstly the catamaran, then a submarine developed by an American, Robert Fulton and, finally, torpedoes and mines. As enthusiastic as ever, Smith tried to persuade the admiralty to adopt these new instruments of war, but without success. The time taken for an officer to reach the rank of admiral and then have a role in the admiralty meant, in practice, that it was a very conservative body.

Finally in 1805, whilst waiting to join Nelson, to command one of the divisions of his squadron, news was received of the Battle of Trafalgar and of his death.

Two days later his name reached the head of the list of captains and so he was promoted to rear admiral of the blue.

In 1806 he was given the command for the inshore squadron in the Mediterranean, under Lord Collinwood, with special responsibility for Sicily.

The Bourbon King, Ferdinand IV, and his wife Queen Maria Caroline (sister to Marie Antoinette, who was beheaded in Paris) were under considerable pressure from Bonaparte's troops. Their kingdom, Two Sicilies, was made up of an area on the continent — south of Naples — and the island of Sicily. The mainland portion of his kingdom had been invaded and Joseph, Bonaparte's brother, was preparing to be crowned King of Naples. British troops, aided by Sicilians and Corsicans, were trying to prevent the invasion of the Island.

Once again Smith would have to deal with British generals and diplomats. The King had named him Viceroy of Calabria and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. Thus he would have to accumulate political and military responsibilities, in addition to those of a rear-admiral.

Smith had not bothered to obtain permission from his superiors or from government in England, before accepting these appointments!

Contrary to the opinion of the British generals, but with the encouragement and support of the Queen, Smith decided to attack the mainland. His opinion was that an attack on the continent was the best way to defend Sicily.

He started by taking the Isle of Capri, next door to Naples. Then, embarking 5,000 British troops, from the Island's garrison, and Corsican irregulars, he landed them in Calabria. The Calabrese mountain fighters, the Massi, were waiting to help them. The battle produced the second British victory on land.

The British ambassador, Hugh Elliot, was livid; not only had he not been informed of the landing, but the money he had given Smith for intelligence-gathering had been used by him to arm the Massi.

In London innumerable complaints were received about his behaviour, his independence and his disrespect for authority. The same complaints that had arisen, in the Levant; where the Sultan had given him command of all Turkish forces, both on land and at sea.

Finally the pressure became too great and he was recalled.

In the meantime Bonaparte had captured the Eastern border of the Adriatic Sea and was actively negotiating permission, with the Sublime Porte, for his troops to cross Turkey, Levant and Egypt. Again his final destination was India.

Smith's orders to return home were revoked; instead he should proceed immediately to Constantinople and place himself under the command of Sir John Duckworth. As he was the only senior officer who knew well that part of the world and, in addition, was friendly with the Sultan, the command of the squadron should have been his by right. However, he had so many enemies amongst politicians and army commanders that it was highly unlikely that they would give him overall command.

Whereas the policy of the Smith brothers, eight years previously, had been to attract the Sultan with friendship and cooperation, Duckworth was in favour of aggression. He threatened the Sultan with destruction of his navy and bombing the capital, should he yield to Bonaparte's demands.

Their mission was a total fiasco. Firstly they sailed through the Dardanelles, 38kms of canals between the Aegean and the Sea of Marmara. Then they entered the Sea of Marmara on the Eastern instead of the Western side; as a result of strong currents, they could not approach Constantinople. Smith, in the rear of the squadron, was still in the canal when the main force entered the Sea otherwise he would certainly have intervened, as he knew those waters well. After two months they abandoned the mission.

Smith now returned to England — it was June of 1807. His first step was to move to Bath, to take the medicinal waters. Socially, he was much in demand; for his extraordinary memory which enabled him to recite poems in English, French and Latin, and his creative participation in charades.

This 'good life' however, was not to last. In November the Admiralty recalled him, and on the 9th he hoisted his flag in the *London* and on the 11th led a squadron out of Plymouth. His instructions were to remain off the Tagus, until further orders. The agreement to provide an escort, should the Royal family decide to move to Brazil was being put into effect; alternatively, should the move not take place, ships of the Portuguese navy would be taken to Britain, until the end of the war.

Following the invasion of Portugal by the French, on November 29th the Royal family and court, after months of preparation (this invasion had been foreseen by D. João, the prince regent) and accompanied by some 12000 citizens, sailed for Brazil. Sidney Smith detached 4 line-of-battle ships to escort them, as provided in the agreement.

On March 7th their final destination, Rio de Janeiro, was reached. All passengers and ships had arrived safely.

Sir Sidney Smith arrived shortly afterwards, on May 17th, to establish a naval station which he would command.

On June 4th, to mark the anniversary of George III, Sidney Smith hosted a banquet on board the *London*. The Prince Regent used this occasion to register the gratitude he felt for the support he had received from the British navy.

The Naval Chronicle officially records the event;

"...At Brazil, on 4th June 1808, Sir Sidney Smith gave an entertainment to the whole Portuguese royal family and court onboard his majesty's ship *London*. On quitting the ship, the Prince Regent presented to the rear admiral, with his own hand, the standard of Portugal, to be borne as an augmentation to the coat of arms and declared the revival of the order of the sword, instituted by Don Alfonso V surnamed the African in 1459 of which order Sir Sidney Smith is to be created grand cross.

All the English captains before the Tagus, under the command of Sir Sidney Smith on the 29th of November, to be created commanders of the Order. The first lieutenants of each ship, as well as Mr. Hill — his majesty's secretary of legation to that court — to be created knights of that same Order."¹

¹ Naval Chronicle 1808, vol. XX, p. 438.

Always prepared to befriend members of the Royal family, as he had done in Sicily, Sidney Smith now gave his total support to D. João's wife, D. Carlota Joaquina, in her ambition, in the name of her brother now King of Spain, to rule Buenos Aires and La Plata.

This support for D. Carlota Joaquina, completely ignoring the ambassador, Lord Strangford, gave rise to considerable friction between the two men. It was only a question of time before Strangford (1809) wrote to London, asking for his recall.

In all fairness to Smith, it must be stated that his real intention was to mount an expedition to invade La Plata, for he feared that France planned to establish a base in that area. In



Fig. 1 — Sir Sidney Smith prisoner in the Temple (Paris). Sketched in November 1796, by Hennequin and engraved by Maria Cosway (British Museum, London).

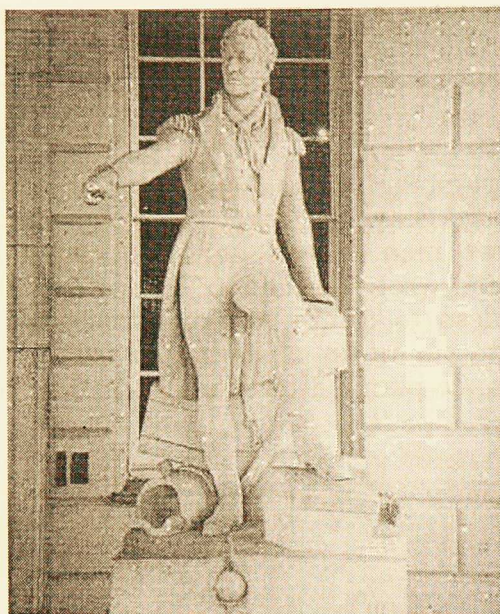


Fig. 2 — Sir Sidney Smith by Thomas Kirk outside the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. Source: POCOCK Tom. *A Thirst for Glory — The Life of Admiral Sir Sidney Smith*. London, Aurum Press, 1996.

1806 a disastrous expedition, with that same objective had taken place, under the command of Sir Home Popham.

On his return to London he was heavily criticized by Canning, the then Prime Minister, until it was explained that he was acting under orders of the War Office (emitted on August 5th, 1808).

In 1810 he was promoted to Vice-Admiral and, in that same year, at the age of 46, he married a widow four years his senior, Caroline Rumbolt.

With the end of the Napoleonic wars and advancing in years, Smith became increasingly eccentric. He founded and named himself President of the Knight Liberators of the Slaves of Africa.

Some years previously, in Cyprus, he had been given the cross that had belonged to Richard I. He now imagined that he had been invested as Grand Prior for England in the Order of the Templars; an order that had been suppressed in 1312!

Always of a generous nature, he spent far beyond his means and, in spite of receiving considerable sums from government — reimbursement of moneys spent by him on their behalf — his debts did not stop growing. He decided to move to Paris, a town



Fig. 3 — Sir Sidney Smith's Coat of Arms; advertisement by R. Brook, engraver to the Royal Family, 302, Strand, London (Imperial Museum, Petrópolis).

that he greatly liked — in spite of the imprisonment; he would be safe from his creditors and the inevitable debtor's prison. In 1826 his wife died.

Finally, in 1838, Queen Victoria, who had been crowned the previous year, presented him with the Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath. Two years later, at the age of 76, he had a stroke and passed away.

Apologia — D. Carlota Joaquina

I could not conclude this brief and modest study on Sir William Sidney Smith without refuting an aspect that, even without proof, is often repeated by historians. That he had been yet another lover of D. Carlota Joaquina.

In her defence, in this case specifically and in a general way, I would like to affirm that, having studied over many years the



Fig. 4 — The tomb of Admiral Sir Sidney and Lady Smith in the cemetery of Père Lachaise. Souce: POCOCK, opus cit.

period in which she lived, I found but one reference, of infidelity, written by someone who lived at that time and frequented her court, William Beckford.

At the age of 10 Beckford had inherited one of England's largest fortunes. In 1787, at the age of 28, because of his activities as a bisexual and a pederast — in particular his love letters to William, Lord Courtenay's 13 years old son — he was forced to leave the country, and so sailed for Portugal.

Although a commoner, he was befriended by the Marquises of Marialva who hoped that he would marry their 15 year-old daughter, Henriquetta. In fact, he was much more interested in their son, 17 years old D. Pedro Vito. Entries in his diary show that, over the course of many months, they established a homosexual friendship; until, finally, his family stepped in.

Some forty five years later he wrote that, on the night of 14th of June of 1794, the son of the Marquis was seduced by D. Carlota Joaquina. He further speculated that he was the father of D. Miguel, later King of Portugal. In spite of the fact that D. Miguel was born, eight years later, in 1802!

D. Pedro Vito, 6th Marquis in 1799, was a trusted friend of D. João. It was he, in a last attempt to appease Bonaparte, who was sent him with a large quantity of diamonds and an offer to wed his son, D. Pedro (future emperor of Brazil, D. Pedro I), to Bonaparte's niece. Later, in 1814, he would negotiate the marriage of the Arch-Duchess D. Leopoldina to D. Pedro; spending, from his private fortune, so as to represent his sovereign and country with an opulence never before seen in that court — as related by Octávio Tarquino. He died in Paris, in 1823, not surprisingly perhaps, still a bachelor. Would he have received such important missions if D. João had not had complete trust in him?

We should also mention that Marcus Cheke, one of D. Carlota Joaquina's principal biographers, describes her as: "one of the ugliest royal princesses that ever existed. She was about 4 feet 9 inches tall, her eyes apoplectic and spiteful, aquiline nose, hard chinned; her purple lips would open to show teeth, as uneven as Pan's pipes; in addition, she limped, the result of a fall whilst riding". Is this the woman that our media would have us believe was a seductress and a nymphomaniac?

As for the allegations (of infidelity) they were, without the shadow of doubt, invented subsequent to her death and were the product of political intrigue — writes Checke. No serious historian, he assures us, can endorse them with concrete proof.

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