

OS INGLESINHOS DE LISBOA

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This short paper is intended to recall briefly the history of the English College in Lisbon and also to seek further information. It is an indication of work to be done rather than work accomplished. Any future history of the establishment will have to take into account not only the college archives that are now at Ushaw College, Durham, England but also any Portuguese sources that may exist and are as yet unexplored (1)

I - Until about twenty years ago, young men dressed in black cassock with a gown and red stole across the shoulders were a familiar sight on the streets of Lisbon. These were the *Inglesinhos* and they lived in a fortress-like building in the Travessa dos Inglesinhos in the Bairro Alto. Despite the very high wall one could catch a glimpse behind, of a solid building in eighteenth century Pombaline style. There was an impressive façade to the College church and front entrance. The public were admitted to weekday mass each morning at seven o'clock and to the High Mass at ten on Sundays. This was the College of Saints Peter and Paul, an English catholic seminary. At one time the students spent twelve years here beginning about the age of fourteen and after a course of humanities they proceeded to philosophy and theology and ordination. In later years it was a six year course of philosophy and theology begun by those who had already received their schooling in England. The seminary was like any other in the catholic world in its discipline and course of studies. What was unusual was that it was for Englishmen who travelled out to Portugal to be taught by an English staff and who then returned after ordination to work in England among the English. This state of affairs went on for 350 years. It finally

closed its doors in 1973.

Such a ghetto-like establishment might not appear to be promising material for a consideration of Anglo-Portuguese relations. It is true that apart from essential shopping in Lisbon, holidays at the Quinta near the Costa da Caparica and, in more recent years, travelling around Portugal in the summer, the students led an isolated and somewhat inward looking life. They were not allowed to mix with either Portuguese or English residents. But this was the common practice in any seminary and they would have been similarly constrained if they had been doing their training at home in England. The case was somewhat different with their professors. They had their duties within the College but, as work permitted from time to time they did engage in social and pastoral contacts with both English and Portuguese families. But whatever may be said about the rule of life of the College and the individuals who were resident there, the institution did nevertheless play a part in the broader pattern of history of our two countries and it is about this that I want to speak.

II - Founded in 1622 the College was not the first English Roman Catholic institution to be established in Portugal because of the troubled religious situation in England. In 1539 Syon Abbey, Isleworth, Middlesex was suppressed by order of Henry VIII and after a series of wanderings across Europe the community of nuns eventually found a home in Lisbon in 1594. They were there until 1809 when with the deterioration of the position of the church in Portugal and the relaxation of the penal laws in England, a return to their homeland was both possible and necessary. Their name is perpetuated in Lisbon to this day, since their original convent stands adapted to other usages in the Travessa das Inglesinhas (2). But the seminary of SS Peter and Paul could not claim such a long pedigree, it was an entirely new establishment. For 50 years or more there had been English catholic seminaries existing on the continent - in the Low Countries, in Spain and in Rome. The English College Lisbon was the last of these to be founded.

Several individual English Roman Catholics had found exile

in Lisbon. The best known of these is Francis Tregian a West Country gentleman who died in Lisbon in 1608 and whose tomb is still to be seen in the Jesuit church of S. Roque (3). For years there had been a resident chaplain to minister to the needs of English Roman Catholics and it was due to the initiative of one of these, William Newman, that the College owes its beginnings. Newman was friendly with a certain Dom Pedro Coutinho who offered land and financial support and the College was founded in 1622, although the first students only arrived some years later.

One of the reasons for the comparatively late founding of yet another English College abroad is to be seen in the Constitutions which make it clear that the College was to be under the direction of the secular clergy. At this time there was tension within the English Roman Catholic community in England, between the Jesuits and the seculars. The Jesuits administered the three English colleges in Spain, at Valladolid, Madrid and Seville. They also had a school at S. Omer in the Netherlands. The seculars ran the College at Douai and were anxious for a support college in the Peninsula that was under their own control. A further point needs to be mentioned about the foundation. Although Portugal was at this time ruled by a Spanish King and it was he who gave permission for the foundation in 1621, yet he never exercised the same interest or influence on Lisbon as he did on the English colleges in Spain. The key figure was the patron Dom Pedro Coutinho. There is need to know more about this man and from what power base he operated. Some of his correspondence is extant in the college archives at Ushaw. From the English point of view he appears to have been a very difficult person to deal with, continually changing the plans for his college. He also underestimated what such an institution would cost financially so that despite his undoubted benefactions the college was desperately poor. There was a collection of mean one-story buildings and a church and it took some years before the foundation was able to receive any students. In the early years the food was meagre and the President and the superiors received no pay for the duties they performed. But from the beginning some outstanding men were trained within its walls. One historian re-

marks 'The College at Lisbon never had a morning but shone out at once in all the splendour of meridian day'. In those preecumenical times religious controversy was the order of the day and men like John Sergeant and Thomas White excelled themselves not only by engaging in dispute with protestant divines but by contestation within the catholic ranks especially against the Jesuits. Both White and Sergeant belonged to a small group of the secular clergy whose aim was to bargain with the government of the day, be it Cavalier or Roundhead, to obtain toleration for catholics at the price of the exclusion of the Jesuits from England. These two are important figures in English religious history and their fame lies outside the Peninsula. For the purposes of this colloquy Richard Russell is far more important since he belongs equally to Portugal and England.

Richard Russell came to the College as a boy of thirteen to act as servant to the President. Five years later in 1647 he was admitted as a student at the College and began his studies for the priesthood. He completed his course at Douai and Paris and then after ordination returned for two years to Lisbon to act as procurator. In 1657 he was recalled to England. He travelled back with the Portuguese Ambassador, Francisco de Mello. It appears that the real reason for his recall was not to work as a missionary priest but to engage in diplomatic activity at Court. He became a trusted if minor diplomat useful to both English and Portuguese courts and the high point of his career was in the negotiations leading to the marriage of Charles II to Catherine of Braganza in 1662. He was deputed to officiate at the private catholic wedding of Charles and Catherine. The Queen Regent of Portugal was pleased with Russell's work and offered him the bishoprick of Cabo Verde with the promise of the first see to become vacant in Portugal. The offer of Cabo Verde was not very tempting but he did accept Portalegre when that see became vacant. However, he had to wait until 1671 because Rome refused to accept his nomination. There was nothing against Russell, it was a case of the Papacy not recognising Portuguese independence and still considering the Spanish King to be the one with the right of nomination. Russell was eventually

consecrated Bishop of Portalegre in the chapel of the English College Lisbon in 1671. In 1682 he was transferred to Viseu where he died November 15, 1693. Some of his correspondence to the Rector of the English College is to be found in the College archives. This is largely about college and English affairs. It would be interesting to know what sort of a bishop he was and whether there is anything about him either at Portalegre or Viseu.

Russell was not the only *Inglesinho* to be connected with the Court in London at this time. Dr Godden, President of the College, resigned his post in order to become chaplain and preceptor to Catherine. He accompanied her to England in 1662 and when she became Queen he was allocated apartments in Somerset House: an unusual thing for a Roman Catholic priest in seventeenth century England. From his close connection with the court he was able to be a considerable help to his coreligionists.

The eighteenth century is not only the era of the great earthquake and the rebuilding of Lisbon, it is the age of the enlightenment. The spirit of this age penetrated the English College of SS Peter and Paul in the persons of some of its professors. John Preston came to the College at the age of twenty in 1732 and was perhaps the most distinguished scholar the College ever entertained. While still a student of philosophy he also taught classics to the lower forms. After ordination he was appointed procurator and then in addition he assumed the duties of professor of theology. He was greatly interested in science. His lecture notes are extant and he is credited with introducing Newtonian physics into Portugal. Although he was opposed by the Jesuits he found favour with the Court and in 1775 was nominated tutor to the young Prince of Brazil. He was held in high esteem by Pombal who on one occasion quoted him as 'the great Preston'. Another member of staff, a contemporary and life-long friend of Preston was Jerome Allen. He was born in London of an English mother and Portuguese father who was employed at the Portuguese embassy in the capital. He was admitted to the College in Lisbon in 1744 and after ordination he stayed on to teach. Because of certain political difficulties he had to leave Portugal for England but after the death of Dom José he went back to Lisbon and was able to secure money from Dom Pedro III for the

rebuilding of the College. Like Preston he was a man of his age and in the 1780s he took part in experiments with hot air balloons, being present at the first ascent of a balloon in Portugal which took place at Mafra. He also planned the erection of an observatory at the top of the College. This was never completed but the high terrace commanding an impressive view of the city was always called 'the observatory'.(4)

During the Napoleonic wars the College was occupied for a time by the forces of General Junot. Through the intercession of the Papal Nuncio the property and its inhabitants remained under the control of the superiors although nominally and technically it was confiscated and they were prisoners of war. Part of the house was reserved for their use but the rest of the building was occupied by 280 French soldiers and 12 officers. Tradition tells of an incident that happened during this occupation when Allen was in charge of the College. On one occasion at a banquet to which the French officers had invited the superiors, a lieutenant rose to propose the health of the Emperor Napoleon and called upon the Englishmen to honour the toast. This at first Allen refused to do. Upon which, the officer observed 'that he (Allen) had not much reason to respect his country since it had driven him forth to a foreign land'. 'Let it be so' rejoined Allen 'yet George III is our lawful King. I will drink your Emperor's health on condition that you drink George III's'. All laughed heartily at the suggestion and both healths were drunk and the whole incident passed off as a joke.

With the second occupation of the city by General Soult the situation deteriorated and the students were sent home to England. But the teaching staff remained and they opened an Anglo-Portuguese Academy, a school that lasted until 1814 when the clerical students returned. When Lisbon was rid of the French and the British Army set up headquarters there, the priests of the College found there was much pastoral work to be done among the English and Irish Roman Catholic troops. From this period probably originates the custom whereby the English College had the 'right' whenever a ship of the Royal Navy was in port to 'demand' its White Ensign and

and to fly it from the observatory on the roof of the College. When the ship left port the Ensign was taken down and kept until the next arrival when it was handed over in exchange for a new Ensign. When Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II visited Lisbon on the Royal Yacht Britannia in 1957 Britannia's Ensign was flown from the College. This relic is now in the hands of the British Historical Society of Portugal.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century the Church in Portugal was in a sorry state. The Roman Catholic seminary of SS Peter and Paul was able to survive because it was English. But the collapse of the church in Portugal at the beginning of this century had a strange effect as far as the College was concerned. Originally founded to provide for catholic needs that could not be met in seventeenth century England, from 1910 the College found that it was now providing for the Portuguese of Lisbon something that had become unattainable in their own country. Many churches were closed or inadequately manned and none were able to hold the impressive services of the past. But at the *Inglesinhos* there was a Solemn High Mass every Sunday and at Christmas and during Holy Week there were the full church services, the only place in Lisbon where this took place. A great many local people frequented the church and the ceremonies and singing reached a high standard. In those years it was prohibited for clerical garb to be worn in public but an exception was made for the *Inglesinhos*. During World War One student numbers fell at the College and its closure became a serious possibility. But Rome intervened and the College remained open because it was catering for the needs of the catholics of Lisbon and of Portugal. Even after the revival of church life many families continued the tradition of going to the *Inglesinhos* for Midnight Mass at Christmas and for the full Holy Week ceremonies. This custom continued well into the 1950s.

It was not the Revolution of 1974 that ended the *Inglesinhos*. The end was due partly to the particular difficulties of recruiting an adequate teaching staff for Lisbon, and partly to the changing ideas about seminary training as a result of the Second Vatican Council. The President and superiors decided that there

was no long term future for the College and with the agreement of the English Hierarchy and the Holy See it was decided to close.

By the will of the founder the right of patronage of the College had been committed to the Misericordia to which the possession of the buildings and whatever property might belong to them were to be made over of the students were withdrawn from Lisbon and returned to England. But this right of patronage included the obligation of keeping the buildings in a state of repair and it had lapsed or been surrendered sometime in the eighteenth century. However as events turned out, the college building in Lisbon has now been acquired by the Misericordia who will shortly adapt to their own needs and purposes.

NOTES

- (1) The chief sources used in this article are: The Very Rev Canon Croft *Historical Account of Lisbon College* (Barnet 1902), A.H. Norris *The English College Lisbon* (British Historical Society of Portugal), M. Sharratt *Lisbon College. Catalogue of Archives. Part I Correspondence*. (Ushaw College Durham 1986). M. Sharratt, Blacklow and Coutinho in 1633 *Ushaw Magazine* 250 pp. 16-25, 251 pp. 18-26 (1977, 1978) M. Sharratt, Bishop Russell and John Sergeant. *Ushaw Magazine* 253 pp. 22-37 (1979). M. Sharratt, The Lisbon Collection at Ushaw. *Catholic Archives* 1 pp.36-39 (1981)
- (2) J.R. Fletcher. *The Story of the English Bridgettines of Syon Abbey*. (South Brent Devon 1933).
- (3) P.A. Boylan and G.R. Lamb. Francis Tregian Cornish Recusant (London/New York 1955).
- (4) Jerome Allen also assisted the President of the College William Fryer in negotiations with Bishop Geddes for the reception of Portuguese medical students at Edinburgh. Maria Leonor Machado de Sousa, *A Abertura de Portugal A Cultura Europeia: Os Bolseiros de Pina Manique*, Lisboa 1983.

