

The Portuguese Revolution of 1 December 1640: A Reappraisal

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In the last few years (since 1990) it has been very interesting and also very encouraging to note the increase coverage/interest being given to the neglected topic of the Portuguese Revolution/*Restauração*, 1640-68 (Fernando J. Bouza Álvarez, Luís Miguel Oliveira Andrade, Fernando Dores Costa, Leonor Freire Costa, Mafalda Soares da Cunha, Eduardo d'Oliveira Franca, Rafael Valladares, and Lorraine White, among many others). Historians, political scientists, and writers in general, not only from Portugal but throughout the academic world, have begun to re-examine this very important military, political, and even economic event within the context of the seventeenth century. Very significant was the recently held conference at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy in December 2003 that set out to place the Portuguese uprising within the context of seventeenth century European revolutions. Using Jack Goldstone's 1991 work, *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World* as a foundation, several of the attendees sought other "interpretations" of the Portuguese uprising. New interpretations have been produced regarding not only how this uprising could have taken place, but more importantly why. What were the motives that would compel Portuguese nationalists to risk virtually everything in a war against a country that, although in the midst of a major decline, was still a vastly superior country militarily, economically, and politically?

As a result of a very fortunate meeting between professors Leonor Freire Costa and Mafalda Soares da Cunha and myself at the Society for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies Conference (Lexington, KY, 2006), a marvelous discussion/debate arose regarding the Portuguese Revolution/*Restauração* and João IV, and the realization (from all three of us) that there were possible varying interpretations regarding these and other topics centering around the uprising of 1640.

As is many times the case with historians, they frequently develop opinions that often times "calcify" into unchangeable "truths." Indeed the problem then becomes that a historian has "staked" out a position from which he/she refuses to move regardless of the new evidence that commands a revised reading. It is obviously with the hope of opening new vistas regarding the Portuguese uprising of 1640 that I present this possible "debate paper" to raise some of those points regarding not only the most recent interpretations (Fernando Dores Costa 2005 was a major impetus), but to also look at some of the interpretations dating back to the revolution (1640) itself.

Because this is only the beginning of a "debate" on the Portuguese uprising of 1640, I will limit my "debate" points to three, although I hope this will generate many other points being raised later by others:

1. Was the Portuguese uprising of 1640 a restoration (*restauração*) or in fact a revolution in the true seventeenth century European context?
2. What were the motives that compelled the Portuguese to revolt? (politics? economics? social mobility? nationalism?)
3. Was João IV a great revolutionary leader? Or was Dona Luísa de Gusmão the true leader of the uprising rather than her husband?

1. Virtually from the beginning, Portuguese historians have universally used the term *restauração* (restoration) in referring to the uprising that was initiated on that Saturday morning of 1 December 1640. Occasionally the term revolution or revolt has been applied but those authors who have done so are truly in the minority. The term “*restauração*” obviously is reflective of the fact that most historians have regarded the uprising as the “restoring” of the “legitimate” Bragança family (*o rei natural*) to the throne of Portugal.

To begin our inquiry regarding this question, I think we must initially determine whether the Habsburg rule in Portugal beginning in 1580, was in fact legitimate or simply a case of a more powerful country seizing control and usurping authority of the true rulers of Portugal. Many have argued that with the death of Cardinal King Henrique on 31 January 1580, although there were many claimants to the throne the one with the best claim was that of Dona Catarina of Bragança (Bouza, 1991; Costa, 2004). However, not possessing either popular appeal or political influence, (indeed, it has been suggested that Dona Catarina was actually paid off by King Philip II of Spain to abandon her claim [Cunha, 2000]), she did not pursue her claim with great vigor. To seize his claim to the throne however, King Philip initiated a military invasion of Portugal under the leadership of the Duke of Alba. Opposition to the Spanish invasion was minimal, and although not considered a legitimate claimant to the throne, it was Dom António, Prior of Crato, who would put up the only resistance. Ultimately, on 25 August 1580 near Alcantara just outside Lisbon, Dom Antonio and his nationalistic supporters confronted the Spanish army where they proved to be no match and suffered a major defeat. Thus taking advantage of the situation Philip claimed what he believed was rightfully his, but more importantly after doing so he wanted his new reign “legitimized” at Tomar.

It was at Tomar in April, 1581 that King Philip II ordered the representatives of the Portuguese three estates to meet. Here the *Cortes* of Tomar acknowledged Philip as the “legitimate” king of Portugal, but only after he had agreed to major concessions and signed an agreement with the Portuguese representatives. Thus began the rule of the Spanish Habsburgs as the “recognized” monarchs of Portugal (in Portuguese history books the Habsburgs kings are actually referred to as King Philip I; King Philip II; and King Philip III of Portugal).

Many have argued that this agreement was in fact the equivalent of a constitutional agreement (the *carte patente* signed 12 November 1582) with the people of Portugal (Alvarez 1991; Valladares; White; Costa 2004). It is here that I strongly agree with

Professor Fernando J. Bouza Alvarez, that the key to this issue centers on the “legitimacy” of Tomar (Alvarez 1991). The agreement or “constitution,” in fact validated the ancient rights and privileges that the Portuguese nobility had enjoyed in virtually all previous dynasties, especially regarding their economic and legal rights vis á vis the monarch. In return the nobles of Portugal gave Philip II of Spain their guarantee of loyalty and obedience and acknowledged him as King Philip I of Portugal. Thus what basically took place at Tomar was in fact the very same procedure that had been carried out when all previous Portuguese monarchs had ascended the throne. In this case both parties (Philip II and the Portuguese nobility) had compromised regarding the rights, privileges, and powers that each would have, or as Professor Lorraine White suggests a “ruling constitution” –a “statute of autonomy” had been cemented at Tomar.

In considering the uprising of 1 December 1640, the *Oxford English Dictionary*, defines a revolution as:

a complete overthrow of the “established” government in any country or state by those who were previously subject to it: a forcible substitution of a new ruler or form of government.

Seemingly within this definition lays R. R. Palmer’s classic definition of a revolutionary situation in which 1) confidence in the justice of the existing authority is undermined; 2) where old loyalties fade; 3) obligations are felt as impositions; 4) law seems arbitrary; and 5) respect for superiors is felt as a form of humiliation. Using these definitions it would seem that the Portuguese nobility that stormed the *Paço do Ribeiro* on that Saturday morning were in fact attacking the “established” and “legitimate” government that ruled over them, and in turn fulfilling exacting what Palmer has described as a revolutionary situation. As a result of the 1 December attack –was the “rightful” heir to the Portuguese throne restored? Yes, but only as a result of attacking and eventually removing what had been the “legitimate” government of Portugal –the Spanish Habsburg monarchy. The uprising of 1640 was then a Revolution and not a *restauração* (Eduardo d’Oliveira Franca actually used the term “revolution” as well and likewise referred the nobles leading the uprising as “revolutionaries” [Franca]). As a result I suggest that the uprising of 1 December 1640 was a Revolution and should be placed very much within the philosophical context of the other major European revolutions of the seventeenth century (England, France and Low Caountries), that made up the famous “Crisis of the Seventeenth Century.”

2. Motives for the Revolution were to run the gamut. Indeed, if the Tomar agreement was the establishment of a “constitutional” relationship between the Spanish Habsburg rulers and the people of Portugal, any violation of these articles by the Madrid government would in fact be a violation of those constitutional rights, and thus justification for rebellion. For example, looking at the following points of the Tomar agreement/constitution we see where direct violations took place:

- *That the Portuguese Cortes would remain the principal legislative agency for Portugal, as no laws affecting Portugal would be made outside of Portugal.*

In reality the Portuguese *Cortes* was called into session but three times by the Habsburg monarchs (1583, 1616, and 1619), and then it was not to initiate any legislative proceedings. In fact, the major governing agency regarding Portugal was the *Conselho do Portugal*, and it was permanently located in Madrid and issued all legislation from there.

- *That the viceroy of Portugal would be Portuguese or a direct member of the Spanish Habsburg royal family.*

Philip II did choose his nephew, Archduke Charles Albert of Austria as the first viceroy of Portugal, but no other member of the royal family was to follow save for the final vicereine, Princess Margaret of Savoy, the Duchess of Mantua.

- *That all major offices in Portugal be posted only by Portuguese nationals.*

The Habsburg government began violating this article almost immediately.

- *That only Portuguese soldiers would serve in fortifications within Portugal.*

By 1640 there were no Portuguese soldiers serving in Portugal at all. Those troops manning the various fortresses in Portugal were either Spanish or German, and their occupation was to be at times very intrusive as it was customary that these forces were maintained (room and board) by the Portuguese citizens. Obviously the Spanish government was very reluctant to establish any kind of permanent military force in Portugal, but yet continuously recruited Portuguese soldiers to serve throughout the continent which they did admirably. Indeed, by 1 December 1640 some 16,000 Portuguese soldiers were serving in the Spanish armies in Flanders and Catalonia.

- *That the Spanish monarch would periodically reside in Portugal.*

Philip II actually stayed in Portugal from 1580 until 1583; Philip III was to visit one time and stay six months; and Philip IV was never to even visit Portugal. King Philip II's minister, Cardinal Granvelle, actually suggested that the King make Lisbon his permanent residence which would be much more strategic than the isolation of Madrid, but of course this was not to be the case.

- *That the Habsburg Crown would assume responsibility for maintaining the armadas for the overseas empire of Portugal.*

Almost from the beginning of her overseas conquests, Portugal had been able to remain outside the politics and wars of Europe. Indeed, Portugal had established rather lucrative trade relations with England, France, and the Netherlands being the principal provider of commodities from the Far East, Africa, and Brazil. However, as Portugal was now united to Spain, such arrangements proved to be difficult if not impossible to maintain. Regarding this issue, Charles Boxer wrote: “The Portuguese complained that the union of their Crown with that of Castile was the sole reason why their overseas dominions (Brazil, Africa, and India) were attacked by the Dutch and to a lesser extent by the English in the early 17th century” (Boxer 79).

Again as argued above by Professors Bouza, White, and Costa, the agreement reached at Tomar was tantamount to the establishment of a constitutional government in Portugal. Unfortunately this was a constitution that the Madrid government was continuously prone to violating.

Another possible motive for revolution recently proposed has been the loss of social status of the Portuguese aristocracy –a social status of rights and privileges that were guaranteed by the agreement reached at Tomar in 1581 (Bouza 1991; Costa 2004, 2005). Indeed, leading the revolt of 1 December was an elite group of the Portuguese nobility who had saw their social and economic status/position in jeopardy. As Professor Eduardo d’Oliveira Franca poetically put it: “The nobility of Portugal had become prisoners of the mediocrity of Spanish domination” (Franca 47). Thus for many the Revolution presented an ideal means to improve upon their social/political status by removing Spanish dominance that had restricted them for sixty years.

In his classic study, *The Anatomy of Revolution*, Crane Brinton laid out what he considered to be the necessary ingredients for a revolution to occur. One of the critical causes/ingredients according to Brinton was the rise of a governmental economic/financial crisis; developments which arose where the economic/financial conditions facing the government would lead to major burdens being placed on the people within a country that would become completely unacceptable.

By the mid-1630s such a crisis had arisen in Spain –the famous seventeenth century “decline of Spain.” With the mounting costs of waging war on several fronts, the Madrid government had found themselves in the midst of a tremendous economic crisis. The major bulk of this burden had fallen on the citizens of Castile who paid far and away the greater percentage of the costs for the wars waged in Europe and even for the military expeditions sent out to protect the Portuguese empire in Brazil. In response to this dilemma, Count-Duke Olivares began to earnestly initiate his famous “Union of Arms” in Portugal. Most noticeable within this policy were the new taxes intended to bring the Portuguese monetary contributions to the Spanish government on par with Castile. A number of new taxes were now imposed with the goal, set by

Olivares himself, of raising 500,000 *cruzados* annually from Portugal. These taxes were in addition to the other financial demands already levied on the Portuguese in form of forced loans that totaled one million *cruzados* annually. For the most part, this financial burden fell on those who traditionally were exempted from paying taxes –the nobility, many of the wealthy merchants, and even the Roman Catholic clergy. Thus the very individuals, who had originally supported Philip II and his claim to the Portuguese throne in 1580, had now begun to experience the economic burden of such a union.

Professor Fernando Dores Costa (2005) argued that this was the number one cause for the revolt of 1 December: “To defend the (Portuguese) people’s capacity of resistance to the innovations in taxation being introduced and consequently to safeguard the mechanism of supervision over the destination of wealth and the existing means of production and reproduction of nobles in that territory.” Indeed, this one single issue was to lead to the famous uprising (*alteração*) in the Alentejo city of Évora on 21 August 1637 and become one of the major precipitators of the 1 December Revolution.

However, while all the above did affect the outbreak of the Revolution on 1 December, the one major motive of the uprising that drove all the Portuguese revolutionaries was the desire to simply have a government that was theirs. As Pedro de Mendonça Furtado, one of the early revolutionaries bluntly stated: “...the rightful authority of Portugal has been lost for too long and only with a risky enterprise such as this that is being planned (1 December) can the rightful power of Portugal be restored” (my translation).

Philip II had worked diligently to win support of his claim to the Portuguese throne. With monetary bribes, the promise of greater economic prosperity, and the hope of greater political stability for Portugal the majority of the Portuguese nobility and “high” clergy had accepted the Spanish government in 1581. However, despite this support there remained one pivotal group in Portugal that never accepted Philip or the “Spanish reign” and saw the union with Spain as nothing more than rule by an alien country –the *povo da Portugal*. From the “common people” a Portuguese nationalistic spirit (*volksgeist*) emerged and remained dominant throughout the “Babylonian Captivity” and became the basis upon which the Revolution was built. Although Professor Fernando Dores Costa (Costa 2005) downplays this particular motive, I feel there are several examples of this nationalistic fervor that laid the foundation for the uprising of 1640.

Even though King Sebastião’s body was returned to Portugal and permanently interred in the elaborate Jerónimos Monastery in Belém, many in Portugal still claimed that Sebastião had not been killed at Alcácer-Quibir. These believers argued that Sebastião had escaped from Morocco and was now waiting for the opportune time to return to reclaim his rightful throne, and to “save” Portugal from Spanish control. It was from such a deep-seated belief that a mythical messianic cult surfaced known as Sebastianism. As early as 1602 Sebastianism was the basis for resistance to Spanish

rule, but as the hatred of the Spanish increased it was to form the nationalistic myth that helped form the Portuguese genius.

Another nationalistic movement followed the *alterações* of Évora, Lisbon, and in the Algarve. Not wanting to lose the emotional momentum created by these uprisings and likewise in hopes of continually fostering and spreading revolutionary sentiments throughout the country, Portuguese nationals began producing a rather interesting and many times satirical publication from Évora known as the *Manuelinho de Évora*. These were pamphlets, published anonymously, which contained articles and poems that were blatantly nationalistic and strongly promoted the idea of Portuguese liberation from Spain. One group that has long been considered having played a central role in fomenting the rebellion through the *Manuelinho* was the Roman Catholic clergy and specifically the religious order of the Jesuits. Dom Francisco Manuel de Melo, writing in 1660, argued that several Jesuit priests/professors from the University of Évora, including Dr. Sebastião de Couto, Álvaro Pires Pacheco, Gaspar Correia, and Diogo Lopes had been involved with the issuing of the *Maneulinho* publication, plus producing philosophical justifications for rebellion.

However, the prime example of this nationalistic spirit within the Revolution was the famous “Heroes of 1640.” Again Crane Brinton in his work, *The Anatomy of Revolution*, suggested that the main element for any revolution is a group of political, intellectual, social, and economic elites who, for whatever reasons, had become “turned off” by the existing economic, societal, and governmental operations. It would now depend on these particular individuals –the “alienated intelligentsia”– to actually lead the uprising against the existing government. In June 1640, Dom Rodrigo da Cunha, Archbishop of Lisbon, organized the initial gathering of Portuguese “alienated intelligentsia;” individuals, who for all the above reasons, had become “turned off” to Spanish rule and were now willing to risk everything solely because of their true love of country and their sense of nationalism. Professor Fernando Dores Costa suggests (2005) that nationalism as a motive of rebellion oversimplifies historical action and perhaps that is true, but to argue that this uprising was based solely upon well thought out rational decisions I think naïve. The leaders of the Revolution initially and then the soldiers who were to serve the Revolution for some twenty-seven years thereafter, were fighting for something greater than that which the Spanish were fighting for – their freedom and independence. These were men fighting for their emotional love and devotion to their country. An oversimplification as Professor Costa suggests, perhaps, but nevertheless a motive that has compelled men and women to fight for their respective countries more than any other. When freedom and independence are the ultimate goals, victory based on a sense of supreme nationalism is almost a guarantee.

3. Because he was the central figure of the Revolution, Dom João of Bragança was and is perhaps the most controversial, and as a result opinions of this man as a “leader” have “run the gamut.” João was born and raised in a true aristocratic family –the Braganças. In his upbringing, João wanted for nothing. He had several tutors training him physically (he was an excellent horseman), intellectually (he studied the

classical letters, Latin and theology), and culturally. Music was to become one of his major passions and everyday he set aside the hours between 5 pm to 7 pm to play, compose, and sing music in the Bragança chapel at Vila Viçosa. It was in this environment that João matured into a mild-mannered gentleman. With the death of his father in 1630, João became the 8th Duke of Bragança and was now in charge of the largest estate (Vila Viçosa) in all of Portugal and the overlord of over 60,000 people, truly the most powerful and wealthy noble in the country. With his financial security set, João seemed very content to simply live the pleasant life at Vila Viçosa, and in doing so surrounding himself with people who enjoyed much the same.

On 12 January 1633 João married Dona Luísa de Gusmão, daughter of the Duke of Medina-Sidonia, Don Juan Manuel Perez de Gusmão of Spain. Although the marriage had been pre-arranged (ironically it was the Count-Duke Olivares who actually set up and blessed this marriage), it is said that Dona Luísa willingly acceded, knowing that she was marrying the most wealthy and powerful prince in Portugal. The marriage proved to be a loving and fruitful one as João and Dona Luísa had eight children. Truly life at Vila Viçosa was most content, comfortable, and tranquil –the “Camelot of the Alentejo.”

Given his very serene life in the Alentejo, it really should not come as a surprise when plans for Revolution were in the making, that João was not always to demonstrate the greatest enthusiasm, but indeed quite the contrary, remaining hesitant and noncommittal. Consequently, many Portuguese historians have portrayed João as weak, vacillating, and even apathetic; an individual unwilling or unable to commit himself as the leader of a rebellion against Spain. Even Charles Boxer has depicted Dom João in this way. In their most recent and very outstanding study of João, Professors Leonor Freire Costa & Mafalda Soares da Cunha suggest very convincingly that João did not want to become King of Portugal and thus his tremendous reluctance to accept any kind of leadership role at all.

However, by reviewing contemporary writings plus evaluating the actions that João was in fact to take, I would propose a different interpretation. João’s father, Dom Teodosio had been a violent and hot-tempered man, who tried to instill into his son a deep-seated hatred of the Spanish, whom Teodosio saw as usurpers of the Portuguese crown. João did in fact share these same feelings but not nearly to the degree or with the intensity of his father. In his actions, João seemed to realize that the one way to actively pursue these desires was to make himself less feared by the Spanish government. Thus in actuality, João proved to be very cautious, calculating, and even manipulative. One contemporary who did see João from this perspective was Manuel de Faria e Sousa writing:

Doubtless had he [João] been the man Duke Theodosio could have had him, he could never have accomplished what he [João] aimed. His actions were so narrowly looked into by the Count Duke’s order that if he had not been so entirely given up to his ease and pleasure, he must of necessity

have been discovered; and if one discovered his repose his fortune would have been sacrificed. The Count of Spain would never have put such power into his hands and suffered to live in the midst of his country. In short such was his course of life as gave not the Spaniards the least umbrage of his aspiring to the crown, and yet it furnished the Portuguese with assured hopes of a wife and mild government, if they themselves would attempt to enthrone him. (89)

Another contemporary who was also João's principal agent serving in Lisbon, João Pinto Ribeiro, was to hold much the same admiration for the Duke of Bragança. Ribeiro wrote that João knew full well that acting hastily would lead only to ruin, and as a result, João played his cards cautiously and nobly, and when he acted he was to be firmly committed to the cause. Pinto Ribeiro was to play a central role in the fomenting of the Revolution serving as João's direct representative, but the Duke continuously impressed upon his spokesman, that while he did in fact covet the throne of Portugal and likewise desired to drive the hated Spaniards out in no way did he want to be seen as openly desiring such ambitions. Thus with this encouragement and direction Pinto Ribeiro surreptitiously began soliciting to obtain the necessary support for his Duke, especially from the nobles of Portugal.

Although João was to work diligently to make himself as inconspicuous as possible living the peaceful gentlemanly life at Vila Viçosa, Count-Duke Olivares was to keep a watchful eye on João's activities, even before any disturbances in Évora had occurred. Olivares realized that with such a prominent member of the Portuguese nobility to rally around, any possible insurrection could become more wide-spread and volatile and would have the potential for success. Coupled with this was the knowledge that Cardinal Richelieu of France had already sent an emissary to Portugal to actively promote a Portuguese revolt against Spain. Although the Duke of Bragança seemed uninterested by Richelieu's overtures, Olivares took no chances. As early as 1634, in a move aimed at removing João as a threat to Madrid, Olivares offered the Duke of Bragança the position of viceroy of Milan/Lombardy in Italy. João refused the offer arguing that he did not have any knowledge of Italian affairs, nor did he have the monetary revenues necessary for an individual of his status to sustain himself and his entourage. Not surprisingly, with the uprising in the Alentejo in 1637, Olivares' concern of the possible threat posed by João increased. Thus in a plan to reconcile himself with the Portuguese nobles and João in particular, in the summer of 1638 Olivares summoned the most prominent Portuguese nobles to Madrid for a "meeting of the minds." The purported pretext, as Olivares emphasized, was to initiate a major reform of the political administration in Portugal, and to actually include the Portuguese nobility to a much greater degree in the political decision-making process. João, presenting the lead for the other nobles, begged out of the meeting claiming both ill health and again a lack of monetary resources to bring his entourage to Spain.

Surprisingly, João's continual refusals to accept any of the proposals offered by Olivares did not lead to a more intolerant attitude toward the Duke, but ironically the exact opposite. On 28 January 1639, in yet another move to hopefully neutralize João, Olivares appointed the Duke as *governador das armas* of Portugal, a position that, at least on paper, placed João in charge of inspecting all military fortifications in Portugal. Given the fears that Olivares exhibited toward João and his possible leadership of some sort of rebellion against Spain, this move appears to have been most contradictory, but as Dom Luís de Meneses, Conde da Ericeira, in his work *História de Portugal Restaurado* argued, by accepting this position it appeared to the people of Portugal that João was now a loyal servant/vassal to the Spanish king, and his power and image in the eyes of the Portuguese would decline.

Following the revolt in Catalonia in the summer of 1640, the Spanish government's concern about João of Bragança as a potential threat to Spanish control now reached its zenith. As a result, influenced by his minister Olivares, King Philip IV sent a royal courier to Vila Viçosa, arriving on 20 October, demanding that João come to Madrid to personally "confer with the king regarding the state of troops and garrisons in Portugal." Olivares had for some time attempted to lure João out of Portugal, offering contrived positions and false acts of kindness, but now going to Madrid came as a direct order from the king. Although João knew that this was simply another attempt to draw him out of Portugal in order to remove him as a threat, he also knew that this order could not be turned down as cavalierly as he had done in the past. As a result, João set out to show Olivares that he did intend on coming to Spain but not immediately. To demonstrate his intent, preparations for departure from Vila Viçosa were actually begun. Eventually João sent a loyal confidant/representative (João de Sousa Coutinho) to Madrid who conveniently explained João's delays. This sham was given added credibility by actually sending ahead a portion of the Duke's belongings in order to furnish a great house in Madrid and also demonstrate that João was to be in fact arriving soon. With this display and the continued excuses made by his representative, the Spanish government was not to immediately question his behavior.

Thus the question to be raised is –would a man who truly did not desire the throne of Portugal have gone to such great lengths and expose himself and his estate to such danger by continuously saying "no" to Madrid? Truly as both Sousa and Pinto Ribeiro portray, João was playing a game of high-stakes poker to achieve what he wanted all along –to become the rightful King of Portugal and drive the Spanish out of Portugal. What seemingly João was waiting for was the right time and opportunity, and fortunately this occurred on 1 December 1640.

The role of Dona Luísa de Gusmão regarding the Revolution and especially her influence on her husband has also come under heavy scrutiny by historians. Dona Luísa was no doubt an ambitious lady. She knew exactly who she was marrying in the person of Dom João, but it also proved to be a perfect match. She was well-educated, trained in several languages as well as being very eloquent in her native Spanish; she

had a radiant charm about her and carried herself majestically; and it was Dona Luísa who was responsible for turning Vila Viçosa into the cultural center of Portugal. Thus like most well-matched couples, João naturally “consulted” with his wife concerning major decisions whether they centered upon their children, the estate, or indeed a Revolution. Unfortunately, Dona Luísa has frequently been portrayed as a dominating wife; a woman of high ambition whose desire to become queen of Portugal was greater than her husband’s desire to become king. She has actually been unflatteringly referred to as João’s “masculine” wife who “used” her husband’s agent (João Pinto Ribeiro) to achieve her goal of gaining the Portuguese throne. Much of this kind of evaluation comes from one of the most famous episodes of the Portuguese Revolution where Dona Luísa is purported to have advised her husband regarding his ultimate decision to lead the revolution: “My friend, if you go to Madrid, you run the risk of losing your head, if you accept the Crown you run the same hazard. If you must perish it is better to die with honor at home, than ingloriously abroad.” (Chamberlayne 134). Hipolito Raposo, Dona Luísa’s biographer, suggests there is really no evidence at all that she said such words. However, he does suggest that João would never have consented to leading the uprising without Dona Luísa’s complete support.

On that bright crisp December morning in 1640 as the revolutionaries, upon the signal of João Pinto Ribeiro, began to storm the *Paço da Ribeira* which housed the Spanish government, they had no idea about the ultimate outcome. They did possess however all the ingredients that revolutionaries everywhere need to have any hope of success: hatred of a government that for too long had subjected them politically, economically, militarily, and socially; a leader who was, like them, willing to sacrifice everything for what they all felt was a war of good versus evil; and finally they had their ultimate goal of freedom and liberty to live and govern themselves as Portuguese.

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