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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Time: May 29, 1975  
3:30-4:30 p.m.

Place: Ambassador Firestone's  
residence, Brussels,  
Belgium

SUBJECT: Meeting with Portuguese

PARTICIPANTS: Portugal:

Prime Minister Goncalves  
Admiral Rosa Continho  
F. Magalhaes Cruz, Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
S. Sacadura Cabral, Ministry of Foreign  
Affairs  
Commander Duarte Lima, Chief of Cabinet of  
Admiral Continho  
Y. Maltos Procuca, Prime Minister's Cabinet

U.S.:

The President  
Secretary of State Kissinger  
Counselor Sonnenfeldt  
Lieutenant General Scowcroft  
Assistant Secretary for European Affairs  
Hartman  
U.S. Interpreter

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President: Mr. Prime Minister, I want you to know how  
encouraged we are by the change that has  
taken place from the former regime in



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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5

State Dept. Guidelines, State Dep. CW 3/9/04

By llh, NARA, Date 5/17/04

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CLASSIFIED BY: HENRY A. KISSINGER

in Portugal. I would very much like to have from you your appraisal of the situation in Portugal and some indication as far as you are concerned about your feelings on NATO.

Goncalves: First of all in all frankness let me say that we are not a trojan horse in NATO. As we have publicly stated, we will stand by our commitments and abide by our obligations in NATO. We feel that this is particularly important and we do not pretend that there should be a change in the balance of power.

On the contrary, we believe that by maintaining the balance of forces, the situation can be improved. What we want is a national independent policy and we believe that such independence goes hand in hand with an improvement in relations but not if the balance of forces is changed. We recognize the geopolitical context in which we fit. We are Europeans but we also have special ties to our former African territories. We feel that we can make a contribution by becoming a link between the developed countries and the



less developed countries in Africa. But I wish to stress again, that we are here to show that we abide by our commitments and that we do not wish to weaken NATO. Our new democratic regime in Portugal in fact, gives NATO a better overall impression than it had with the old regime.

President: The United States has strongly supported NATO as an alliance of free governments working together. We have invested much in this healthy relationship. The alliance was created to resist communism. We do not agree with the form or operations of the previous government and we are encouraged by the growth of democracy in Portugal. We were greatly encouraged by the vote in the referendum and feel that it is a genuine expression of the will of your people -- an expression of will that occurred for the first time in many years. This is most encouraging to us. We believe that the voice of the people should be reflected in your government and we hope that your government will be a good partner in NATO. We are concerned, however, that the vote does not seem to be reflected by some elements and that,



therefore, the potential exists that some elements will not be as good a NATO partner.

Goncalves: Mr. President are you referring to the presence of communists in the government?

President: Yes, specifically and this bothers us in NATO which was formed to meet the challenges of communism. This does not mean that we do not appreciate the progress made in detente too. What concerns us is that communist influences in Portugal will be reflected in NATO itself.

Goncalves: But that does not happen. The process is very complicated and it would take me some time to explain fully but let me try in a few words. With regard to the Treaty and the secrecy involved, we are now in a period of transition. It has been accepted by all political parties in our country that political power is separate from military power. The President is a military man and he wears another hat as chief of the joint staff -- therefore on all matters dealing with NATO and military affairs they are run through



this system. Then there is the provisional government. It also happens that I am a military man but all military matters run outside the provisional government. There is a clean cut separation. On top of this structure there is the Council of the Revolution which is composed only of military men. The Chairman of the Council is also President of the Republic. There can be no confusion about this and there will be no interference in NATO. What I am stating is the policy of the Council of the Revolution and of the provisional government. The communists have never raised any problems about these arrangements. They support our maintaining our international agreements and commitments. The Portuguese people and the coalition government have accepted these facts. We would not be able to stay in NATO if it were otherwise.

President: You can appreciate that we cannot tolerate a communist influence in NATO.



Goncalves: There will be no such influence. Those who know can tell you this. You must also take account of the fact that the Council of the Revolution is composed only of military men who have their own ethics. They will be concerned about the welfare of our commitments.

President: Are you saying that there are no communists in the Armed Forces and therefore you are a reliable member of NATO.

Goncalves: You can rely on the military entirely. Our enemies have brandished the communist scarecrow. Of course, there is a struggle among the political parties. But our majority does not permit this struggle to affect the operations of the military part of our government.

President: Are you saying that the Armed Forces Movement is free and clear of communist influence?

Goncalves: Yes, we have political positions that are divorced from any party.

Secretary: May I ask a question? The complexity of the system you describe is beyond anything



I studied as a political scientist.

Why are communists in the government?

Why is there pressure to take communists into the cabinet if there are no communists in the Armed Forces Movement?

Goncalves: The Armed Forces Movement (AFM) is strongly non-partisan. The military when we started the AFM committed on their honor to carry out a national program which would be anti-fascist and it would improve the standard of living of the poor people. The military agreed that they would have no party affiliation and that there would be democratic forces organized to carry out the program. The Armed Forces Movement program has been accepted by all the parties allowed in the provisional government.

President: When do you expect the provisional government to become an elected government?

Goncalves: This present government is democratic. It's carrying out a campaign to fight on all fronts to improve the economy, education, etc. Experience shows that you cannot turn



over our country to political parties without a transition -- they need the AFM. So, the real situation is as follows: The Armed Forces Movement is established to carry out and assure change. Then there are the political parties and that is the reality of Portuguese life. We are now framing the next constitution.

President: Who controls the government and what is the timetable to move toward democracy?

Concalves: I believe this has all been described in the press. You may have heard that there was a pact agreed between the AFM and the political parties before the elections. This pact provided that the new interim constitution would have a legislative assembly which would be freely elected and in addition it would be an assembly of the AFM. The salient feature of our system is that there will be a legislative assembly elected by the people in addition to the assembly of the Armed Forces Movement. Both assemblies embody our sovereignty.



President: But which body controls the government?

Goncalves: The Council of the Revolution which is chaired by the President and that will continue during a transition period of 3-5 years then we will need a new constitution, but that requires time.

Secretary: As Professor of Political Sciences, I don't believe I have ever heard of a system which is quite so complex.

Goncalves: It is not complex if you understand that there is a collegial relationship between the two assemblies and that they both report to the President.

Secretary: Who thought up this system? All of us have much admiration for its complex nature.

Goncalves: To understand it would take a while to explanation. It is necessary to devote time but this conversation should help to clear the air and make it easier to understand.

President: I must re-emphasize that there cannot be a strong NATO for the purpose which it was formed and have communists in it.



Goncalves: I have already explained our situation. These institutions meet our own domestic national policy needs. But we are committed to NATO and we stand by our agreements and treaties. We believe we are in a position to contribute to an improvement of world relations. We can help NATO to clear the international air globally. We believe it is necessary to stay in NATO even though we have a different political system. We like the Soviets and the United States to reach agreements. We think that the CSCE is good and that our aims are not inconsistent with these. Our domestic politics may be different.

President: You can do what you wish domestically and if the communists have no influence in NATO you will be a stronger partner.

Goncalves: The communists are carrying out the program of the AFM but we have the final say and we are aware of our own responsibilities.

