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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Portugal

Lisbon, Portugal, July 18, 1947

AUG 22 1947

MAP DIVISION

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Rec'd No. 61

Aug 6, 1947

SUBJECT: Transmitting Memorandum of Conversation Between British and American Ambassadors, Relative to Portuguese Colonial Problems and Their Influence on the Azores Negotiations

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THE HONORABLE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE,

WASHINGTON, D. C.

MR-O-O-O SIR:

I have the honor to transmit herewith the memorandum of a conversation which Ambassador Wiley had with the British Ambassador, Sir Nigel Ronald, on July 15, 1947, relative to Portuguese colonial problems and their influence on the Azores negotiations.

CPH

Respectfully yours,

For the Ambassador

J. Webb Benton
Counselor of Embassy

Enclosure:

Memorandum of Conversation
as stated.

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I called on the British Ambassador, Sir Nigel Ronald, this morning at noon and brought him up to date on such events as had taken place in respect of the Azores conversations. I made reference to the rather unfortunate coincidence that the Azores conversations should coincide with acute Portuguese apprehension having to do chiefly with Macao and possessions in India. Sir Nigel replied that the Portuguese were very troubled, particularly over Macao and their Indian possessions as well as the Patriarchiat. Some time ago, he said, the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Rajahs of Mysore and Travancore had proposed a plan whereby they would buy out the Portuguese. The Portuguese Government had replied in the negative but had countered with a proposal having to do with free port facilities at Margao. When this came up to his Government, Sir Nigel went on to say, the Portuguese and the Indian rulers concerned had been informed that, since their territories were not contiguous, any such proposal would have to be based on a treaty with the Government of India. This apparently acted as a roadblock and no further progress was made.

I mentioned to Sir Nigel that the Foreign Minister had remarked the other day that something like a month ago the Portuguese Government had been obliged to make very urgent representations on the subject of Portuguese colonial possessions. I asked if Sir Nigel knew of these representations, and to whom the representations, if any, had been addressed. Sir Nigel replied first that he knew nothing; then, as an afterthought, he explained: "Yes, I think I know what they are about". He then explained that the Indian Government had caused wild denunciations of the Portuguese Government to be published in the press, calling Goa a blotch on the surface of India, a monument to bad administration, a haven of refuge for anti-Indian agitators, and all kinds of other charges. Whereupon the Indian Government formulated all the foregoing into representations which were sent to the Portuguese Government through the British Embassy in Lisbon. Sir Nigel explained that he had no discretion in the matter; that his Embassy was acting only as a mailbox. Thereupon the aforesaid note was handed in.

Some time later on the Portuguese Government replied, completely rebutting these exaggerated representations in quite temperate and reasonable terms. Sir Nigel explained that the Indian Government had left itself wide open. However, the Portuguese Government had terminated the note by expressing a certain amount of resentment that the Indian Government had formulated such unfortunate and exaggerated accusations. Sir Nigel thought that without a great stretch of the imagination the foregoing could be the strong representations to which I had referred.

Sir Nigel then went on to discuss his own problems. He stated that during the short time he had been in Portugal he had greatly altered his opinion with regard to the Portuguese Government. He described the corporate state organization of Portugal as being something utterly different from what had existed in Italy. He found considerable decentralization of authority and not a one-man rule. He spoke of the Government's sensitiveness to public opinion. Sir Nigel made it clear that his opinion of the Portuguese Government had been greatly altered in favor of the Portuguese. He complained that he had to struggle against the "hostile indifference" of the Labor Government towards Portugal. He was determined to leave nothing undone in an endeavor to change this attitude to

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from the American Embassy, Lisbon, Portugal

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one of "benevolent curiosity". He then quoted to me at length from Chapter XIII of "A History of Western Philosophy" by Bertrand Russell. The extract is attached herewith.

When Sir Nigel makes his first call on Dr. Salazar he will, he told me, make it quite clear that his main object in Portugal will be the accurate representation of things as they are. Sir Nigel lamented the fact that international relations suffered so much from studied misrepresentations.

Lisbon, July 15, 1947.

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