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## FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

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TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

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SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH CHIEF MINISTER PRAKASAM OF ANDHRA

Transmitted as a memorandum on Chief Minister T. Prakasam of Andhra prepared by the reporting officer on the basis of a personal interview and other information obtained during the course of a recent four-day visit to Kurnool.

The Chief Minister's announcement that he would be visiting the United States sometime next month in the course of a projected round-the-world tour is the first news that we have had of this program. It would appear that Prakasam's chief interest, announced earlier in the press, is to visit China and Japan; the stopover in Vienna is for medical reasons attendant on a cataract operation on his eyes performed locally this summer; the visit to the United States appears to have been slated more as a geographic necessity in combining these two than for any specific reason.

Considering Prakasam's age and generally feeble physical condition, the projected trip is an arduous one. It is likewise an expensive one and there is no information as to how it will be financed. With the fall of his Ministry and the resulting confusion in the Andhra political picture, he may well decide to postpone it indefinitely.

Henry C. Ramsey,  
Principal Officer.

Enclosure as stated

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Chief Minister PRAKASAM - Memorandum of conversation and other information and impressions gleaned during Kurnool visit, November 2-5, 1954.

I called on the Chief Minister Prakasam at his residence on November 3, 1954, at the end of the day's Assembly session. The call was very brief since I realized how tired he must be after listening to the heated debate, which had lasted until 6:30 that evening. He drove up to the bungalow after I had arrived so that I watched him helped out, painfully and with effort, from the car which by means of a ramp had been run up level with the porch. His two sons supported him on either side while he walked the few steps necessary into the house.

He took my hand when we were introduced and held it until I left, as if to feel what he could not see. Despite the helplessness and frailty of a very old man -- some say that he is 86, others insist that he is nearer 90 -- there is an inner strength and vigor of personality that leaps those bonds.

After I had made a very brief statement as to the purpose of my visit, Prakasam said, "I am glad you have come. I like Americans. I will visit the United States next month." I expressed some surprise at this unexpected announcement and at the same time assured him that I knew he would be received with the honor and respect due a great patriot.

On leaving I talked to his elder son, who also acts as his private secretary and has been a pivot for scandal and reports of extortion in making appointments with his father or granting other favors. Hanumantha is an unprepossessing, fat, oily character who in appearance lends validity to all the nasty stories told about him.

Hanumantha said his father, his brother (who also acts as a personal assistant-secretary), himself and another secretary would be leaving by plane for the U.K. early in December. They planned a brief stopover in Rome and in Vienna where his father would be fitted for glasses. Asked if the results of the cataract operation were successful, Hanumantha said that the healing was progressing but that it had been decided to go to Vienna for the final check-up and fitting of glasses. I inferred that the trip onward from the U.K. to the U.S. was more or less incidental to Prakasam's projected visit to Japan and China. Hanumantha added that the program was still tentative but would be finalized on his father's visit to Delhi later in the week. However, Prakasam canceled his Delhi trip following the Government's defeat on November 6, 1954, in a no-confidence motion.

COMMENT: Except for urgent medical treatment abroad, it seems unlikely that Prakasam will leave Andhra during the present fluid state pending new elections. Despite his age and feebleness, he has no intention of resigning his leadership. Friends and foes alike say that he wants to be Chief Minister as long as he lives. And he has still much to give any party because of his continuing personal appeal and hold over the masses.

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As an example in point, Pattabhirama Rao, Minister for Education and Prohibition, told me that after the decision had finally been made to locate the capitol in Kurnool rather than Guntur or Vijawada, there was great resentment even in Congress ranks in the coastal area. A meeting was called by local Congressmen in Guntur which turned out to be a mass gathering with predominant Communist participation. The question arose as to who could face the mob and quell their antagonism. While the Deputy Chief Minister, Sanjeeviah Reddi, is a fluent and adroit speaker, the task was beyond him. Prakasam stepped up to the mike. He said that now was not the time or the place for him to set forth why they had decided on Kurnool as the capitol -- but that he had a secret book in which every reason, and there were many, was fully documented. The people were to believe him, not to question him. When the time was ripe, he would open the book and tell them why. Now they were to accept his word.

According to Pattabhirama Rao, this was a most remarkable demonstration of bluff which no one else in the Congress could have done successfully. Communists and Congressites alike accepted his word and departed peacefully because Prakasam had said it.

Prakasam's presence is somewhat in the order of an emergency brake -- you may not have to use it, but it is very comforting knowing that it is there. At the opening of the Assembly debate following the Governor's address and statement of government policy, Prakasam announced that henceforth the Deputy C.M., Sanjeeviah Reddi, would act as Leader of the House and would answer all questions on his behalf. Nevertheless, Prakasam attended and sat through every session of the Assembly without a moment out for relaxation or a smoke in the corridors. He is remarkably alert, hears everything, remembers everything.

Pattabhirama Rao recounted another incident that had happened that very morning when Prakasam, at the conclusion of a series of speeches by the Opposition, leaned across the table and, quoting word for word a point made by the Communist Gopal Rao much earlier in the debate, had reprimanded him for parodying now what he had said in 1942 when he was a member of the Congress. Gopal Rao shamefacedly admitted the correctness and the basis of the reprimand. But the reproof came as a shock to the whole Assembly that Prakasam, old as he is, blind as he is, is still so alert, so keen.

There have been many rumors that Prakasam's devotion to his two sons and his unwillingness to listen to any criticism of their corrupt practices had weakened his own prestige in Andhra. As far as I could gather these reports are unfounded. Everyone admits that Prakasam's sons are unscrupulous and out to profit on their father's name; at the same time the sons are accepted as simply weak spots and in no way damaging to a great man's reputation. In a way, his blind affection for them is another tribute to his personality and endears him further to the people. The Secretariat and his cabinet colleagues are, however, completely alive to the situation and feel that they have fairly well isolated the sons from doing any damage:

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all papers are completed at a ministerial level and merely sent to Prakasam as a formality. No gaps are left for his decision, no alternatives left for his choice which the sons might exploit for squeeze money.

Edith C. Wall

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