

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

~~SECRET/NODIS~~

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Francisco da Costa Gomes, President of Portugal
Foreign Minister Mario Soares
Ambassador Joao Hall Themido

President Gerald Ford
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State and
Assistant to the President for National Security
Affairs
Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant to
the President for National Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME: October 18, 1974; 12:00-1:00 p.m.

PLACE: The Oval Office
The White House

Kissinger: The Foreign Minister is a great orator.

President Ford: I understand he is a very successful lawyer. I am very happy to have you here. I understand this is the first visit of a Portuguese President to the United States.

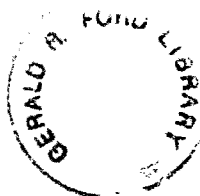
Costa Gomes: It is a great pleasure to be here, especially at a time when the atmosphere should be clarified.

[The press is admitted briefly for photographs and then dismissed].

President Ford: As I said, we are delighted to have you. I am interested in any thoughts and observations you can give us about your country.

Costa Gomes: I am very glad to be here to discuss with you. This is indeed a signal opportunity. I am a special admirer of the United States, having spent two years in Norfolk. I would be glad to be able to clarify the situation in my country since the press often did not report events in my country with accuracy.

SECRET/NODIS



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CLASSIFIED BY: HENRY A. KISSINGER

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, SEC. 3.5
NSC MEMO, 11/24/99, STATE DEPT. GUIDELINES, State reviews 5/10/04
BY JK, NARA, DATE 5/6/04

President Ford: Please do.

Costa Gomes: There has been a profound and sudden transformation from a dictator to full freedom regained. We have not been able to avoid all kinds of disruption, but I am pleased to say we have managed to avoid violence.

Many of the limits which should have been in place to handle continuity of rule -- the laws, the framework for exchange -- many were lacking. Nevertheless, all the various groups in the country have been granted full freedom and have enjoyed that freedom. There were even some attempts by reactionary forces to restore the situation before 24 April, and the first attempt corresponded to the first provisional government.

As you may know, in Portugal there is a fear of the powerful influence of the Communist Party, which is the only party which emerged from the revolution with a structure which makes it a going concern as a party. It is only one member of the government, but the only one organized. It was this fear which was played on by the forces of reaction in their attempts to restore the previous regime. The events of the 28th of September represent a reaction on the part of the right-wing parties to make a demonstration of their power.

In the midst of these events, Spinoia exercised enormous influence because he brought to bear the Silent Majority. I have been a personal friend of Spinoia for 50 years. I have the greatest esteem for him as a person and a military man. But I never conversed with him about the political situation in the country. On 28 September I made a last attempt to persuade Spinoia not to resign by persuading him that the situation in the country was different from that represented in his speech. It is my testimony that the transition from Spinoia to my government has taken place without disturbance and that the present government is more stable. Soares will back me on this.

After September 28, the entire press, including the American press, seemed to think the entire government was swinging to the left. I assure you that the present provisional government, the President, the armed forces, stand ready to carry out the programs outlined by the military forces to have a neutral, middle of the road policy, one which will bring a full democracy with freedom for all guaranteed.

Any one who knows the Portuguese people knows they are very anti-Communist in sentiment. This doesn't mean the Communist Party is



not without strength, without organization, and doesn't exercise a great deal of control in industrialized sections, especially around Lisbon and Oporto. But an overwhelming part of the population is to the north of the river where the Communist influence is nil.

At the present time our major problems are decolonization -- which is being vigorously prosecuted on the basis of commitment to the documents of the UN, and economic problems. Guinea-Bissau has become independent. Angola is our most difficult problem. The local parties are divided into three factions which cannot at this time seem to get together. But we will try to get a provisional government in which all three parties will be represented.

As to the economic problem, as I see it, it is very serious in our country. If it is not solved it could lead to the extreme right or to the extreme left prevailing.

Secretary Kissinger is familiar with the problem we are facing and I think he agrees Portugal needs help from its friends not only for its internal economic problem but for Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique who are going to need a great deal of help in coping with their problems. While this is my personal view, if we can solve the economic problem, the political problem will be solved within the program set by the military, and we will be able to hold elections in March, in which all parties will be represented but in which the Communists will not have the strength many fear.

President Ford: Can all participate?

Costa Gomes: All parties are completely free to participate.

President: How many parties are there?

Costa Gomes: There are many parties, but the principal ones are the Communist, the Socialist, the Social Democrats, and another. The military leaders can participate only if they withdraw from the military. This is a contract of honor.

President Ford: We think it is important that you start these democratic processes. We think that is healthy and important.

Costa Gomes: It is also very important -- indeed a point of honor -- for these elections to go forward. The media have been stressing that we are moving to the left, but we are making a special effort to get the media to



adopt a more balanced view and we are having some success.

Kissinger: We hear that the process is leading to domination of the media by the Communists.

Costa Gomes: We didn't introduce the Communist elements. They were already in place in the media, but we have moved against them, especially some of the more radical elements even to the left of the Communists.

President Ford: We think it is important for NATO to be strengthened, and we are very worried about Communist influence in any member country. We just couldn't tolerate Communism in NATO itself.

Costa Gomes: This fear you express is unjustified. I am very familiar with NATO -- I have been with NATO since 1951.

Kissinger: All liaison with NATO has gone through the President's office.

Costa Gomes: So I am certain that there is no doubt about our devotion to NATO.

President Ford: I am glad to hear it. It is an important point with us.

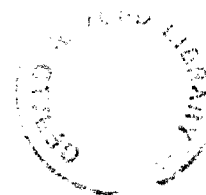
Costa Gomes: Our contribution to NATO has not been effective over the past years because of our colonies, but when we complete de-colonization, we will be able to do more if NATO will help us with equipment.

President Ford: We support decolonization and, speaking for the United States, we want to help, but the Congress and I will have to have assurance that Portugal is a part of the same team as it has been since 1951 and is not going off in a different direction toward a different alliance. Then we will be willing to help, at least to do our share.

Costa Gomes: I am at a loss to know what to say except to invite you to Portugal when you go to Europe so you can see the trends in our country as they really are, to quiet your press, which I consider unjustified.

President Ford: We had these reports which have concerned us so, and we are glad to have your report, and we are very much encouraged by your report.

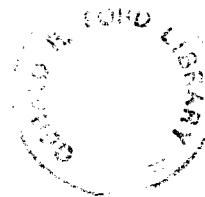
Kissinger: I will be able to pursue this further at lunch.



Costa Gomes: I wish to express my gratitude for the opportunity to explain the situation in my country and express the friendship and esteem of the people of Portugal to the American people.

President Ford: The American people feel the same way toward the people of Portugal. When I go to Europe I will talk to Secretary Kissinger and we will see about a visit to Portugal.

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NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
Presidential Libraries Withdrawal Sheet

WITHDRAWAL ID 017738

REASON FOR WITHDRAWAL National security restriction

TYPE OF MATERIAL Briefing Paper

CREATOR'S NAME Henry A. Kissinger

TITLE Meeting with Francisco Da Costa Gomes,
President of Portugal

CREATION DATE 10/18/1974

VOLUME 5 pages

COLLECTION/SERIES/FOLDER ID . 031400267

COLLECTION TITLE National Security Adviser. Memoranda of
Conversations

BOX NUMBER 6

FOLDER TITLE October 18, 1974 - Ford, Kissinger,
Portuguese President Costa Gomes,
Foreign Minister Mario Soares

DATE WITHDRAWN 05/11/2004

WITHDRAWING ARCHIVIST GG

26

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
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REASON FOR WITHDRAWAL National security restriction

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CREATION DATE 10/10/1974

VOLUME 6 pages

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Conversations

BOX NUMBER 6

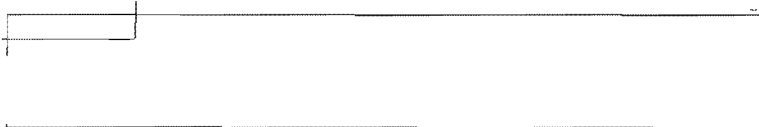
FOLDER TITLE October 18, 1974 - Ford, Kissinger,
Portuguese President Costa Gomes,
Foreign Minister Mario Soares

DATE WITHDRAWN 05/11/2004

WITHDRAWING ARCHIVIST GG

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PORTUGAL

Francisco da COSTA GOMES

President; Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces



On 30 September 1974, after the sudden resignation of President António Spínola, the ruling military Junta of National Salvation named Gen Francisco da Costa Gomes (pronounced COHStah GOHmess) to replace Spínola as President of Portugal.

Costa Gomes was a member of the junta at the time of its establishment on 25 April 1974, following the virtually bloodless coup of the Armed Forces Movement (MFA), and he has served since 29 April as Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces. He intends to retain that powerful military post. His continuing as President and Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, however, will depend on his ability to work with the MFA left-wing element, which was responsible for his predecessor's downfall.

His Military Role

A career army officer, Costa Gomes has enjoyed an excellent reputation within the military.

his position of trust under two very different regimes. Costa Gomes also was Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces (September 1972-March 1974) under former Prime Minister Marcello Caetano.

As Chief of Staff, Costa Gomes is the operational commander of the armed forces and is responsible for coordinating military contacts with NATO and for issuing statements of the Portuguese Government's opinions regarding such international military subjects (as the US Base Agreements). He also heads the Continental Operational Command, a military force created on 12 July 1974 and empowered to intervene directly to maintain and restore law and order when the normal police forces are inadequate.



DECLASSIFIED w/ portions exempted
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CIA OPV 12/1/2010
By dal NARA, Date 3/5/10





Francisco da COSTA GOMES


His MFA Connections

In July 1973, while he was Chief of Staff under Caetano, Costa Gomes apparently was told of the existence of a "captains' movement," which became the forerunner of the MFA. Young officers had organized informally to give themselves more clout in voicing their grievances about pay, promotions and the wars in Africa.


Costa Gomes was the first general to give his support to the captains' movement, and he gained and apparently has maintained the respect of its successor organization, the MFA. He sympathized with the captains and did as much as he could to improve conditions, but he did not take part in plotting the coup.

Costa Gomes has said he is a close friend of Gen. Vasco Gonçalves, a leading MFA member who played a major role in the successful 25 April coup. Gonçalves served as Prime Minister (13 July-30 September) during Spínola's presidency and has been retained in that post by Costa Gomes. Costa Gomes as Chief of Staff and Gonçalves as Defense Minister will also work in tandem on military matters.

Political Question Mark
Becomes President

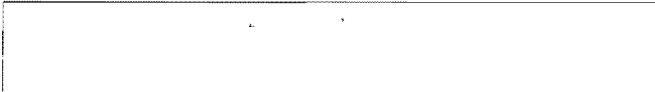
Costa Gomes, who is most often described as a moderate, 



 He rose through the ranks in the service of the conservative, authoritarian regime (1932-68) of the late Premier António Salazar; in 1961 he was suspected of involvement in an attempted coup against Salazar; in 1973 he foiled a plan by extreme rightists to overthrow the Caetano government.

An old Africa hand, Costa Gomes long deplored the persistence of the Caetano regime in continuing a doomed colonial war effort. He acquired





Francisco da COSTA GOMES

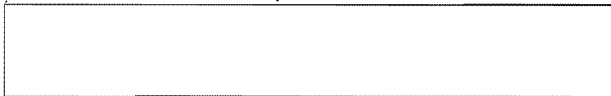
his firsthand knowledge of the area's problems during 1965-69 as deputy commander (later, acting commander) of the Mozambique Military Region and during 1970-73 as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces in Angola. As early as May 1971 he advocated improving conditions for the natives as a more realistic step toward a solution. In February 1974 General Spinoia published his now famous book, *Portugal and the Future*, which called for an end to the costly colonial wars and offered a political solution. Because Costa Gomes approved the publication, Caetano dismissed him as Chief of Staff in March 1974.

After the MFA overthrew the Caetano regime in April 1974, Costa Gomes joined its leadership and became the second-ranking member of the ruling seven-man Junta of National Salvation. When he was reinstated as Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, the post was upgraded to make him the military equal of the Prime Minister. The general soon became a law unto himself by keeping the defense establishment completely apart from the provisional government. He continued to serve President Spinoia, however, by acting as a middle man and conciliator between the latter and the MFA.

In August 1974 Spinoia became discouraged with some of the MFA programs, particularly that for rapid decolonization, and planned to resign, but Costa Gomes persuaded him to stay on for the sake of unity within the armed forces. Finally the pressure from leftist elements in the MFA became so great that Spinoia felt he could no longer lead the country, and he did resign. When Costa Gomes assumed the presidency he issued a short statement saying that he felt the political situation was less gloomy than Spinoia considered it.

His Views on Colonial Africa

Presumably, Costa Gomes agrees with the MFA rapid decolonization program but his views on



[Redacted]

Francisco da COSTA GOMES

that subject are not known. When he traveled to Angola and Mozambique after being reinstated as Chief of Staff on what was officially described as a factfinding tour, he spoke favorably of self-determination.

[Redacted] he is pessimistic about the situation in Mozambique, primarily because racial antagonism is strong there. He foresees that the Mozambiguans will chose independence from Portugal and then plunge into a civil war.

The general is more optimistic about the outcome in Angola, where he believes Portuguese talks with the African rebels will be fruitful. He thinks it quite possible that, when given the opportunity for self-determination, the rebels may opt for some form of continued relationship with Portugal.

Attitude Toward NATO and the United States

As Chief of Staff, Costa Gomes is responsible for military contact with NATO; he attended the June 1974 Defense Planning Committee meeting in Brussels. He firmly believes that Portugal should fulfill its NATO obligations, and in his first presidential address to the nation he promised that it would. Early in his career Costa Gomes spent 2 years in the United States (1954-56), assigned to the official Mission of NATO at the Supreme Allied Command, Atlantic, in Norfolk, Virginia. He favors closer relations with the United States and supports organizing, training and equipping the Portuguese Armed Forces along US lines.

Professional Assessment

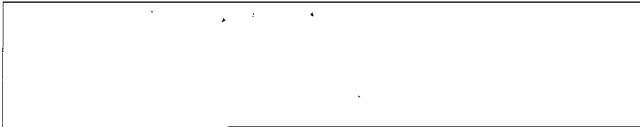
As a soldier, Gen. Costa Gomes is respected

[Redacted]

[Redacted] While serving in Angola, he helped to reorganize the overseas military forces. His wide variety of

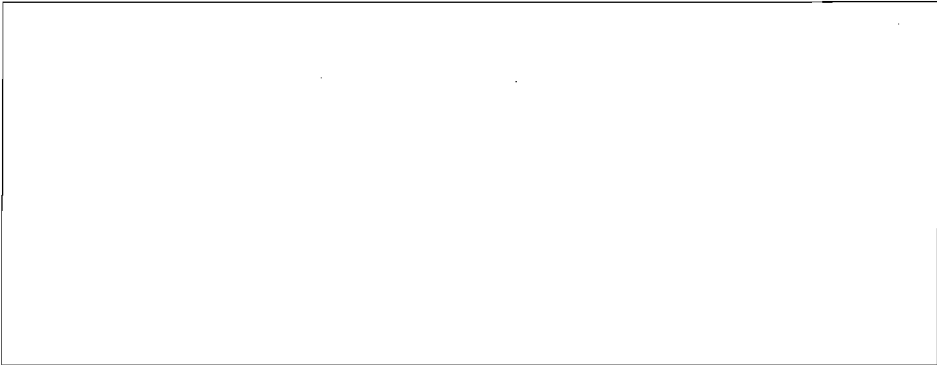
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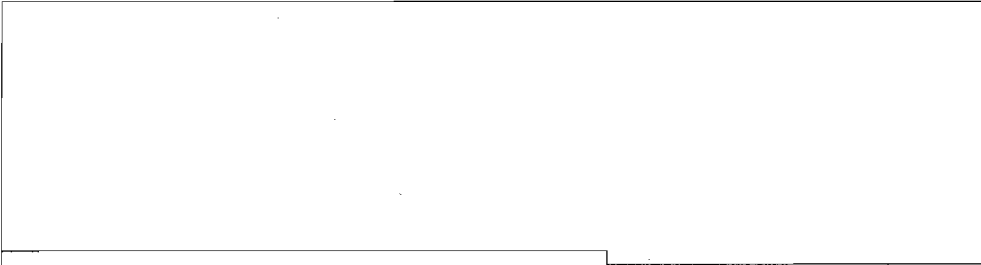
Francisco da COSTA GOMES


experience in the military has enabled him to make changes useful in strengthening army logistics and production facilities as well.



Early Life and Career

Francisco da Costa Gomes was born on 30 June 1914 in the northern town of Chaves. He joined the army in July 1931 and rose steadily through the ranks. While in the army he attended Porto University, graduating in 1944 with distinction as a mathematics major. In addition to his African assignments, he has served as under secretary of the army (1958-61), as inspector of the Cavalry Directorate and professor of the high command course (April-August 1965) and as quartermaster general of the army (September 1969-March 1970).



 He holds the Gold Distinguished Medal with palms, the Commemorative Medal of the Mozambique Expedition and the Military Order of Avis, with the degree of commander. He speaks, reads and writes English well.





Francisco da COSTA GOMES .

Costa Gomes married Maria Estela Veloso de Antas Varajão in 1952. They have one son, born in 1956, who is currently studying law.

10 October 1974



NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
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DATE WITHDRAWN 05/11/2004

WITHDRAWING ARCHIVIST GG

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1/21/10

21

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
Presidential Libraries Withdrawal Sheet

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CREATION DATE 05/07/1974

VOLUME 5 pages

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Transcribed
by PWR
10/21/74

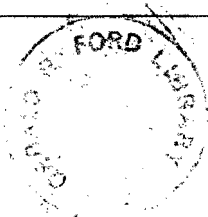
Free/Costa Gomes
12:00-1:00, 10/18/74

- K The FAL is a great orator
- P I understand a very successful lump
Very happy to hear you have. I understand this
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(Press in)
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- P G & D will be delighted to have you. I'm interested
in this & location you can give us about your
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- G Very glad to be w/ you. This is a real ^{being sent} a signal
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E.O. 12958, SEC. 3.5

NSC MEMO, 11/24/98, STATE DEPT. GUIDELINES State review 3/10/04
BY da, NARA, DATE 5/6/04



G As you may know, in Port there is a fear of
power & influence of CP, which is only party
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18000
Cms. - Roberts
Fellows

people know they are very anti trust in
sentiment. This doesn't mean P is not
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deal of control in industrial sections, esp
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the main major problems are decentralization -
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be solved w/ in prov gov by treaty & we
will be able to hold elections in prov, in which
all parties will be rep represented but in which
Crests will not have a strength many years.

- P ~~Cms~~ Council participants
- G All parties are completely free to participate.
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Trump would
& PRC.

NSC to 330?

- many parties, but principal are
- G I think Socialist, Com. Demo, + ... The military leaders can participate only if they w/drawn from military. This is a constraint of hours
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