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EUROPE'S CONTRIBUTION TO AMERICAN CIVILIZATION

Address by

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I feel very honoured with this opportunity of coming before such a distinguished audience to speak on Europe's contribution to American Civilization. Being a representative of Portugal, it seems obvious that my remarks will be directed at Portugal's contribution.

It was with a mixed feeling of pleasure and fear that I accepted the charge of delivering a speech on this matter; pleasure because that is what any Portuguese can feel when he is called upon to speak on the interpenetration of civilizations to which Portugal has contributed so much all along its history; fear because, conscious of my shortcomings, I looked at the list of distinguished speakers on this series of lectures and realized the difficulty -- I would even say the impossibility -- of keeping my speech at the level of those you have already heard and will hear in the future on this same matter.

I ask therefore for your indulgence in your appreciation of the words that follow, in which I shall try to present to you a picture of my country's contribution to American civilization since the far away days of the Portuguese navigations all over the world.

2. One speaks of "American Civilization". Let us first of all produce a definition of it. The United States, as everyone knows, is a country based on immigration from Europe -- a Nation of Immigrants, as President Kennedy called it in the title of one of his books. Since the foundation of Jamestown and the arrival of the Pilgrims of the "Mayflower" in the XVII century up to the present days, a flow of people coming mainly from Europe contributed to the development of the immense riches of this country and transformed it from a vast and almost uninhabited land, three centuries ago, into the greatest power of

the world today.

People who left Europe because they were dissatisfied with their own government or because they were simply adventurous, or even because pressed by economic difficulties in the overcrowded continent of Europe, they were seeking better living conditions in the large open spaces of America. They brought with them their own customs and traditions, their own civilization which is always one -- Western Civilization. Particular conditions of this society led to what is usually called the American way of life. Way of life must not be confounded with Civilization; it is a certain moment of its evolution. It follows more or less closely the national progress of the country and the sociological conditions of the moment. Civilization however is a much broader concept and I do not think that we can properly speak of American Civilization as an entity in itself.

I would rather prefer to refer to Western Civilization or, at least, not to try to present American Civilization in a kind of contrast with European Civilization, for instance. One and the other fall within the wider framework of Western Civilization. American Civilization, as I think the sponsors of this series of lectures had in mind, means Western Civilization such as it appears in America as a result of the permanent contribution of the various groups of immigrants from Europe which gave this country its living substratum. And this concept seems more compatible with the definition of Western Civilization as it is given by the great historian Arnold Toynbee; the Greco-Latin Civilization which was born in the Mediterranean basin, later flourished in Western Europe in the Middle Ages and was brought to the other side of the Atlantic as a result of the XV and XVI century's navigations.

And here we find the first contribution of the Portuguese, in fact a worldwide contribution, decisive to the expansion of Western

Civilization, which led Toynbee to consider modern history as divided into two periods: before and after Vasco da Gama, referring to the great captain who commanded the first sea expedition from Europe to India around the Cape, and opened the East to the impact of Western Civilization in 1498.

Reference to the Portuguese navigations to the East however is out of the scope of this lecture. I shall simply mention, rather briefly, those which concern directly the North American Continent.

3. Before Columbus discovered America in 1492, Portuguese navigators had already travelled westwards exploring the Atlantic Ocean in all directions, though the Portuguese main effort was concentrated in the preparation of the expedition which led them to the Indian Coast under Vasco da Gama. Not many records are left of those pre-Columbian navigations, but it seems established that in 1452 Diogo de Teive, searching for the legendary Island of the Seven Cities, approached, if he did not even reach Newfoundland. This was quoted by Columbus himself in his notes, later published by his son.

Between 1495 and 1498, Joao Fernandes Lavrador and Pedro de Barcelos reached Greenland, which for many years was called Labrador from the name of the first one. At the same epoch, Joao Vaz Corte Real navigated several times towards Newfoundland, a region which later was very detailedly explored by his sons Gaspar and Miguel Corte Real. As a prize for his efforts, the King of Portugal gave to him and his successors the government and the exploitation of the lands he discovered and might still discover. Thus started the voyages of the two Corte Real brothers.

In 1500, Gaspar Corte Real made a reconnaissance of Newfoundland and approached Greenland where he could not land on account of the floating ices.

The following year with three ships he reached the present Labrador, Newfoundland, and Nova Scotia. Two of those ships went back to Lisbon carrying products of the newly explored lands and some natives presenting quite a different aspect from those which were brought from other regions the Portuguese ships were reaching.

The third ship, with Gaspar Corte Real aboard, had disappeared. In 1502 his brother Miguel left Lisbon searching for him, but unfortunately he also disappeared and all the endeavours to find the two brothers failed by 1506, date in which they were officially considered as dead.

Some American historians refer to some old American Indian traditions concerning the arrival of white sailors at Narragansett Bay, in what the Indians called a "white house" or a "white bird" -- the Portuguese caravels on the waters of the bay might certainly look like huge white sea birds.

Recently a rock with inscriptions were found on the mouth of Taunton River in this Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It is called the Dighton Rock and some experts are of the opinion that it dates from & celebrates the passage of Miguel Corte Real by that region. I understand that Dighton Rock has been the object of a great discussion between those who consider it a memorial left by a Portuguese navigator -- most likely Corte Real -- or a simple fallacy. I am not going to reopen the discussion. At the best of my knowledge it was recently decided that it is a true monument of the passage of the Portuguese and the municipality of Taunton envisages its protection as such.

It seems that it can be established that Miguel Corte Real landed near the mouth of the Taunton River, fought the Indians in the region -- their traditions also speak of thunder and lightning coming out of the "white houses" -- and finally reached a peaceful settlement with

them. Some historians even say that when one of the Indian chiefs died, Corte Real replaced him and ruled the Wampanoag tribe. Later in 1524, when Verranzano dealt with these Indians he remarked that they were more advanced than the others in New England and possessed metal objects of undoubtful European manufacture.

The list of the Portuguese navigators and explorers who contributed to expand Western Civilization in the North American Continent is long and I do not wish to lose much time now by trying to exhaust it. I shall only refer to some of the more important ones.

In 1520, Joao Alves Fagundes discovered the mainland and some islands in the vicinity of the mouth of the St. Lawrence River; in 1525, Estevao Gomes, a Portuguese navigator on a Spanish ship, was charged to find the passage between the Atlantic and the Pacific by the northwest, and explored the coasts of Maine, of the whole of New England, and sailed down to New Jersey, discovering and exploring the Hudson River 82 years before Henry Hudson arrived there, giving his name to all those lands as they appear in a map of 1529; in 1541 Andre de Campos went through Texas, crossed part of what now is that State and crossed also the Mississippi and Colorado Rivers; in the same year Andre de Vasconcelos went into the interior of what is now Florida, Georgia, and the Carolinas, and penetrated as far as Alabama, Arkansas and Oklahoma; in 1542 Joao Rodrigues Cabrilho discovered the coasts of California and entered the bay of San Diego; in 1595, when we were under Spanish rule Sebastiao Rodrigues Sermenho was charged to prepare plans for the colonization of California.

And I could go on quoting.

4. While we are dealing with historic facts, it seems interesting to evoke also the action of another Portuguese, about two hundred years later, during the American struggle for independence. I mean Pedro Francisco or Peter Francisco, a soldier of George Washington whose

legendary deeds reached great fame. Little is known about the real origin of Peter Francisco. The legend presents him as a son of a Portuguese nobleman who sailed to Virginia in the middle of the XVIII century as a small child to escape the enemies of his father who was involved in revolutionary activities. Others say he was merely a cabin boy of a Portuguese ship stranded in Virginia in 1765.

In fact, while still in his teens he reached the gigantic stature of 6 feet, 6 inches. At the age of 16 he enlisted in the celebrated Tenth Virginia Regiment and marched off to war. He first saw action on the field of Brandywine and was wounded there. Another well-known man was also wounded in the same battle, Lafayette. According to tradition both met on that occasion and thus started what was to become a lifelong friendship.

Less than a month later Francisco was in battle again at Germantown. The following June found him on the battlefield in Monmouth where he received his second wound. A year later he was wounded again in the storming of two British outposts of Paulus Hook and Stormy Point.

Having served out his enlistment, Francisco returned to Virginia but promptly volunteered again, this time in a militia regiment headed by Col. William Mayo, and again he distinguished himself in action saving the life of his commander. He joined this time a cavalry troop put under the command of General Greene and fought against Cornwallis' army in Guilford Courthouse. There he got his fourth wound, but again he acted most gallantly charging with William Washington's cavalry and slaying eleven men of the enemy with his oversized sword.

This particular deed is celebrated in a monument unveiled on July 4, 1904 at the Guilford Courthouse National Military Park in North Carolina.

Though wounded Francisco went on fighting and took part in the

first assault against Cornwallis' troops, which caused him to be wounded once more, this time almost fatally. Riding headlong upon the squares of guardsmen he was impaled upon a bayonet upthrust from a prickly hedge. The steel laid open his entire upper leg and he tumbled from the saddle and collapsed on the battleground. A Quaker found Francisco on the battlefield, still breathing, took him home and nursed him back to health. By the time he had recovered from his last wound the war had moved ahead of him and the stage was being set for Yorktown.

Trudging north on foot, Peter Francisco volunteered as a scout. One day at Ward's Tavern nine dragoons surprised him but, through a ruse, Francisco grabbed an enemy saber, cut down three of the British and escaped on a dragoon's horse. That was the last of his almost incredible wartime exploits.

Apart from these details of his action during the war of independence, little more is known about the life of Peter Francisco. I gather that some people with the same name, his great grandsons, still live in Virginia where they are farmers.

I went perhaps into too much detail concerning the deeds of Peter Francisco. They seem however worth being remembered as a symbol of Luso-American fraternity. By shedding his blood several times in the most daring circumstances this man fought with all his forces for the cause most heartily cherished by all Americans of his time: the independence of the country.

5. We mentioned before the decisive role of the European immigration in the modeling of the character of the North American nation. Let us now say a few words about the Portuguese immigration in the United States.

It is difficult to give a precise date for the arrival of the first Portuguese settlers in America (and by America here I obviously

mean the United States). We can fairly put it around the first years of the XIX century. These immigrants were mainly whale fishermen, who came from the Islands of the Azores, to work in New England. It is interesting to note that owing to their profession, these Portuguese settled on the coastal zones -- New England first, California and Hawaii later. Curiously enough still today the main nucleus of Portuguese and Luso-Americans are established near the sea.

It is a happy coincidence that I am delivering this speech today in Boston, in the center of one of the most important communities of Portuguese origin in the United States. The person who travels near the coast in Rhode Island and Massachusetts can see for himself the quantity of Portuguese names in the front of shops or at the entrance of houses, not only in towns like Fall River, New Bedford or Newport, but also along the roads in motels, restaurants, nurseries, etc. Many of these families have been established in New England for many generations. Sometimes their names, for practical reasons, were Anglicized -- so we have for instance Perry for Pereira, Marshall for Machado, Frates for Freitas, Oliver for Oliveira, Travis for Tavares and real translations like White for Branco, Brooke for Ribeiro and Simon or Simons for Simoes. The great majority of them acquired also American citizenship. Deep in their hearts however, they still feel like Portuguese and they have the nostalgia of the distant homeland of their ancestors. And many go back there on a visit, send money to their relatives at home and facilitate the immigration into America of a few of them, thus helping to increase the flow of Portuguese who come to settle in this country.

It is difficult to present an accurate figure of all the Portuguese and Americans of Portuguese descent we can find in the United States. I would put the total around one million. The oldest community is that of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, which may have between

250 and 350 thousand people. Other important communities are established in the metropolitan area of New York and in New Jersey, mainly in Newark and Elizabeth, in California and Hawaii, and more recently in a few points of the State of Connecticut.

Apart from these communities where there is a larger concentration of Portuguese, one can find them or their descendants all over the country, sometimes in mines, farms or big industrial factories. And not only Portuguese originating from the European provinces of Portugal immigrated into the United States. A few thousand came from the Overseas Province of Cabo Verde and are settled in New England, in California and in the New York area. They occupy themselves mainly in the fishing industry and as sailors.

The moderate rate of immigration in the years 1918-1922 which served as a basis for the quota calculations in the immigration laws now in force in the United States was the cause of the relatively very low figure of 438 immigrants of Portuguese origin allowed, in principle, to enter the United States each year. Many are the Portuguese willing to emigrate to this country who patiently wait their turn hoping that, as was already promised more than once, the quota system will be altered in order to allow a greater influx of Portuguese immigrants.

6. The presence of so many Portuguese in this country could not fail to have a certain effect on the habits of the communities where they are concentrated. Even those who more than one generation ago acquired American citizenship keep deep in their hearts their feelings of Portuguese. We have therefore in some communities the same kind of feasts we have in Portugal, the same folk-lore songs, the same habits which resist the influence of the Anglo-Saxon majority of the country. In my official capacity I have often the occasion to visit the Luso-American communities in different parts of the East of the United

States. It is with great pleasure that I notice that they did not lose their basic Portuguese feelings. I saw Portuguese from Cabo Verde who barely speak any more Portuguese -- so long they have been in this country -- sing and play their folksongs as if they were in their islands of origin. I saw recently in Brooklyn, New York, a Portuguese amateur singer who, though he has been in this country for 23 years, seemed to have arrived yesterday from Lisbon. And I could go on quoting many experiences in this field.

All these Luso-American communities have their clubs, many of them have churches they build very often in the style of the churches in Portugal, and all directed by their own Portuguese priests. They have also newspapers in Portuguese which help to keep them in touch with their language of origin and with events in the villages of their homeland. One of these papers, in fact a daily one, is published very near here, in New Bedford, Massachusetts.

The Portuguese people are traditionally quiet, law-abiding people. With a deep-rooted individualistic sense they present some contradictions which foreigners find difficult to understand. A perfect presentation of their character was made by the Prime Minister Dr. Oliveira Salazar in an article he published in the British review "International Affairs". I do not resist the temptation of quoting those words.

"Profoundly Catholic when he is religious, the Portuguese is at the same time anticlerical; studious and zealous he is, in principle, no respecter of his teacher; highly competent professionally, he finds it difficult to adapt himself to communal work. In his daily life, the individual Portuguese has his own concepts, which are different from those of his neighbors in matters of detail, which may be of secondary importance but which almost always will suffice to prevent the joining

of hands in a common effort. This Portuguese characteristic imparts to our people an acute critical sense which, in the face of events, leads them to notice that which is genuine and essential in them, but which at the same time, minimizes their impact and stimulates a capacity for observation that is penetrating, though, almost always, directed at the negative aspect of people and things".

All the characters of the Portuguese mentality were kept in the Luso-American communities. It is for this reason that wherever I have been in my area of jurisdiction, I have always heard from the local authorities the most flattering words concerning the civic behaviour of the Luso-American communities: a behaviour the same authorities consider a very useful example to be followed by others. Hard working, patient, well-behaved people, they cannot but constitute good citizens for the great American nation.

Traditionally colour-blind, they also can decisively contribute to the racial coexistence so necessary for the continuation of the peaceful development of this country, a problem which has occupied the headlines of the American press in the last few months, and seems to be a major preoccupation of the political leaders here.

7. So many people of Portuguese origin could not fail to have an impact on American culture. Two names occur to me as the most outstanding examples of the intellectual projection of the Luso-American community: the well-known writer John dos Passos and John Philip Sousa, the famous composer.

John dos Passos was born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1896, from Portuguese parents and is one of the leading novelists in American literature. Though an American citizen, he does not conceal his pride in his Portuguese ancestry.

John Philip Sousa was born in Washington, in 1856, and died in

1932. At the age of 17 he began conducting for travelling theatrical troupes and, in 1880, became Bandmaster of the U.S. Marine Corps, serving in that capacity until 1892, when he organized his own band with which, in 1910, he toured the world. He wrote a number of comic operas but acquired most of his repute as a composer, on the basis of his military marches the most famous of them - "The Stars and Stripes Forever" and "Liberty Bell". John Philip de Sousa, as his name could not deny, was a descendant of Portuguese -- of those Portuguese who came to settle in this country as early as the last century.

Incidentally, his memory was very recently honored by the American Federation of Musicians in New Bedford, Mass., a town where we can find four bands and a dozen orchestras composed of Luso-Americans.

Moreover, apart from these two famous names, many Luso-Americans distinguished and are distinguishing themselves in the scientific field, as doctors and scientific researchers, in the courts, as lawyers and attorneys, in the political scene as mayors, municipal councilors, etc. etc. In their daily work they contribute in the measure of their abilities to the prestige of the country.

8. And we must not forget also the anonymous mass of Portuguese labourers in the building industry, in road construction and many other hard manual activities. While they earn their daily bread, they are also contributing in a decisive way to the gigantic public works we see everywhere in this country: the wonderful highways and bridges, the big buildings that grow all over the States, those definite signs of the prosperity and economic power of this great country. When we use the magnificent American highways which we cannot fail to admire everyday, we seldom think of the cost in money and physical labor their construction implied. Much of such labor was supplied by Portuguese immigrants who thus contributed in their own way to this external evidence of the American Civilization.

9. I think I am exceeding somehow the time allotted for this speech. However, before closing my remarks here today, I would like to make a few comments on an aspect of the Luso-American ties which seems connected with the subject of this series of lectures.

In 1816 the King of Portugal appointed the first Minister Plenipotentiary to the United States of America. The man accredited in that capacity was someone extremely well-known then in the political circles of this country, who played a significant role in shaping the political and philosophical thinking of the American elites of that time. This man was Jose Correa da Serra, or Joseph Correa de Serra, as he spelled it in English, and he was an Abbot.

Abbot Correa da Serra, a distinguished naturalist and founder of the Academy of Sciences in Lisbon, decided at a certain moment to live abroad in a self-imposed exile and went to live in London, where he was in touch with eminent scientists and where he published some works which reached international reputation. After a period during which he served as Counsellor to the Portuguese Embassy in the British capital, he decided to come to the United States in 1812. He was then sixty-two years old and as Thomas Jefferson would phrase it later, "a monument of fine wisdom".

He came to live in Philadelphia where he earned his living by teaching Botany and his close connection with the great American political figures of the time began almost immediately.

After his official appointment, Correa da Serra, already a friend of many politicians in Washington, became then a "close associate" due to his diplomatic capacity. He moved to Washington but he still spent much time in Philadelphia, in the intellectual milieu which he liked so much.

His correspondence with Jefferson, carefully preserved by the American Philosophical Society, shows the degree of respect the American

politician had for the Portuguese Abbot. In one of his letters Correa da Serra tells Jefferson about his disappointment in finding a stiff "opposition" in the states he visited... "there is among them more treason than, from what I remember of our conversation, you seemed aware of". And he gave his friend his advice on how the Republic should deal with that danger.

At a time when there was in America a certain degree of suspicion against upperclass Europeans, such as Correa da Serra, the Portuguese Abbot became a trusted friend and even an advisor of the men who made the American Republic.

In a letter dated December 9, 1914, and addressed to Jefferson, he calls his attention to the anti-American campaign fomented in Europe, as he said, by the agents of the British Crown. And I quote from this letter "...The last arrivals have brought English and French papers, pamphlets and letters which I wish I could put under your eyes, to give you a just idea of what is going on in Europe. No favorable result is to be expected from Vienna; war is adjourned. So far you know already and from better sources, but what is very important and remarkable and which only an attentive lecture of a great number of the above materials can show, is that the only ally that you have now in Europe, and a powerful one, if properly seconded, is public opinion, which has sprung again in Europe... your enemies with their papers and pamphlets strive to persuade Europe that this country (the U.S.) is the nest of anti-monarchical jacobinism and this government the tool of Bonaparte, to be severely chastized and crushed like him. It seems as if they wished to raise a crusade against this country...."

Correa's feelings about the English of 1812 had of course to be somewhat subdued when in 1816 he was appointed Minister Plenipotentiary of Portugal in the United States. Nevertheless, after his diplomatic

appointment, he remained as always a Jeffersonian at heart, and his friendship and close association with Jefferson and, to a minor degree, with Madison, Adams, Randolph and the "gentlemen of Philadelphia" continued.

When he left the country in 1820, Correa da Serra received the last letter from Jefferson in which he says: "I received your adieu with feelings of sincere regret at the loss we were to sustain, and particularly of those friendly visits by which you had made me so happy. I shall feel, too, the want of your counsel and approbation in what we are doing and have yet to do in our University (the University of Virginia) the last of my mortal cares, and the last service I can render my country..."

The tone of this letter shows how much the Portuguese Minister was appreciated in this country and the high esteem Jefferson had for his advice and opinion.

This is the reason why I thought it worthwhile to mention here this episode of the Luso-American relations which I gather is little known nowadays.

10. Much more could certainly be said on this subject of Portugal's contribution to American Civilization.

Specially since the signature of the North Atlantic Treaty, fourteen years ago, the destinies of our two countries are specially united by the pledge contained in that important treaty -- the defense of the values of the Civilization which we so much contributed to spread on this side of the Atlantic as early as the XVth and XVIth centuries.

An analysis of Luso-American ties from the early years of American independence up to the present days of the Atlantic Alliance would perhaps help to give a more complete picture of Portugal's role in the wider framework of Europe's contribution to American Civilization.

Such an analysis would however lengthen this speech and I feel that I have already abused your patience and attention.

In the words that preceded I tried to give you a rapid glimpse -- so wide is the subject -- so wide is the subject -- of how Portuguese influence in the shaping of this great North American nation started with our navigations in the XV and XVI centuries and how Portuguese immigration in the XIX and XX centuries shared in the build-up of the United States. The examples of Peter Francisco and Abbot Correa da Serra -- one the indomitable fighter and the other the quiet intellectual -- seemed worthy of special reference as typical as an influence of individual actions in two delicate and decisive phases of the history of this great country -- the struggle for independence and the consolidation of the new Republic.

At the beginning I asked for your indulgence in your appreciation of my words here today. I ask you now to forgive me also for taking so much of your time, and I thank you for your attention.

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