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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

8 February 1961

STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 11-61 (Internal O/NE Working Paper - CIA
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SUBJECT: Opposition in Portugal

1. The strange odyssey of the Santa Maria, although a personal failure for Captain Galvao, did serve to focus world strains within attention on the embarrassed Portuguese dictatorship of Premier Salazar. Stirred from its comfortable somnolence, the government is demonstrating considerable anxiety lest oppositionists at home and in the overseas provinces draw encouragement from the incident and embark on a sustained campaign of open hostility -- no matter what their views of Galvao, Delgado and Co. While neither the regime, nor the 71-year-old Salazar, himself, appears in any real immediate danger, it is unlikely that Portugal will once again subside into usual political torpor until after the departure of the dictator.

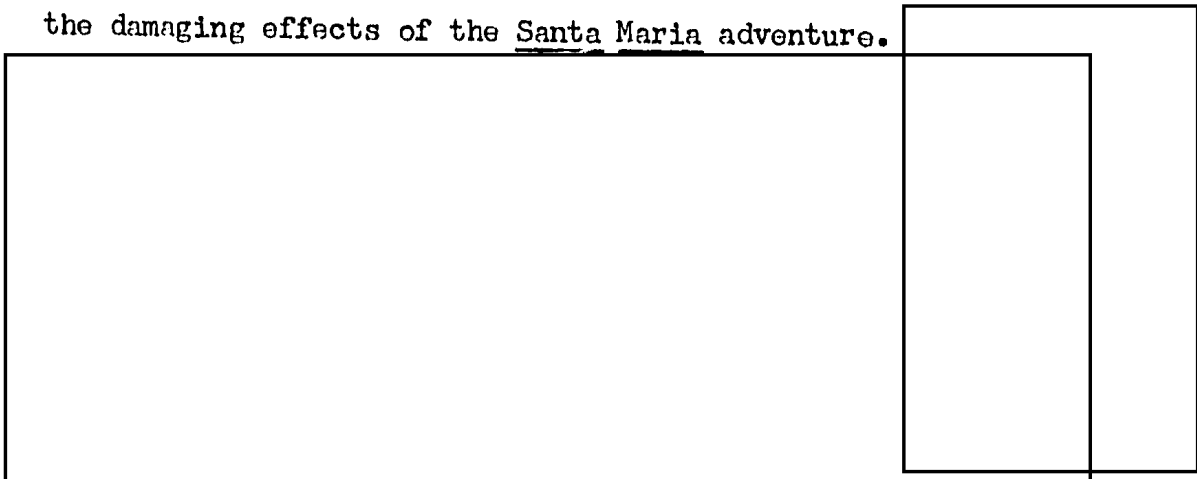
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2. Opposition in Portugal proper is not yet serious, although there is grumbling among some high officials and within the politically conscious elite over Salazar's reluctance to invigorate the static Portuguese economy. A more general impression that the premier's personal capabilities are no longer equal to the task of controlling and directing national affairs was strengthened when he failed to take an active lead in mapping policy to counter the damaging effects of the Santa Maria adventure.



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3. The legislative elections scheduled for April will afford the small and semi-clandestine opposition groups an early opportunity to test the extent of public disenchantment with Salazar at home. In the likely event that the opposition is successful in capturing some seats in the cortes -- now monopolized by Salazar's political machine -- other prominent figures in the regime, discouraged by the dictator's uncertain leadership might use this evidence of falling political fortunes as a pretext to persuade

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him to resign. A successor government would probably be headed by a military or government leader associated with the present regime. Apart from possibly adopting more dynamic economic policies, it would not be likely to basically change Portugal's political orientation.

4. Over the next few months the developing situation in the Portuguese overseas territories will be critically important. While the incumbent regime has tied its prestige to the retention of its African "provinces" and to their development as primary sources of national wealth and power, it has imposed a tight, arbitrary rule on the areas and has in practice consistently failed to meet settler expectations of much needed economic expansion and foreign investment. Settler reactions to domination by Lisbon are generally of three kinds: (1) Simple hostility to Salazar and his government on the part of those whose loyalty to Portugal remains steadfast, but who feel the "provinces" are being overlooked by a far-away capitol. (2) Separatism, which has, according to some reports, significant strength among Mozambique settlers who are discontent with the assimilation policy and attracted to some form of apartheid. (3) Scattered radical opposition -- prepared to use any allies -- even African nationalists -- to discredit and eliminate the dictatorship and all its

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institutions. It was probably these latter elements that caused the recent disturbances in Angola.

5. Finally, it should be noted that the overseas territories themselves are almost certain to be exposed to external pressures over the next few years which could intensify the political malaise within them. Portuguese Guinea is an inviting target for Toure's nationalist propaganda and is apt to become increasingly unsettled; the situation in northern Angola is reportedly already troubled by Abako tribal agitation originating from kinsmen in the Congo; and Mozambique experiences/low level recurrent native unrest, in part stimulated by outside agitators. The Portuguese military establishment in these areas, although recently enlarged, is probably spread too thin to cope with major disorders. Although the scanty evidence available would indicate that the Africans, themselves, are not as yet seriously infected with anti-Portuguese sentiments, they will in time almost certainly be stirred to hostile action against their white rulers in response to some form of foreign pressure. A deteriorating situation in the overseas provinces would probably quickly lead to the departure of the Salazar government.

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