4-17-10 SCRIPT TEXT

<Slide 1: Title is on screen**:** “The Image of Portugal in Selected Works by Voltaire”>

**The purpose of my talk today is to present the highlights of more than 150 references to Portugal located in several literary and historical works by François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire, the most representative author of the Enlightenment period, the “Age of Voltaire.”**

<Slide 2: Voltaire’s dates are on screen>

**This topic should be of interest to those curious to learn what Voltaire and, therefore, Europe thought of Portugal in Voltaire’s lifetime. Voltaire’s works were very influential prior to the French Revolution of 1789; his views influenced a large segment of the literate public on both sides of the Atlantic. The overall image of Portugal projected by Voltaire’s works tended toward the unflattering and the negative, perhaps because it served his principal priority.**

<Slide 3: Voltaire’s priorities are listed on screen>

**Voltaire’s principal cause, *écrasez l’infâme*, involved a campaign against the abuses of a powerful Roman Catholic Church allied with the State, an alliance that set the stage for intolerance, injustice, and lack of freedom. In addition, Voltaire promoted the doctrine of progress, or that progress indeed was possible. He maintained that through unfettered critical reexamination and reevaluation of all authority contemporary Europe had already progressed, even surpassed, the greatest accomplishments of Rome in the fields of science, technology, culture, commerce, government, and society, thus leaving behind the abasement and ignorance of the Middle Ages. Additional, desirable progress could be secured through the fostering of tolerance everywhere that intolerance flourished, without exception, including in his native France, where he could no longer reside because a *lettre de cachet*, a king’s arrest warrant, had been issued in his name.**

<Slide 4: Definition of Enlightenment (lacking in Portugal)> NOTE: Push “Forward” key twice!!

**Voltaire seemed determined to exclude Portugal from his assessment of a progressive Europe. In his *Précis du* *Siècle de Louis XV*, or *Short History of Louis XV’s Reign*, in a chapter dealing with the assassination attempt on the life of King Joseph I, Voltaire dismissed Portugal in one dire statement: (quote) “Portugal was a country not yet reached by the *“lumières”* that enlighten so many other nations in Europe … whereas other peoples were in the 18th Century, the Portuguese seemed stuck in the 12th Century” (end quote).**

<Slide 5: The Selected Works, publication dates chart, # times Portugal mentioned>

**The literary and historical publications listed for you on the screen first appeared during the period 1751-1768. Voltaire’s historical works, especially his secular *Essai sur les moeurs*, or *Universal World History*, constituted an important resource for the compilers of Diderot’s enormously influential 35 volume *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences, Arts et Métiers,* that appeared between 1752 and 1780.**

<Slide 6: L’Encyclopédie Frontispiece>

**As a result, numerous articles in Diderot’s Encyclopedia tended to perpetuate Voltaire’s biases and omissions with regard to Portugal.For example, the *encyclopédiste* compiler *Chevalier de Jaucourt* borrowed the entire text of Voltaire’s lengthy condemnation of the Spanish-Portuguese Inquisition for inclusion in the article *Inquisition* in the *Encyclopédie;* the article *Navigation* concerning Portuguese Discoveries also contained significant pages from Voltaire’s *Universal World History.***

<Slide 7: Six Highlights on screen as follows: The Great Discoveries of the 15th & 16th Centuries; John V, King of Portugal; The Inquisition in Portugal; The Lisbon Earthquake; Pombal’s Cruelty; Portugal, a Country Under the Control of England. Question: What is lacking in this “picture?”

**How did Voltaire present the Great Portuguese Discoveries of the 15th and 16th Centuries in his *Universal World History*?**

<Slide 8: World map of Portuguese Discoveries is from *National Geographic>*

**He gave a realistic, modern assessment that included occasional praise coupled with characteristic skepticism that would further his priorities mentioned earlier. According to Voltaire, just as the Venetians had replaced Alexandrian, Ptolemaic Egypt in the domination of Mediterranean commerce, by opening trade routes by sea to India and to the Far East, the Portuguese had rendered Mediterranean commerce entirely irrelevant. The Portuguese began to merit, hyperbolized Voltaire, “a glorious renown durable as the universe.” Voltaire praised Prince Henry’s strong and steadfast leadership during the important, initial phase of exploration and discovery of new lands. On one hand Portugal’s overseas expansion “radically changed commerce in Europe,” while on the other it “initiated a tragic competition among European nations” to seize trade advantages abroad. The Portuguese brought the modern technology of war to the Chinese, and taught them how to use artillery. The Jesuits who accompanied the Portuguese taught the Chinese to manufacture canon. Voltaire observed that the Chinese were not any more virtuous for not having invented these instruments of destruction, because they waged war all the same. In India, ironically, the religion of Islam had been much more successful in producing converts than was the case with Christianity, despite the “strong evidence and holiness of Christian doctrine,” and “the existence of Christian enclaves in India belonging to the Portuguese, the French, the Dutch, and to the Danish.” He added that rivalries and fighting among Europeans had worked against the interest of Christianizing the peoples of India. The establishment of the Inquisition in Portuguese Goa in India undermined the main purpose of the enclave, namely the conduct of commerce. In chapter 42 of his *Universal World History* Voltaire recounted the establishment of Portuguese commercial and religious interests in Japan, their successes and eventual expulsion due to the fanaticism of a few Portuguese. The establishment of Christianity, wrote Voltaire, “always ends in battles. “**

**How did Voltaire treat John V, one of Portugal’s greatest kings, who ruled 1706-1750?**

<Slide 9: John V’s portrait, is on screen)

**In a poem written in 1747 to flatter Frederick II, Voltaire sent Death away from the king of Prussia in pursuit of Portugal’s “priest king,” an unkind allusion to John V who had suffered a debilitating stroke the year before. John reappeared briefly in 1755 in a variant of Voltaire’s burlesque concerning Joan of Arc, *La* *Pucelle,* as “This devout king of Lusitania who fainted atop his lover while praying to God.”**

**Inquisition: In Chapter 95 of his *Universal World History* Voltaire condemned the institution of the Inquisition as practiced in Spain and Portugal. The application of the Inquisition to the Jews became counterproductive to the state, noted Voltaire, because the Jews posed no real danger and provided valuable resources in the form of taxes. In Spain and Portugal the Inquisition’s sole purpose became the enforcement of fanaticism.**

<Slide 10: Scene from the Holy Inquisition in Lisbon is on screen>

**“Its incomparably worst aspects were the public sacrifices called *autos da fé,* acts of faith, and the horrors that preceded them, priests who had vowed humility and meekness maintained prisons and engaged in torture. The *autos da fé* were staged in a festive atmosphere of religious celebration, sacrifice and slaughter.” Voltaire conjectured that Montezuma, who executed captured enemies, would have been horrified had he witnessed an *auto da fé*.**

**The Lisbon Earthquake, November 1, 1755:**

<Slide 11: The Lisbon Earthquake, Richter 8.6, slide is on screen>

**Voltaire’s immediate response to the terrible cataclysm was typical of the French classical period in literature: he composed an elegant poem, *Le Désastre de Lisbonne*, to give voice to his deep despair and doubts concerning the goodness of God and Divine Providence. The emotions and themes expressed in Voltaire’s poem about the Lisbon Disaster led directly to the creation of *Candide ou, l’optimisme,***

<Slide 12: The cover of my *Candide* is on the screen>

**a short novel designed to draw a large readership, and also written to destroy forever the notion of God’s Providence in the form of 18th Century philosophical Optimism *à la* Leibnitz. Voltaire’s *Candide* attained both of these objectives admirably.In chapter six of *Candide,* Voltaire appears to have deliberately fiddled with some of the facts regarding the Inquisition. René Pomeau demonstrated in his critical edition of *Candide* that Voltaire was in error to state that the Portuguese Church deliberately performed *autos da fé* post-November 1, 1755 in order to stave off further earthquakes. Nine years after the initial publication of *Candide*, in his *Short History of Louis XV’s Reign,* Voltaire again bent the facts and reported that following the 1755 Earthquake the Portuguese believed that “they could obtain God’s clemency by burning Jews and others in an *auto da fé,* a practice that other nations considered an act of barbarism.” Not to let these other nations of Europe off the hook, Voltaire added that those nations, too, found their own, unique ways to bloody the earth that shakes beneath our feet.**

**The Cruelty of Pombal Horrified Voltaire and Europe:**

<Slide 13: *Marquês de* Pombal appears on screen>

**In Chapter 38 of *The Short History of* *Louis XV’s Reign,* Voltaire reported that the *de facto* prime minister of Portugal, the *Marquês de* Pombal, dealt harshly, tortured and executed, the alleged perpetrators of a plot to assassinate King Joseph I;**

<Slide 14: Portrait of Joseph I on screen>;

<Slide 15: Assassination Attempt on King Joseph’s Life, 1758, is on screen>

**these included members of the nobility who were considered enemies of the king. Several Jesuits, accused of planning the murder attempt, were expelled from Portugal, while deranged father Malagrida was executed. Francis Dutra has published an article in which he convincingly explained that the wounding of Joseph I probably involved accidental, mistaken identity, and that the charges against so-called plotters and perpetrators were trumped up. Voltaire and Europe were permanently shocked by the ruthless actions of Pombal in dispatching many of the king’s (and his own) enemies.**

<Slide 16: The execution of the Aveiro & Távora is on screen>

**Nearly two years prior to the alleged attempt on the life of Joseph I, a deranged fanatic, Damiens, had succeeded in wounding the French king, Louis XV, with a simple pen knife;**

<Slide 17: Damiens’ portrait, judges, etc., on screen>

**Damiens was subsequently executed in a particularly gruesome, medieval manner. In chapter 37 of the *History of Louis XV’s Reign* Voltaire did not demonstrate the degree of revulsion for the barbaric punishment of Damiens as he did in the case of the alleged conspirators in the so-called plot to kill the King of Portugal. The inconsistency in Voltaire’s reaction to punishment meted out to those deemed responsible in these two assassination attempts involving royalty can perhaps be explained by the ruthless nature of Pombal’s method of dealing with the king’s (and his own) enemies. This appears to explain Voltaire’s negative statement regarding Portugal as lacking in “*lumières*” cited earlier.**

**A Country Under English Control: In *History of Louis XV’s Reign*, chapter 35, Voltaire alludes to the fact that were it not for the English, Portugal could not maintain its freedom from Spanish domination. The price of this assistance, however, was very dear, as it involved dependence on England, which dominated much of Portugal’s commerce.**

**What seems to be Lacking in Voltaire’s References Concerning Portugal? The *History of Louis XV’s Reign* was initially printed thirteen years after the 1755 Lisbon Earthquake. Voltaire kept abreast of events in Europe as few others due to his financial dealings as one of Europe’s wealthiest war profiteers. He helped to bankroll the armies of Spain and Portugal that fought the Jesuits and Indians in Paraguay and Southern Brazil. Voltaire had plenty of time to inform himself concerning events in Portugal, leading one to wonder why he made no mention in his writings of the truly laudable, decisive, managerial skills exhibited by the *Marquês de* Pombal**

<Slide 18: Another image of the *Marquês de* Pombal appears on screen>

**in dealing with the death and destruction produced by the Lisbon Earthquake, or the superb Pombaline plan to rebuild Lisbon according to enlightened, rational standards, or Pombal’s establishment of enlightened reforms in government, church-state relations, the Inquisition, education, and colonial policy. Voltaire of course did concur with the expulsion of the Jesuits from Portugal and elsewhere, and said so. However, Voltaire must have known of at least some of the positive accomplishments to which I alluded briefly; if so, why did he then choose not to report on reforms in Portugal? Perhaps Voltaire perceived that such omissions better suited his priorities in an unyielding combat against Church abuses and fanaticism. As noted at the beginning of my presentation, the representation of Portugal in Voltaire’s works and correspondence is not entirely flattering, and not entirely fair. If one can find much to admire in Voltaire’s enlightened, modern, skeptical outlook and approach, his denunciation of religious intolerance and torture for example, it remains at the same time difficult to accept an intentional, negative bias often apparent in his references to Portugal contained in his literary and historical works that had such a wide readership.**

<Slide 19: Sunset over the Tagus … 21st Century>

**Thank you for your attention.**

<Slide 20 = F I M >

Summary Bibliographic Note

My task in researching Voltaire’s works was facilitated by the indices in volumes 51 and 52 of Moland’s venerable 1878 edition of Voltaire’s *Oeuvres Complètes.* The on-going Voltaire Foundation Oxford re-edition of Voltaire’s *Complete* *Works*, projected to include 200 volumes when completed in 2018, has been of use. For example, Haydn Mason and David Adams in 2009 published a long awaited critical edition of the *Poème sur le* *Désastre de Lisbonne* in Oxford’s *Oeuvres Complètes de Voltaire*, vol. 45A. René Pomeau’s critical edition of *Candide* appeared in *Oeuvres Complètes de* *Voltaire,* vol. 48, 1980. However, only the first of seven volumes has appeared in print to date of what promises to be a masterful, critical edition of Voltaire’s *Universal History.* For the additional volumes, we will have to wait patiently.

I have been asked to revise this paper for publication in Crossroads/Encrucilhadas. DAR