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Goiias-Federal District Monthly Report - March, 1967

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1. Inauguration of President Dominates Month

The inauguration of President COSTA E SILVA on March 15 was unquestionably the most important event of the month (and perhaps, the year) in the Federal District. Not only were the related ceremonies and festivities a bright spot of activity for a few days in the middle of the month, but talking about and planning for the event ahead of time and rehashing its happenings and significance afterwards were the prime preoccupation of Brasilia for all of March. There was the last-minute flurry of activity to prepare the capital

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physically for the inaugural. The new Foreign Ministry ceremonial building, the lovely Palacio dos Arcos, was finished and Itamaraty moved in officially March 11. Three days later the diplomatic corps (including an invasion of the "stragglers" still residing in Rio de Janeiro) and other dignitaries attended its dedication, and gave generally enthusiastic approval.

The actual ceremonies of the transfer of power on the fifteenth were simple but effective. The incoming President took his oath of office before the joint Congress in the packed Chamber of Deputies and then went across the street to the Planalto Palace to receive the sash symbolizing the Presidency from outgoing President CASTELLO BRANCO, who departed for Rio and retirement a few hours later. After a marathon afternoon of receiving the compliments of the diplomatic corps and special foreign delegations, the new President was host to an evening reception at his new home, the Alvorada Palace. Unfortunately, this was the only event that didn't come off reasonably well--a torrential rain drove a potentially-well arranged party indoors, and traffic snarls delayed the arrival of many of the guests by as much as two hours.

The American special delegation was composed of ex-Governor Edmund G. "Pat" Brown, of California, U.S. Representative Donald W. Riegle, of Michigan, and Ambassador Tuthill. Mr. Jack Valenti, another member of the delegation, was unable to attend owing to sudden illness. When the delegation paid its compliments to President Costa e Silva, it presented a gift of a suitably-inscribed sterling silver desk set from President Johnson. The new Brazilian President expressed his gratitude for the present and for our President's warm and personal hospitality during his recent visit to Washington.

The rest of the month saw the swearing-in of many members of the new cabinet, several of whom (the Ministers of Treasury, Interior and Agriculture in particular) pledged to take special steps to move their departments to Brasilia as soon as possible, in accordance with the new President's stated desires. The President himself, kept busy with the organization of his new government, gave a press conference from the Planalto Palace on March 31 in which he stressed his belief in the validity of Brasilia and the continuance of the "March to the West."

2. Other March Events Overshadowed

Numerous other events during the month were practically overlooked as a result of attention being focussed on the inaugural. The long-awaited first train arrived in the Federal District on March 14 on the newly-laid tracks that now link the capital with Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. The arrival of

the symbolic train does not mean, however, that direct rail service will be initiated soon. The work on the link-up was speeded up to coincide with the inaugural, and a good portion of the last section of track will have to be re-laid before it can handle regular or heavy traffic. When the trains do start to roll, perhaps by the end of the year, passenger service will be possible in 26 hours downhill to Sao Paulo and 27 hours for the uphill return trip. The gesture, if premature, was appreciated--the first train whistle was a welcome and exciting sound to many ears.

The end of the month brought the celebration of the third anniversary of the Revolution of March 31, 1964. Banners proclaimed that ⁰⁰Brasilia Thanks the Revolution⁰⁰, and a military parade, fly-by and speeches completed the festivities. A few days before, crudely painted signs appeared overnight on busstops and walls around the city, demanding ⁰⁰Death to Communists.⁰⁰ A local newspaper columnist noted, tongue in cheek, that the police had caught anti-regime signpainters almost immediately (see Item 3 under Federal District A-104, February Monthly) but had not managed any arrests when the slogans followed a line favorable to the government.

The Supreme Court is examining the extradition cases of two internationally-sought fugitives from justice. The first is Franz Paul Stangl, an Austrian Nazi war criminal who is alleged to be responsible for the deaths of some 700,000 Jews in concentration camps in Holland and 400,000 in Warsaw during World War II. His extradition is being sought by Austria and, it is believed, Poland and the Netherlands as well. The other is Youssef Bedas, a Lebanese banker charged with embezzlement and other illegal financial operations in connection with the failure of the Intra Bank of Lebanon, which once had assets of about \$750 million. His story was recently covered in ⁰⁰Life.⁰⁰ Bedas' lawyers have just submitted their defense, which is now being considered by one of the justices of the Supreme Court.

3. New Mayor of Brasilia

After more than a month of conjecture about the appointment of a new mayor for the Federal District, President Costa e Silva surprised almost everyone on March 27 by nominating a near-unknown for the post. His choice was Wadjô da Costa GOMIDE, a 34-year old civil engineer from Catalão, Goiás, who has worked with NOVACAP (the government-sponsored construction company), been vice-mayor of the satellite city Nucleo Bandeirante, and most recently served as head of SHIS (Sociedade de Habitações de Interesse Social - Social Interest Housing Society), the government low-cost housing agency, for the Federal District.

Comment: The President is said to have specified the qualifications for the mayor (young, past experience with Brasilia, preferably engineer, etc.) and then interviewed personally the names given him. There have been undercurrents of complaint that Gomide is short on diplomacy and the public relations techniques allegedly necessary for success in the job. The outgoing mayor, Engineer Plinio Cantanhede, will be a tough act to follow. Almost universally popular, Cantanhede was the darling of the local daily Correio Braziliense, on whose pages his picture, and tales of his accomplishments, have appeared almost daily. Although there was considerable pressure, from the press, local civic organizations and Congress, to keep him on, Cantanhede may welcome the rest and opportunity to treat a detached retina.

4. Arrival of USAF Photomapping Group

On March 24th, the main component of the Aerial Survey Team Ten of the U.S. Air Force arrived in Brasilia to initiate the next stage in their work of taking aerial photos of all of Brazil. The program, begun in 1964 and previously staged out of Sao Paulo, is based upon a U.S. -Brazilian agreement signed in 1952 under which Brazil provides observers on all the group's photo flights and shares in the results of every mapping picture. In spite of the fact that the program is three years old and is over fifty percent complete, the initiation of its operations from the capital inevitably caused some stir of nationalist feelings in Congress and the Press. One senator put forth a long list of what he apparently thought were tough questions, but these were quickly and easily answered through the Brazilian geodetic and mapping authorities, the beneficiaries of the photography which is vital to mapping for the development of the country. The issue was again raised a few days later by a local columnist, and steps are being taken to provide him the information necessary to correct his mistaken impressions about the alleged infringement of Brazilian sovereignty.

Goiás

1. Ambassador Tuthill Visits Goiania

Remaining in Brasilia after the inaugural ceremonies, Ambassador Tuthill flew to Goiania, the capital of the neighboring state of Goiás on March 17 for a very full day of meetings with government and civic leaders and visits to American-aided projects. Greeted with full military honors, the Ambassador had valuable and frank discussions with Goiás Governor Otavio LAGE, Archbishop Dom Fernando Gomes dos Santos, and Goiania mayor Iris REZENDE. (The Mayor and the Governor are Foreign Leader Program grantees. Rezende is due to travel to the U.S. on April 10.) Calls were also made on the presidents of the Legislative Assembly and the State Court. The Ambassador visited the BI-National Center where he met with some university students, and made an inspection tour of Highway GO-5, between Goiania and the agricultural center of Neropolis. This highway is being paved with USAID assistance.

Comment: The visit was much more successful than anyone had hoped. The officials and people of Goias were flattered by the Ambassador's interest and his willingness to discuss any subjects they wished to raise. The Ambassador was impressed with the dynamic spirit of growth of the state and its capital. He also became interested in the possibilities of agricultural production in the Goias region and the use of the area as an outlet for excess population from other parts of Brazil.

2. Castello Branco Visits Goiania

Another distinguished visitor to Goiania during March was President CASTELLO BRANCO, then in the last fortnight of his term of office. The President left Brasilia at eight in the morning on his private plane, hit Goiania like a tornado, signing a rural electrification agreement between the federal agricultural development organization and the state of Goias, inaugurating a new group of low-cost houses built by the National Housing Bank and a new cancer hospital, and was back in the federal capital shortly after noon. While in Goiania he was given the title "Honorary Citizen of Goias," an honor he shares with Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy. Some of the civic leaders of the state capital also wanted to make him an honorary citizen of Goiania, but the opposition MDB, with a majority in the city council, spitefully refused him the title.

3. Governor's Brother Gets Federal Post

Jair LAGE, brother of the Governor of Goias and his Secretary of Planning in the state government, was appointed by President Costa e Silva on March 17, to be the new President of RODOBRAS, the federal organization responsible for the building of the Brasilia-Belem highway.

There had been no previous indication that Lage was being considered for the post, even after the Governor, while in Rio de Janeiro two weeks earlier had conferred with the incoming President about appointing natives of Goias to federal jobs. Reaction within Goias, however, has not been especially favorable, and the usually pro-government daily O Popular of Goiania editorialized against the appointment. The paper said that the Governor is already guilty of pushing members of his own family into public office (he also allegedly used considerable political pressure to reelect his father, Jales MACHADO as Federal Deputy), and that this step expands his power to another field of public life.

The highway has gradually become a very important north-south transportation artery for the central part of Brazil, and now carries a great amount of traffic

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from industrial Sao Paulo destined for Amazonia that formerly was sent by sea. It is still unpaved and the heavy truck traffic is taking a toll of its impacted earth surface. Anything Lage can do to improve the road will benefit a big part of Brazil, as well as his native Goias.

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