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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE

INFO: BELEM, PORTO ALEGRE, RECIFE, RIO DE JANEIRO, SALVADOR, SAO PAULO

FROM: Embassy BRASILIA

DATE: December 21, 1972

SUBJECT: Army Minister Again Urges Military Unity

REF :

Military Unity Stressed

During the December 13 Navy Day commemoration ceremonies, Army Minister Orlando GEISEL in his public address once again stressed the necessity for the unity of the Armed Forces and cautioned against the military's being enticed into involvement in the political arena. In congratulating his Navy counterpart, Admiral Adalberto de BARROS NUNES, the Army Minister stated that his presence and that of Air Minister, Brigadier Joelmir Campos de ARARIPE MACEDO, symbolized the camaraderie of men in uniform.

After pointing to the sacrifices which military men made to ensure the "security and tranquility" of 100 million Brazilians, Minister Geisel noted that the military chieftains were nevertheless well compensated by their "love of country" and their "dedication to the common welfare of the people." He said that individual disagreements within the military after the 1964 Revolution had been eliminated and that the Armed Forces as a bloc supported the subsequent revolutionary governments, including during moments of crises. The Minister underlined that the military was "immune to criticism of past achievements and deaf to theoretical solutions," and benefitting along with the Brazilian people from the peace and progress, would remain vigilant against terrorism and subversion to nip either in the bud if they should appear.

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Minister Geisel stressed that the military leaders were looking to prepare the institution of the Armed Forces for the new commitments which will be levied upon it. Domestically, he said, the military is fully engaged in the continuing process of upgrading its professional competence without permitting itself to become involved in the political scene. Thus, military leaders remain serene awaiting direction from the Supreme Commander (i.e., President MEDICI) for the coming year.

Accompanying the rapidly changing international scene, the Minister mentioned the role of the military as being in tandem with the nation's foreign relations. He then noted that the Air Force is establishing a traffic control system to respond to the growing needs of Brazilian airports. For its part, the Navy is alert to the strategic importance of the growing trade and cultural routes across the Atlantic to African nations.

Naval Modernization

In this regard, the Minister devoted a separate passage in his remarks to the modernization program of the Navy. Citing Brazil's extensive maritime frontiers, he pointed to the difficulty in maintaining the readiness of the Navy to cope with the nation's ever growing needs for maritime surveillance and protection. Nevertheless, he continued, Brazilians were proud of the results of modernization which through the scrupulous application of public funds and a constant re-examination of priorities led to Brazil's independence in the choice of military hardware as well as in the selection of suppliers. The program also gave careful consideration to stimulating technology within Brazil as well as employing the national labor force in the construction of warships.

Comment

Although low key in tone, Minister Geisel's speech reiterated once again the thought predominant in the minds of many concerned with the Medici succession question--the need for military cohesion. While stressing the theme of unity, the Minister cautioned his colleagues in uniform against individual political aspirations or activities by sternly apprising them of the necessity to await President Medici's initiative in the coming year. To many observers, the speech points to the fact that, occasional rumors to the contrary, the President and his Army Minister are still closely allied and a breach between them appears unlikely at this stage.

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