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Fifth Military Region Reaches Out to Rural People

Making the Army known to the people appeared to be the primary motivation behind the implementation of a well publicized campaign known as Ação Civico-Social 70 (ACISO 70) organized under the auspices of General José Campos de ARAGAO, commander of the Fifth Military Region headquartered in Curitiba. During the vacation month of July, a military social action movement known as ACISO 70 was activated with the ostensible goal of bringing a wide range of community improvement programs to several dozen small towns scattered in the remote areas of Paraná and Santa Catarina. These two states comprise the geographic jurisdiction of the Fifth Military Region. Under the close supervision of the Coordinating Director, Lt. Col. Delson Lanter PERET, state government personnel, high school and university students, publicly spirited civilians with a talent to offer as well as private firms were mobilized to assist the military in realizing this endeavor. Donations were sought and received from numerous companies and individuals who contributed money, medicines, food, seeds, tools, nails, paint, books and a wide variety of other items.

It was originally planned for ACISO 70 to reach some thirty-odd towns, but more than fifty had been helped by the time the program drew to a close at the end of the month. The type of activity and the length

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of stay of an ACISO group depended largely on the needs of the particular community. Numerous community action projects were undertaken by the soldiers, such as the construction of a school building in Antonina, the building of a bridge and improvement of an access road in Lapa and the restoration of a deteriorated community center in Rio Verde. Lectures on topical subjects were delivered and films devoted to health, agriculture and similar pertinent subjects were shown to the local citizenry. Animals were vaccinated and seeds distributed to needy farmers, who were also instructed on improved farming techniques by agronomy students or employees of the state agricultural services. Perhaps the most welcome and worthwhile activity was the medical attention given to the populace, who in their remote areas only infrequently have access to trained personnel. Army doctors gave injections, treated illnesses and advised on medical problems. Military dentists filled hundreds of cavities and extracted a large number of teeth. In spite of this "shotgun" approach, ACISO 70 participants were apparently well received by the communities and were often feted in appreciation for their efforts.

In summarizing ACISO 70, although not all the projects had been completed at that date, General Aragao enumerated ACISO 70's accomplishments as of July 30: Some 57,230 animals had been examined and vaccinated and seeds had been distributed to 14,909 persons and tools to 2,425. There had been 45,555 medical and 45,100 dental consultations, 210,996 vaccinations and 241,882 medications parcelled out to the needy. Assistance of one type or another had been rendered to 1,375 schools, including the distribution of 180,460 scholastic items. During the period 102 kilometers of roadway and 15 bridges were constructed. Thanking those who had contributed to ACISO 70's success, the General affirmed that what had been sought and attained was the "integration" of the people. He concluded somewhat poetically: "ACISO 70 might be but a drop of water, but oceans are formed from drops of water."

COMMENT: There is little doubt that ACISO 70 generated a wealth of favorable publicity for the Fifth Military Region and for General Aragao. Most likely it served to improve the image of the military among the people who were the recipients of ACISO 70's attention. On the other hand, given the paternalistic manner in which ACISO 70 was conducted, whether the community action aspects of this program and similar ACISO activities elsewhere in Brazil will prosper or whether there will be any sustained follow-up remains to be seen.

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