

OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM

TO: Amembassy Rio
 FROM: Amconsul Porto Alegre *[initials]*
 SUBJECT: POLITICAL: Wave of Cabinet Resignations Follows Cabral Statement on Revolutionary Plotting
 REF: Porto Alegre Weekly Summary No. 89, A-36, December 31, 1963

DATE: January 3, 1964

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After Governor Meneghetti had confirmed that his Civil Household Chief, Sr. Plínio Cabral, was speaking on his behalf when he granted the recent interview to the Correio do Povo and spoke of the imminence of a leftist revolt, Professor Fernando Affonso Gay da Fonseca, Secretary of Interior and Justice, and General Amaro da Silveira, Secretary of Public Security, submitted their resignations, which were accepted by the Governor. It is understood that that of Professor Zilah Mattos Totta, Secretary of Education, will follow soon, as will the departure or replacement of Chief of Police Armando Prates Dias. Certain other cabinet or high state administrative posts may also change hands.

The Governor has undoubtedly toyed for some time with the idea of making a number of changes in his cabinet, and all of the persons named above have been under fire, or reported as about to resign, on several previous occasions. It is not certain, however, that the Governor actually planned to force them out in this manner, although his action seemed to make their withdrawal inevitable. Gay and Amaro were undoubtedly the ones, barring the Governor himself, who should have made any statement which seemed to be required regarding a threat to the security of the state, and by making use of Cabral in their stead, the Governor indicated pretty clearly that they no longer had his confidence.

The Legislative Assembly met in extraordinary session, at the call of the PTB bancada, to hear the two Secretaries "name the names", but was unable to do so, in view of their resignation. In his letter to Meneghetti, Gay maintained a tone of exquisite courtesy, but it is clear that both he and his party (the PDC) are fuming over the incident. The Consulate is trying to figure out what he meant when he said that the use of the word "typically fascist" by Cabral in describing the plot was one of the portions of the statement with which he particularly disagreed.

If Meneghetti has a little good luck, after so much bad, his new cabinet should be a stronger and more efficient one. Gay was intelligent, likable, and capable, but he apparently disagreed with his chief on many key issues. (Almost alone in the government, he has never been denounced by the leftist press, and has even earned their praise on several occasions.) A spabble between the Secretary of Security and Chief of Police did little to enhance security conditions in the state.

The Embassy will have heard from another source regarding the nature of the plotting which Cabral denounced in his statement.

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