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ANALYSIS BRANCH

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FROM : AmEmbassy Office BRASILIA

DATE: February 23, 1968

SUBJECT : Lacerda After the Military Alerts

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS
FEB 28 1968

REF : Brasilia A-144 of January 19, 1968

1. Since the round of military alerts in late January which were brought about, at least in part, by the approach of Carlos LACERDA's January 27 São Paulo address, the Frente Ampla leader has again withdrawn into one of his periodic phases of low-level public activity. Lacerda has given no more speeches and only twice has been quoted directly in the press since his São Paulo appearance. In press interviews on January 30 and February 14 Lacerda commented on the alerts, calling them manifestations of "irresponsibility, psychedelic delirium, and the subversion of order," and compared the present governmental regime to fascist Germany and Italy. He said President COSTA E SILVA would not suspend his political rights as the President knew that such an action would allow him more free time, which he could use in order to "conspire." He also attacked the "pacification" plan proposed by Bahian Governor Luis VIANNA Filho. Lacerda claimed the administration was attempting to divide the Frente leadership by sending emissaries to former Presidents KUBITSCHER and GOULART and other members of the movement, but he declared such attempts would fail. Except for these remarks, more in the nature of reactions to actual or contemplated administration measures toward him, rather than full-fledged political pronouncements, Lacerda has been content to observe the repercussions of his recent political activities from his summer home in Petropolis.

2. In contrast to Lacerda's public inactivity, other Frente members

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have been on the move. Frente supporters have had a field day in Congress, blasting the administration's actions during the alerts and picturing the President as a prisoner of military pressures. They have also continued their efforts to organize Frente directorates in some of the states. They are reportedly maintaining their contacts with exiled politicians in Uruguay, principally Goulart and Leonel BRIZOLA, and have renewed their attempts to attract former President QUADROS to the movement. While Goulart recently reaffirmed his support for the Frente, Quadros' position remains unclear. Brizola, on the other hand, sent a letter to Jornal do Brasil, published on February 22, in which he disclaimed interest in adhering to the Frente, calling it a senseless attempt to restore the past, and attacking Lacerda in harsh terms.

3. Although Lacerda himself has given few indications of his immediate plans for political action, he apparently will resume his attacks on the Costa e Silva administration sometime in March. The Frente's Executive Secretary, Deputy Renato ARCHER (MDB-Maranhão) has stated that Lacerda will speak at March and April meetings in Parana, São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul and perhaps in Pernambuco before the Legislative Assembly. According to MDB Deputies Simão da CUNHA (Minas Gerais) and Raul BRUNINI (Guanabara), Frente supporters will organize a motor caravan, headed by Lacerda, which will travel in the states mentioned above and then proceed for extensive visits and speeches in the Northeast. This is being billed as a latter-day "Prestes Column" and as a sustained attempt to test the administration's will and its cohesion.

4. Comment. Lacerda for the time being is coasting on the momentum of the results of his São Paulo appearance. His speech stung the administration, and, together with the military alerts which accompanied it, has promoted rumors of dissension and "crisis" in government ranks, as well as an increase in opposition attacks on the regime. With the administration now having had about a month's respite from the full blast of Lacerda's vitriol, it seems likely, in accordance with his ebb-and-flow tactic, that he will resume the offensive. If he does in fact attempt a prolonged political parade through the South and Northeast, as his supporters indicate he will do, even greater tensions can be expected to result. This particularly applies to the Northeast, which Lacerda has not visited recently, and where discontent among students, labor and progressive sectors of the Church is evident and vocal.

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