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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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SUBJECT : The Campaign in Alagoas

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Summary

With one month to go and five candidates running, the Alagoan election campaign remains uncertain; ratification by the State Assembly will probably be necessary. It seems likely that Rui Palmeira will come out the winner, either by ratification of a plurality or in a run-off against Muniz Falcão. The campaign is tranquil and arousing relatively slight public interest. In Maceió, Divaldo Suruagy is the probable next Mayor in a six-man race. The victory of Muniz Falcão would represent a setback for the Revolution because of his known links with Communism and Crime. This report is based on a trip to Maceió by the reporting officer on August 26 - 29, 1965.

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GROUP 3

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Background:

Alagoas, one of the smallest and poorest states in Brazil, has an unenviable (if sometimes romantic) reputation for political crime and turmoil. One of the last strongholds of Brazilian political feudalism, it has been the scene of constant political feuds and assassinations, culminating most recently in the killing of the State Secretary of Security in April of this year.

The political history of the state was in the past marked by the "reign" of successive political families, such as the Maltas from 1900 to 1912 and the Góes Monteiros from the late 1930's to 1950. The last of these was Silvestre PERICLES de Góes Monteiro, now a Senator (PST), who was elected in 1947 after the restoration of Brazilian democracy. A brilliant but erratic and arbitrary man, he ran a tumultuous and very personal administration whose chief accomplishment was a water supply for Maceió.

In the election of 1950, Silvestre was unable to put in his candidate for the succession. Instead, the victory went to Arnon de MELLO (UDN, now FDC), an experienced journalist and businessman who had been one of Silvestre's advisors but who broke with him and ran as opposition candidate. Silvestre has never forgiven Arnon, and has sworn to avenge his "treachery." In 1963 Silvestre tried to shoot Arnon when the latter took his seat in the Senate; in the exchange of shots Arnon accidentally killed Senator José Kairala of Acre. Arnon ran a "popular" type campaign, distributing countless souvenirs and promising anything and everything to Alagoas' teeming poor. As Governor he tried to maintain law and order, encouraged cultural activities, and built some paved roads--notably that from Maceió to Palmeira dos Índios. But he was unable to keep many of his promises, and failed to install his candidate for the succession.

The winner in 1955 was Muniz FALCÃO (PSP), a corrupt, unscrupulous demagogue with little education but considerable ability. Falcão ran as candidate of the "people", with Communist support and an extreme nationalist platform. His administration was the most tumultuous Alagoas has seen in some time. In 1957 the State Assembly tried to impeach Falcão, following the assassination of Deputy José Marques da SILVA of the UDN. On March 13, several pro-Falcão deputies, led by his father-in-law, Assembly President Humberto MENDES, entered the Assembly accompanied by half a dozen gunmen. Threatening to stop the vote at any cost they opened fire with tommy-guns on the other deputies, who fired back. Mendes died, six deputies were wounded, over a hundred bullets were buried in the Assembly walls, and the Army had to enter the hall and stop the shooting. The Federal Government then intervened in the state, and Falcão was out of office for three months. He returned, however, and the rest of his term was relatively quiet.

In the election of 1960, the UDN, with the support of Arnon de Mello, elected as Governor "Major" Luiz CAVALCANTE (PL-UDN), a respected Army officer.

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Cavalcante has run a quiet, progressive, and generally non-political administration. His administration has concentrated on law-and-order, and the building of schools and health facilities. In 1962, Arnon de Mello broke with Cavalcante when the latter tried to back Vice Governor Teotônio VILHELA for Senator in opposition to Arnon. Arnon, who had lost a Senate campaign to Silvestre Péricles in 1958, won anyway, along with Cavalcante's other candidate, Federal Deputy Rui PALMEIRA (UDN). Cavalcante is a firm anti-Communist, and on March 29, 1964 broke up a leftist comício in Maceió in what Alagoans like to think of as the beginning of the March 31 Revolution.

In February 1965 violence broke out again in Alagoas, with the attempted assassination of State Deputy Rôbson MENDES, son of the late Humberto and brother-in-law of Muniz FALCÃO. Falcão and his friends blamed Cavalcante, and in April the State Secretary of Security and Interior, Luiz Augusto de CASTRO E SILVA was shot down as he returned home from a Maceió movie. Arrested as intellectual author of the crime was Law Professor José MOURA, a leftist-nationalist considered linked to Falcão. Aside from the purely political aspects of the case, the Security Secretary had been hot on the trail of the flourishing Alagoan marijuana industry, which reportedly involves a number of politicians of the Falcão stripe. The Federal Government sent in General Riograndino KRUEL to investigate, and then arranged to have General José Augusto BITTENCOURT named as new Security Secretary, with a team of 30 specialists from the South, to investigate and clean up the so-called Syndicate of Crime in Alagoas.

The Campaign

As the 1965 gubernatorial campaign opened, Senator Arnon de Mello made a serious effort to wean the UDN away from Governor Cavalcante. He insists he had no desire to run himself, and that he would gladly have accepted a unity candidate, such as Assembly President LAMENHA FILHO (PSD). Indeed, Arnon's principal insistence was that the UDN break with Cavalcante. Some elements of the UDN, such as suplente Federal Deputy Geraldo SAMPAIO, also wished to break with Cavalcante, alleging that he had not given proper support to the party while in office.

Nevertheless, the UDN decided to remain with Cavalcante, and nominated as its candidate Senator Rui PALMEIRA, a moderate respected for his honesty if not for his brilliance. The PSD joined the coalition with the naming of suplente Deputy and long-time IAA lawyer Francisco OITICICA as candidate for Vice Governor.

The opposition's choice was clearly between Deputy Muniz Falcão (PSP) or his close associate Deputy Abrahão MOURA (PTB). The latter withdrew his own candidacy and State Deputy Cleto MARQUES LUZ became Falcão's running mate in a PSP-PTB coalition.

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Geraldo SAMPAIO, owner of the radio station in Palmeira dos Indios, refused to go along with Cavalcante and Palmeira, and has maintained his own candidacy; as running mate he first picked Deputy Aloisio NONO (PTB), but when Nono backed out he went to Edmar Araujo SILVA, an economist who is having eligibility troubles because he is under 35. Sampaio succeeded in gaining the support of the tiny MTR.

Arnon de Mello, unable to win over the UDN, launched his own candidacy on his PDC ticket, backed by the PTN. As running mate he chose Federal Deputy Oséas CARDOSO (PTN), a veteran politician who, like Arnon, is a long-time enemy of Silvestre Péricles.

Finally, a Maceió lawyer, João UCHOA, has entered the race as a self-proclaimed non-partisan candidate, on the PST line, with Humberto de Barros CORREIA as his running mate.

With five sets of candidates in the field, the campaign is a confused one. It is generally admitted, however, that the only serious contest is between Palmeira, Falcão, and Arnon de Mello. Each enters the race with different advantages and disadvantages. The campaign has so far been an orderly and peaceful one, and despite the plethora of activity and propaganda resulting from the number of candidates, public interest seems relatively low.

Rui Palmeira has the advantages and disadvantages of being a Government candidate. On the one hand he has the prestige of the state administration behind him, and his own reputation for honesty goes well with that of Governor Cavalcante. On the other, he is the target of the Brazilian's normal tendency to prefer the outs to the ins. While the administration has permitted the state radio to campaign all but openly for Palmeira, and the Government candidate has the backing of the semi-official Correio de Maceió, Cavalcante has not used many of the traditional incumbent tactics, such as last-minute packing of the civil service, in order to aid his candidate. Further, Palmeira is not a demagogue who can appeal to the poor urban masses, and the non-partisan nature of Cavalcante's administration has not endeared it to the political bosses of the interior. Palmeira must therefore run on a platform of good, honest government and on the solid achievements of his predecessor, without being able to promise much in the way of special favors to either the masses or the bosses. It is said that Palmeira has been quietly telling the bosses of the interior that he will not be as non-partisan as was Cavalcante, and that they can expect some reward for supporting his candidacy.

Palmeira's campaign has made headlines largely through the charges repeatedly made by State Security Secretary General Bittencourt against Muniz Falcão. Bittencourt has sent off repeated dossiers and telegrams to the Federal authorities, accusing Falcão and his followers (especially the Mendes family) of involvement in Alagoan crime and subversion.

Muniz Falcão has the traditional advantage of the opposition candidate; he can blame all evils on the incumbents and promise heaven for the future.

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Against him is the memory of his own last administration. Appealing principally to the urban masses in Maceió, Falcão portrays himself as the people's candidate and accuses of the incumbent administration of trying to persecute him and install a regime of terror in the state. Since the Revolution, Falcão has changed his political spots, or at least painted over all the red ones; he now serves proudly as Secretary of the Revolutionary Bloc in the Federal Congress and claims--without evidence--the support of President Castello Branco. Maceió's smallest morning daily, the Diário de Alagoas, backs Falcão.

Arnon de Mello's principal advantage is the publicity and backing offered by his newspaper, the Gazeta de Alagoas, and his radio station, both the largest and most professional in the state. His own strength is principally in the interior, and as running mate he has therefore chosen Federal Deputy Oséas Cardoso (PTN), whose strength is supposed to be among the poor of Maceió. He has campaigned exclusively against Cavalcante and on the promise to "bring back" the good Government supposedly enjoyed during his previous tenure. Supporters of Arnon accuse the Cavalcante regime of being responsible for the attempted come-back of Muniz Falcão, since had the evidence against him been sent in promptly after the Revolution he would have lost his political rights and been unable to join the Revolutionary Bloc or run for office.

Geraldo Sampaio, ~~representative~~ despite the support of the tiny afternoon daily Jornal de Hoje and the fact that his name is as widely painted on walls and rocks as are those of his competitors, is not considered a serious contender. Uchôa is even less so.

Prospects

Under the new electoral rules governors must receive an absolute majority of votes cast; if not, the State Assembly can either ratify the leading candidate or call a run-off between the top two. With three major and two minor candidates in the field, Assembly participation in the election seems almost certain. Most observers feel that the Assembly would ratify a plurality won by either Palmeira or Arnon de Mello, but would refuse to ratify (and thus force a run-off election) if Muniz Falcão should come out ahead. This is based on the fact that the Government claims the support of 28 of the 35 deputies; a few people fear that Muniz might be able to buy out enough deputies to get approval.

It is generally conceded that Muniz Falcão is running ahead in Maceió but that, were it not for the split between Rui Palmeira and Arnon de Mello, he would not have a chance on a state-wide basis. For this reason, he is expected to lose a run-off election if one becomes necessary. As to the relative strength of Arnon and Rui there is considerable difference of opinion, mostly following party lines; partisans of each side assume that the main contest is between their candidate and Muniz. A poll conducted by the non-partisan Jornal de Alagoas (Diários Associados) at the end of August in Maceió gave the following figures:

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Muniz Falcão	30%
Rui Palmeira	29%
Arnon de Mello	14%
João Uchoa	2%
Geraldo Sampaio	1%
undecided	24%

A Recife observer has suggested that Rui would run second to Muniz in the city and second to Arnon in the interior, but would come out first on a state-wide basis.

In the opinion of the reporting officer, Rui Palmeira will turn out to be stronger than Arnon de Mello. This should mean that he will win, either by gaining a plurality and being ratified by the State Assembly, or by coming in second to Muniz Falcão and winning in a run-off. Palmeira's campaign seems to be gathering strength as he enters the campaign personally, and we suspect that the "anti-Muniz" vote of those who fear a return to the turmoil of the Falcão administration is more likely to go to the candidate who represents established order than to a man who is, essentially, a lone wolf. It is likely to prove, however, a close election.

The Mayoralty Campaign in Maceió

The last elected Mayor of Maceió was Sandoval CAJÚ, a demagogic radio announcer who used his term of office to feather his own nest and to decorate the city with a large number of attractive parks, all of them featuring his first initial at every possible point. Deprived of his civil rights by the Revolution, Cajú was replaced by Deputy Mayor Vinicius CANSANÇÃO, a willing young man who has not proved an exceptionally dynamic leader.

Registered in the campaign for Mayor are at least six tickets. Most of them are slates backed by one or the other of the gubernatorial candidates. Of them, only two are considered important. The Government is backing a ticket led by 28-year old Divaldo SURUAGY, a brilliant and youthful economist who has been Finance Secretary to Governor Cavalcante; his running mate is city councilman Juvêncio LESSA. His chief opposition comes from a slate backed by Arnon de Mello, consisting of State Deputy Teobaldo BARBOSA and José MARTINS. The Muniz Falcão opposition backs a slate composed of Wilson LUCENA, the son of an ex-Mayor, and Togo FALCÃO, a relative of Muniz. Ousted Mayor Cajú is backing a slate made up of State Deputy Lauro FARIAS (PST) and Angelico GOMES. The MTR is backing a PSP dissident, Nereu CAVALCANTI, whose running mate is Emanuel FAY. Finally there is the local crank candidate, Hélio TAVEIROS, who is, as usual, running on his own.

General opinion is that Suruagy is running a bit ahead of Teobaldo, and that none of the others count at all. This is supported by the Jornal de Alagoas straw poll last week, which gave the following results:

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Divaldo Suruagy	45%
Teobaldo Barbosa	30%
Nereu Cavalcante	10%
Lauro Farias	5%
Wilson Lucena	3%
undecided	7%

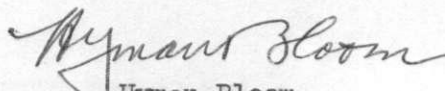
Unless things change drastically before October 3, Divaldo Suruagy ought to win. He should make a good Mayor, too.

Comment

The contrast between candidates in Alagoas is greater than in other states because of the presence of Muniz Falcão, who stands for the worst in political corruption and unprincipled nationalistic demagoguery. His two main opponents vary in style, but both represent reasonably responsible government. Supporters of both Arnon and Rui tend to regret that the two are splitting the anti-Muniz vote, and are not especially disturbed at the prospect of a victory by either; they are united in their horror of a possible victory by Muniz Falcão.

So far as the United States is concerned, a victory by either Rui Palmeira or Arnon de Mello should mean a continuation of the atmosphere of friendly co-operation which has generally prevailed under Luiz Cavalcante. A victory by Muniz Falcão would be more problematical; as a man who has changed his spots before, he might decide to be cooperative. On the other hand, it is more probable that his tendency toward corruption, and his penchant for nationalistic polemics, would lead him to exploit U.S. aid both as a source of personal gain and as a whipping boy for popular discontent.

In the Brazilian scene, a victory by Muniz would be a real challenge to the Revolution, despite his new-found revolutionary loyalty and his party ties to the old fox of São Paulo. Even if the Federal Government cannot afford to publicly denounce an associate of Adhemar and a leader of the Revolutionary Bloc, it is hard to imagine that it can look with favor on the return to power of a man who represents the worst in Brazilian politics.


Hyman Bloom
Consul

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