

October 18, 1968

To : The Secretary
through: S/S
From : INR - George C. Denney, Jr. *A.C.D.L*

Subject: Brazil: Potential for Student Violence Increases

The potential for violent student disturbances in Brazil increased significantly with the arrest on October 12 of over 700 participants of the illegal congress of the National Union of Students (UNE). This was the first police success in disrupting the annual UNE meeting and it resulted in the arrest of virtually every important student leader in the organization. Extremist militants of the Popular Action movement are acting quickly to fill the leadership void thus created, and anti-government demonstrations in sympathy with the arrested students have already occurred in at least eight cities. The government's decision to release all but the top UNE leaders will probably help to de-fuse the highly volatile situation, but Brazil's unsettled political atmosphere
(2) and the declared intent of the government to use massive force in putting down future demonstrations make some renewed violence and bloodshed almost inevitable.

Arrests had strong psychological impact. The almost incredible success of the police in arresting the entire UNE congress will probably encourage security forces to maintain their intractable opposition to student protests. The UNE--although outlawed in January 1966 as a subversive organization--has retained broad-based student support and its very existence has become symbolic of opposition to the government.

Since 1966, the UNE has continued and even expanded its activities and

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its annual clandestine congresses--two of which were held with the collusion of liberal Catholic priests--have made a mockery of the official ban against UNE's existence. An attempt to create a government-sponsored rival to the UNE was a pitiful failure and there is at present no legally recognized national student organization in Brazil. For these reasons, the government has been keenly interested in preventing this year's gathering, all the more so because 1968 is the UNE's thirtieth anniversary.

Top student leaders imprisoned. The successful disruption of the UNE congress netted the police an unexpected bonus, the arrest of virtually every prominent student leader in Brazil. Among those jailed were: Vladimir Palmeira, the much-publicized leader of massive demonstrations in Rio last June; Luis Gonzaga Travassos da Rosa, incumbent UNE president; José Dirceu de Oliveira e Silva, well-known São Paulo student activist and the leading candidate for the UNE presidency; Jean Marc Vanderweid, the nominee of the Popular Action movement for the UNE presidency; two UNE vice presidents and numerous student delegates from all regions of the country. All in all, it was a notable achievement for the police and a temporary defeat for student militants who are now more angry than afraid. While the arrested student leaders were certainly militants, they were nonetheless realistic enough to seek to avoid or at least control student violence. Their arrest--which apparently means that they will be tried under the National Security Law--intensifies the polarization of the Brazilian student movement and allows the violence-prone faction of the Popular Action group a free hand to exploit student anger and frustration.

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Police action protested. Student reaction to the arrest of UNE congress participants was spontaneous and anti-government demonstrations have thus far occurred in Rio, Belem, Belo Horizonte, Brasilia, Vitoria, Salvador, Fortaleza and Recife. Further protests are planned. The focus of protest has been in the last three named Northeast Brazilian cities where university students are generally less responsive than their colleagues in other regions. Several persons have been wounded, police cars stoned and windows of the governor's palace broken in Salvador where the UNE arrests followed continued student disturbances over a local issue of police brutality. Injuries also were reported in Fortaleza where students violently clashed with police on October 15. All faculties at the Federal university in that city remain closed as a sign of protest against police action in the UNE affair. In Recife, 2,000 policemen have been assigned on a relatively permanent basis to the downtown area in anticipation of renewed disturbances. All faculties at both the Federal and Catholic universities are striking in sympathy with the arrested UNE delegates (51 of whom are from Recife) and there are unconfirmed reports that "rightist" students are stockpiling Molotov cocktails for future use. While the first outbreak of demonstrations following the UNE arrests was probably an uncoordinated reaction, it has been reported by a clandestine source that a Popular Action representative from Rio de Janeiro arrived in Recife on October 13 with \$5,500 US to be used in financing student protest activities. He is attempting to coordinate student demonstrations in a three or four state area and similar representatives are presumably active in other regions of the country. The source of Popular Action financing is unknown.

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Right-wing groups exacerbate tensions. A "rightist" reaction to continued student demonstrations has already resulted in a pitched battle between opposing student factions in São Paulo and is likely to cause further violence. Several stridently anti-communist organizations-- apparently composed of hardline students and young military men--have for the past few months engaged in violent harassment of students and others whom they consider to be "subversive" or communist. On October 15, elements from three "rightist" organizations raided the Federal University Law School in Rio, held guards at bay with submachine guns and proceeded to cover all four floors of the building with strong anti-communist slogans written in roofing tar. Most oft-repeated was the phrase "For every democrat killed, five communists will die". The emergence of extreme right-wing groups injects a dangerous element into the student situation and will probably make it more difficult for police to either prevent or control violence.

Political atmosphere uneasy. Brazil's political atmosphere is currently unsettled and the threat of renewed violence could not have come at a more inopportune time. Under attack from several quarters, the Costa e Silva government seems to be hardening its position in the face of criticism, and recent statements by cabinet members and the President himself indicate that official tolerance of dissent is very low. For the first time since the 1964 Revolution, the military as an institution has been vilified in Congress and legal proceedings against the offending congressmen have been initiated. Charges of corruption have been levied against the President's immediate family, a counter-terror group has been uncovered within the Brazilian Air Force, there have been signs

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that the Brazilian Catholic Church will increasingly pressure the government for social and economic reforms and the first serious labor strikes in four years have occurred in recent months. Commenting on the present situation, Minister of Interior, General Albuquerque Lima--a leading candidate to succeed President Costa e Silva in 1971--vehemently criticized those who denigrate the military and attempt to undo the Revolution. He implicated priests, bishops, students and elements of the press and vowed that the Revolution will continue "ten years if necessary, or as many years as needed to implant necessary reforms".

Further student disturbances likely. The release of all but the top student leaders arrested at the UNE meeting will diminish tensions somewhat, but it will not alter the basic positions of either the government or the students. Moreover, the imprisonment of student leaders such as Vladimir Palmeira and José Dirceu de Oliveira provides a continual focus for student agitation and simultaneously assures the ascendancy of radical, second echelon Popular Action militants. Given both the circumstances and the absence of moderating influences on either side, a renewal of student disturbances and a violent police reaction appear to be very likely.