

## AIRGRAM

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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State

INFO:

RIO DE JANEIRO, BRASILIA

STATE DEPARTMENT SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

☒ Retain class'n ☐ Change/classify to☐ Declassify with concurrence of

EO 12958, 25X

FPC/HDR by WBY Date: 3/15/96

after death of Perracchi

Withdrawal No. ST-10 R1 67-69

FROM : Amconsul PORTO ALEGRE

DATE: December 1, 1969

SUBJECT : BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: Walter Perracchi Barcellos, Governor of Rio Grande do Sul

REF :

1. Governor Perracchi has been amply covered for biographic purposes for many years. These notes based on three years of close contact with him are intended as supplementary information only.

2. Perracchi, whose political career has been typified by even more ups and downs than that of most politicians, is now riding the crest of the wave. Not only has he finally succeeded in achieving virtual control over his own party in the State and thoroughly dominated the opposition party, but with the inception of the Medici Government he has become a figure of national importance for the second or third time in his life. This is by reason of his old and close friendship with Medici which extends back to the 1920's when both were young officers, Medici in the Army and Perracchi in the State Military Police, engaging in the now historically famous pursuit of the column of the Communist leader Luis Carlos Prestes. Medici and Perracchi also fought shoulder-to-shoulder in the Revolutions of 1930, 1935, and 1937. When Perracchi left the Military Police to embrace a political career in the 1950's his path often crossed with Medici's and their friendly relationship was sustained. President Medici, whose opinion of politicians is generally low, has often said that Perracchi is the only politician whom he genuinely admires and respects. This feeling is returned by Perracchi, who as an ex-military man himself likes soldiers, but has a low opinion of their political acumen. Perracchi has told me that Medici is the only General officer he knows whose mind ranges beyond the parade ground. This mutual admiration society is likely to give Perracchi considerable influence in the new government particularly with respect to development of political structures and political parties.

3. Governor Perracchi finishes his present term of office in March 1971 at which time he could presumably write his own ticket at the national level.

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Political observers have only speculated that he may run for the Senate and also become national president of the ARENA party. However he told me two days ago that under the present eligibility law he would have to resign the governorship nine months before the end of his regular term in order to stand for a Senate seat, and that he has no intention of doing this. On the other hand he admitted that he has no intention of retiring from public life after leaving the Governorship. Hence it is quite likely that he may join Medici's cabinet perhaps as either Minister of Interior and Justice or Minister of Labor (a job he held under Castello Branco), or become part of President Medici's personal staff perhaps as Chief of the Civil Household.

4. Perracchi's personal history is an interesting one and worth recording particularly as a saga of a self-made man in Brazil. He was born to a family of very modest circumstances and his father died when he was seven years old. As the oldest of numerous children he had to leave school and devote himself to helping his mother support the family. This he did initially by shining shoes and selling newspapers in the central plaza of Porto Alegre where dozens of urchins still follow these occupations. He also followed a number of other pursuits, some of them best unmentioned, until the age of 14 when he lied about his age to join the State Military Police as a recruit. He was commissioned as an officer in this organization some 10 years later after having taught himself to read and write and passing the examinations for the cadet school. After being commissioned he rose quickly through the ranks because of his legendary will power and great personal courage as well as an already blossoming political touch. By the late 1940's he was a Colonel and Commander-in-Chief of the State Military Police. After his retirement he served as a member of the State Legislative Assembly, the National Chamber of Deputies, and ultimately the Senate. Although Perracchi has risen high and learned much he is still in many ways a very simple man whose chief virtues are courage and persistence. As one of his chief rivals and critics told me, the Governor is ~~basically~~ frequently confused, was slow to make up his mind, but once he does it can rain rocks and pitchforks but Perracchi will not be deterred from reaching his objective or even forced to deviate from his established course.

*[Signature]*  
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