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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE 1964 OCT 30 PM 2 29  
 INFO : RIO DE JANEIRO, BRASILIA  
 FROM : AmConGen, SAO PAULO DATE: October 23, 1964  
 SUBJECT : São Paulo City Council honors Martin Luther KING.  
 REF :

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
 BUREAU OF  
 INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS  
 NOV 2 - 1964

RM/AN  
 ANALYSIS & DISTRIBUTION  
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RMR FILES  
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The City Council of São Paulo held a special meeting on the evening of October 16 to commemorate the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Martin Luther King. The reporting officer represented the Consulate General at the ceremony attended by several hundred persons, including the largest number of negroes yet seen at such a gathering. City Councilman João Carlos de Souza MEIRELLES, evidently a great personal admirer of Martin Luther King, organized and directed the meeting and was the principal speaker. Other speakers were the President of the City Council, two Federal Deputies, two State Deputies, and several City Councilmen, one a negro.

The ceremony, which might easily have become an occasion for attacks on our country because of the race conflict, evolved into eulogies of both the United States and Martin Luther King. Many speakers, with a surprising amount of self-criticism and considerable truthfulness, emphasized that discrimination did exist within Brazil, despite the fact that Brazilian law, like that of the United States, guaranteed civil rights. Martin Luther King was praised extravagantly by all speakers as a world figure whose policies of non-violence had set an example for others. In eulogizing a famous American, many speakers dwelt at length on the common dedication of Brazil and the U.S. to the ideals of democracy and Christianity exemplified by Martin Luther King.

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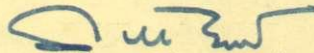


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Many Brazilians at the ceremony took great pride in the extent of racial integration in Brazil, and these had apparently adopted Martin Luther King as their own; they considered the award of the Nobel Peace Prize as an honor to Brazil as well as to the United States. Councilman Meirelles reported that 42 of the 45 City Councilmen had already signed a petition to make Martin Luther King an honorary citizen of São Paulo. At the same time Federal Deputy Levy TAVARES announced that an invitation had been sent directly to Martin Luther King to visit Brazil early next year.

Comment: The excitement aroused locally by the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to a noted American negro was quite impressive. Should Martin Luther King be able to come to Brazil his visit would undoubtedly arouse vast enthusiasm and would be highly beneficial for United States-Brazilian relations. In many ways Martin Luther King's appeal for civil rights, Christian ideals, and peaceful actions holds for Brazilians the same emotional spell as did the words of the late President Kennedy.



Niles W. Bond  
Minister Consul General

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