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TO : Department of State

INFO : BRASILIA, PORTO ALEGRE, RIO DE JANEIRO, SAO PAULO

FROM : Amconsul RECIFE

DATE: Dec. 3, 1969

SUBJECT : Prospects for Future Political Leadership in Brazil
as Drawn from the Views of Civilian Politicians and

REEX : Military Officers in the Northeast

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS
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INTRODUCTION

At the Principal Officers' meeting of a few months ago in Rio, some attention was given to the question of the sources of enlightened future political leadership in Brazil. From where would come those men who would provide the leadership needed to build a viable political system? (By political system is meant a functioning, effective, and, hopefully, reasonably representative party structure, a system of communication and political decision-making in which popular participation would begin to have real meaning. This would include a mechanism for developing national goals with opportunities for a national dialogue and the development of widely based political support for these goals, etc.)

The military was identified as one of the more likely sources of such leadership or, because of its power position, at least as the sector which would determine who most of the leaders would be. Technocrats were another identified leadership source. As part of our continuing analysis of this issue, Recife has sought to discover and analyze the views and attitudes of representatives of various sectors of Brazilian life in the Northeast. In this airgram, a descriptive appraisal of two sectors is presented: civilian politicians at the state and local level, and military officers. Comments on other sectors, in the context of serving as future sources of political leadership, will be offered in subsequent messages.

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SUMMARY

Many elements of the political spectrum and of the military officers in the Northeast do not represent, as judged from their views and attitudes, promising sources of enlightened modern political leadership in Brazil. Most civilian politicians at the state and local level regard the political process and the expected eventual restoration of "democracy" as desirable because these would represent a return to familiar patterns of personal leadership. They have little notion of ways to develop new political forms or revise old ones and are doing little or no thinking about what kind of political system the modernization of Brazil requires. Most military officers here have only the vaguest notion of the political process and, along with the majority of other sectors, essentially mistrust the process and its professional practitioners. As yet, these officers have not formed, nor have they been given, a set of goals or national purposes, an ideology or program, which could constitute the agenda of a popular political movement or the subject of a national political dialogue.

VIEWS AND ATTITUDES OF CIVILIAN POLITICIANS^{1/}

Attitudes Toward the Present Regime. The attitudes of civilian politicians toward the present regime appear, at first glance, to be sharply divided. Those who have gained from the Revolution or hope to gain (especially from indirect elections or appointment) approve of the regime, while those "old guard" politicians who have not improved their position, or whose power is based on popular support or political influence, are generally opposed. This, of course, is an oversimplification, since, to some extent, opinion cuts across these lines, running the gamut from harsh disapproval to near total support. However, few politicians are indifferent or neutral. Their spirited feelings, however, are essentially confined to the impact of political developments on their own future status. What these developments mean for political modernization in Brazil or how they can work with the regime to implement, in practical political terms, President Garrastazu Médici's call for political democratization, do not appear to be matters of serious interest to them.

In general, a majority of the politicians support, or profess to support most or all of the Revolution's stated objectives: elimination of corruption and subversion, restoration of sound finances, continuation of economic development on a firm base, social and institutional reforms, etc. However,

^{1/} The attitudes described below were drawn from a series of conversations with state deputies, state secretaries, and city councilmen in the Recife consular district during the period October-November 1969. All are members of ARENA. This report does not reflect opinions of governors and federal congressmen.

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many are becoming disillusioned with the lack of dramatic results and attractive, easily understood programs. Most regret or resent the continued curtailment of democratic rights. Nevertheless, a significant number accept and support the regime's "modified" democratic system as necessary and appropriate for the present Brazilian "reality." But little or no constructive thought is being given to the structure which will follow the present system.

There is no evidence of any intention to confront the regime with direct opposition. Here, the operative rationale seems to be that a politician's "first duty to the people" is to maintain his own position. All politicians accept the present situation with varying degrees of enthusiasm or resignation. They regard the dictatorial aspects of the regime as temporary and perhaps even necessary. However, most view military control as unacceptable in the long run. Even those most hostile to the government frankly admit they are keeping their heads down for the time being. They respect and fear the power and determination of the military. They see the military as a tightly organized and united group which will brook no significant opposition or criticism. They are sensitive to the fact that the military prefer to exercise power indirectly, but understand that the military are capable of ruthlessness under certain circumstances.

Attitudes Toward the Future. Most politicians regard the ultimate restoration of democracy as inevitable. They do not, however, indicate that they are prepared or preparing for this by making plans, discussing new initiatives, etc. They seem to have no sense of community among themselves or with the military in any effort to develop new leadership or to promote changes in attitudes and institutions. For those most opposed to the regime, return to the pre-Goulart version of democratic participation seems to be their primary goal. Some, not all, want the return of the old political parties. They envision no great changes in the pre-1964 political system but seem to sense that, somehow, certain of that system's inadequacies must be corrected and the more glaring abuses under that system will have to be curbed. They seem to be assuming that the pre-1964 system will permit their vague wishes for reform to be nicely implemented. There is no real appreciation of the causal connection between the patterns of this system and the abuses which occurred within it. If, on the part of the "old guard," there is any sense of "guilt" for their role in events leading to the Revolution, it is not manifest. These individuals seem more resentful than contrite.

There are few specific theories among the politicians regarding the method by which democracy will be restored. Most seem to expect a gradual erosion of the military will to continue governing and a return to old style participatory democracy by incremental steps. Inaugural and subsequent statements by President Médici have aroused cautious optimism that this process may be beginning, but no one expects a dramatic breakthrough. One politician has

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suggested that the new, handpicked ARENA national directorate will be the vehicle by which the regime will gradually transfer political control from the military to civilians (see Recife A-104). A sizeable number of politicians (mostly ex-PSD) indicate support and enthusiasm for General Afonso Albuquerque Lima. This may indicate agreement with his views or, more likely, that he has represented the only known, essentially respectable opposition to a regime with which they have many disagreements.

Finally, in spite of their hopes for a return to democracy, few see much chance that they will be able to participate, even in a limited fashion, in the forthcoming indirect gubernatorial elections. Most are convinced that the governors will be selected at the presidential level and "imposed" upon the state legislatures. Thus, they foresee little basic change from the present political system in the next year or two.

VIEWS AND ATTITUDES OF MILITARY OFFICERS^{2/}

✓ Limited Concept of National Political Purpose. Although the Brazilian military establishment, as a national institution, is today the chief arbitrator and executor of the nation's affairs, the overwhelming impression conveyed by the military in the Northeast is an absence of a positive sense of national political purpose. It is true that they are united in the conviction and the acceptance that their role is to curb and control corruption and subversion, and that they must oversee the conduct of the nation's business. (As a part of this, they willingly carry out non-military assignments in federal and state executive positions.) It also seems that the military, more than any other Brazilian group, believe in and are willing to sacrifice for a "great" Brazil of the future. However, these nationalistic aspirations remain inarticulated as far as specifics are concerned. For example, a meaningful concept of the 1964 Revolution as a revolution designed not only to save the nation from chaos and corruption but to also redesign the social and political framework, is lacking. They are united in agreement that the conduct of national affairs must not be returned to those who allowed the pre-1964 situation to develop. But, perhaps as a result of discipline, or because of the traditional military distaste for things political, they seem divorced from consideration of problems of national policy or the process of political evolution. Efforts by the regime to change the

✓ 2/ The following discussion of attitudes of Brazilian military officers in the Northeast is a distillation of a series of conversations with individual officers in Pernambuco, Paraíba, Rio Grande do Norte, and Ceará during the period October-November 1969. While the observations made represent a synthesis, it is believed that these officers (ranging in rank from major to general) are a representative group insofar as the attitudes of the military in the Northeast are concerned. It should be noted that the fact that, with one possible exception, none of the officers contacted have participated in policy decisions at the national level may explain their seeming lack of a positive sense of political purpose.

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✓ previous socio-political structure of Brazil and take initiatives toward the alteration of institutions enlist the support of the military but not necessarily their comprehension and participation. For example, they approve of the concepts of agrarian and educational reform and of political democratization, but regard these as issues of little relevance to themselves and their present mission.

✓ If one defined national purpose in terms of adopting "orthodox" or "classical" economic policies and sound financial goals, then it could be said that most of the military officers in the Northeast have adopted and generally understand the purposes to which the present regime is committed. They support these policies, with pride, albeit with statist overtones in connection with government participation in the basic industries. Moreover, they favor "economic development" as something intrinsically good and necessary, even though their general understanding of sound fiscal policy is not sufficient to illuminate the connection between the two. Beyond this, however, the closest approach of most of the military to consideration of change in the status quo or to political modernization is their agreement that somehow and someday a new and better breed of civilian leader must develop, emerge, and reassume direction of the nation's destinies. The formulation of national goals and a national political purpose, as steps toward developing political leadership and a viable political system, has simply not become part of the thought processes of the majority of military officers in the Northeast.

Attitudes Toward Local Affairs and the Civilian Sector. Where the military are often vague concerning national issues and prospects, they are succinct regarding local affairs. Here, there is no lack of a sense of purpose. They are confident of their ability to control and direct the areas under their command in all essentials and have no fear of the development of significant opposition to the regime or themselves. The officers take pride in a "civic" role for the military. In addition to military road building, communications and educational activities, they demonstrate an awareness of the need for military units to integrate more thoroughly with the local community. They speak of courting favorable public response with band concerts, charitable campaigns, civic improvement projects, etc. They support Operation Rondon and are enthusiastic about a recent program of the Fourth Army which included groups of student volunteers on its recent field maneuvers to permit the latter to engage in social welfare work in the interior. In general, the military's concern for public opinion seems to reflect not so much a fear that they are opposed by the people but that they are not loved or supported by them. Their regard for public opinion could be a product of normal good will and prudence, or a deliberate program to achieve a popular social consensus in favor of the regime, or both. The military make no bones about their position as the nation's politically

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dominant group but few evince great enthusiasm for this role and some indicate it is obnoxious to them. The majority can be qualified as at least passive hard-liners. Significantly, insofar as the regime's extra-legal acts are concerned, none demonstrated the kind of legalistic qualms such as characterized many members of the military in the pre-1964 era. They accept as morally correct their "duty" to direct government affairs. They do so because of their belief that military men have national vision, are honest, patriotic, and technically competent. This contrasts in their view with civilian political leaders who, in addition to often being incompetent, corrupt and subversive, represent narrow, local and personal interests, and "play politics" at the expense of the nation's welfare.

Believing this, the military are largely intolerant of criticism from "morally inferior" civilians and tend to equate anti-military statements with subversion. This tendency is sharpened by a highly developed sense of officer class solidarity and an acute sensitivity toward slights placed upon "military honor." One result of this is a rigidly narrow view of what democracy should permit insofar as free speech and political activity are concerned. Concepts by the military of adjusting to a renewal of popular participation in national affairs remain vague and ill-defined. The idea of a broadly based democracy seems either foreign to them or one with which most officers are uncomfortable.

The experiences of the military both immediately before and since 1964 have imbued them with a paternalistic and strict attitude toward civilians. The delegation of authority to civilians, however necessary and desirable, is viewed with uneasiness. While most officers have little desire to assume responsibility for the day-to-day conduct of public business and interfere in it only reluctantly, their confidence in civilians is slight. They do not trust or respect political leaders in general. (For this reason they welcomed the recent Ineligibility Law and favor its strict interpretation.) They sympathize with workers but regard unions and union leaders with deep suspicion and a measure of contempt. As a general rule, they have little confidence in the efficacy of freely functioning democratic institutions. They are particularly mistrustful of the ability of the electorate to vote "intelligently" and of the capacity of the present political parties to organize and lead the nation. The military view the more progressive church leaders as communists at worst or tools of communists at best and subversive in any case. They regard the church as an institution which, after allowing time to pass it by, is now suffering the throes of a belated and often misdirected modernization effort.

In view of the above, the attitude of the military toward students is surprisingly ambivalent. All agree on the need to penalize "agitators," but many are inclined to forgive and forget once a transgressor has been

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punished. In general, the military seem to have a wary affection for and pride in students because of their "idealism" and since they are, inevitably, the future leaders of the nation. Most are hopeful that they will be able to "manage" the students and blunt their hostility if not actually win them over to support of the regime.

Conclusion. The military in the Northeast appear to be a group of tough, honest, nationalistic individuals engaged in a venture whose purpose, for them, lacks specific definition. Beyond their dedication to the task of maintaining the regime in power and to the achievement of a greater Brazil through economic development, they seem somewhat rudderless. In the absence of an evolving political system which promotes popular support of national goals, and should these officers become dissatisfied with the present regime's performance, they could find tempting the promises of a Nasser-type military leader. (Perhaps General Afonso, who still is well regarded by several military officers, mounted his offensive too early.) Insofar as a return to democracy is concerned, the military's general contempt for and lack of confidence in civilian political leaders and democratic institutions seems to leave them with no alternative at present but adherence to the status quo. It is also evident that the typical military officer in the Northeast has been giving little or no thought to widening Brazil's political alternatives by creating conditions conducive to the emergence of civilian leaders whom they could trust.

The foregoing is not meant to describe those few officers who understand and are motivated by the concepts of "development" and "security" as articulated, for example, by the Escola Superior de Guerra and who, further, are aware of the philosophical and practical difficulties in reconciling "democracy" and "order". What is relevant, however, is the absence among the vast majority of officers here in the Northeast--from whom some of the future military and perhaps national political decision-makers will spring--of an inclination to reconcile the democracy versus order dilemma by examining how new political forms or a more modern political system, Brazilian style, will assist in achieving the general development and security purposes to which they are committed. As yet, therefore, despite the role of the military for the past five and one-half years in Brazil, those now in the Northeast do not provide much hope that as a group, they will offer a source of enlightened future political leadership.

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