

# AIRGRAM

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FILE DESIGNATION

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HANDLING INDICATOR

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FROM : Amembassy RIO DE JANEIRO

DATE: Jan. 20, 1971

SUBJECT : Trends and Events for the Month of December 1970

REF :

I. Major Trends

1. Kidnapping of Swiss Ambassador Bucher

On December 7, Brazil experienced its fourth kidnapping of a diplomat in 15 months, when the Swiss Ambassador in Rio, Giovanni Bucher, was taken from his car at gunpoint, and his single police guard was mortally wounded. It quickly became apparent that -- in contrast to the Government's rapid acquiescence to the kidnappers' demands in the three previous kidnap cases -- this time the rules were different. It is well established that by Dec. 8 the GOB had received an authentic communique from Bucher's kidnappers (containing a handwritten note from him affirming that he was well) which demanded the freeing of 70 prisoners, publication of the kidnappers' manifestos, and free rides for commuters on two suburban trains until the 70 prisoners were freed. The GOB had in effect acknowledged the contents of this message, by issuing a communique stating that it would only agree to the release of prisoners, and nothing more, for the safe return of the Ambassador. However, it was only on Dec. 21 that the GOB finally admitted officially that it had received an authentic message.

During this interval, while the authorities were carrying out a dragnet operation to locate the Ambassador and his captors, the GOB appeared to deliberately foment confusion. In one instance the Army Intelligence Center surfaced a fake list of prisoners to be ransomed. Also the GOB's management of

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the news encouraged rumors to circulate that the kidnapers with the Ambassador were surrounded by police in a house somewhere in Rio's mountains, or that he had been injured and was in danger of dying.

After all of the delay and the GOB'S elimination of every demand except ransom of prisoners, the kidnapers also were to have their lists of prisoners partially vetoed three times by the GOB before seventy acceptable names were found. When at last liberated on January 16, Ambassador Bucher had been held 40 days, in contrast to 4 days each for the US Ambassador and Japanese Consul General, and 5 days for the German Ambassador. The expulsion of the 70 prisoners who were flown to Chile brought to 130 the total number of prisoners who have been ransomed for kidnapped diplomats in Brazil thus far.

Despite finally agreeing to release 70 prisoners for Ambassador Bucher, the GOB did establish two important precedents which could have damaging effect on future recruitment for the terrorist movement. First, it demonstrated that in exchange for a kidnapped diplomat it only would release prisoners who had not been involved in serious crimes (excluding thereby murderers, kidnapers, and other persons charged or convicted of crimes for which long prison terms were prescribed). Some terrorists (so the GOB might hope) would be reluctant to engage in activities for which they know they cannot be ransomed if arrested. Second, the Government forced the kidnapers to drop their less essential demands, when it indicated it would only agree to the release of prisoners for the return of the Ambassador. As a result the terrorists were unable to make much domestic propaganda out of the kidnapping. With Bucher finally having been returned and the GOB's stance proven successful, it is being speculated that in any future kidnapping the Government might adopt an even harder position in the face of ransom demands. Soundings made by the ARMA indicate that a majority of the Army officer corps has swung against giving in to any future kidnapers' demands. Even in Bucher's case, President Medici allegedly went against such opinion in negotiating the Ambassador's release. These pressures on the President are likely to be very strong in any future kidnapping.

## 2. Press Censorship

Censorship and intimidation of journalists noticeably worsened in December, partially as a result of the Government's strict handling of news concerning the ransom of Ambassador Bucher. The arrest and expulsion from Brazil of the Director of Agence France Presse, François Pelou, was one of the events contributing to the bad press atmosphere. Pelou had circulated both here and abroad a list of the names of prisoners, whose release was demanded for the return of Ambassador Bucher, which the

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GOB believed he had obtained from a terrorist. He thus forced the hand of the Government, which initially had been reluctant to acknowledge there was such a list. For this Pelou was arrested and held for 24 hours, accused of violating national security, and ordered to leave Brazil within four days. During December the Brazilian correspondent of Le Monde, Irinee Guimarães, also was accused of having violated the National Security Law. He was charged with having written for the French paper last June articles defamatory to Brazil, dealing with tortures and Church-State relations.

As a result of these journalists' experience and other harassment by the police, the foreign correspondents club during the month sent cables to the Foreign and Justice Ministers asking that their rights be respected. They were assured by GOB officials that this would be taken care of. When police harassment continued, a second cable was sent to the Foreign Ministry asking that their professional obligations and limitations be stipulated. This telegram was rejected as impertinent.

The weekly humor paper O Pasquim abruptly had its circulation suspended in the middle of the month by the Federal Police. Pasquim's editorial and administrative staff had been in jail without charges since early November, but nevertheless had managed to continue publication, because of the assistance of journalists from other papers. The uproar this created in journalistic circles and the protests made to the Justice Minister by Brazilian officials of the Inter-American Press Association, however, succeeded in obtaining O Pasquim's reopening two weeks later, and all of the publication's staff was released from jail by the first part of January.

In allowing O Pasquim's re-circulation, the GOB had the last say though, for it simultaneously issued a modification of its pre-censorship law to require periodicals to submit to censors ready-for-circulation copies rather than just manuscripts as earlier required. This puts O Pasquim (the only wide circulation publication to be pre-censored at present) face-to-face with the possibility of considerable financial loss, if it regularly is forced to reset its type and reschedule its operations, because of last minute changes in its editions by the federal censors.

During December directors of several São Paulo newspapers were called together by military censors and reprimanded for having violated censorship guidelines in publishing articles about the Swiss Ambassador's kidnapping. In Campo Grande, journalists protested against censorship which was so rigorous that they could not even publish a note of the Justice Minister on the Bucher kidnapping. On a nation-wide basis

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general subjects that newspapers had to clear with the censor continued to be: terrorist kidnappings, bank assaults, arrest of military personnel, and statements by Church officials -- with more restrictive application of the rules in some parts of the country than in others.

The first half of January saw several more disagreeable incidents involving journalists and police. In Rio two Associated Press employees (one US and one Brazilian), who were covering the departure of the 70 prisoners ransomed for Ambassador Bucher, were arrested and beaten by Army Police. At Belo Horizonte a Jornal do Brasil reporter was beaten on the street by a policeman for no apparent reason to the extent that his arm was broken. The President of the Uruguay Press Association, while transiting Brazil by commercial airlines, was arrested in Rio on January 17 for unknown reasons, but was released after 24 hours. In the face of these recent events ex-Foreign Minister Magalhaes Pinto (an ARENA Senator-elect) was moved to say last week, during a luncheon with journalists in Rio, that the reestablishment of freedom of the press is a priority requirement if the restoration of democracy is to begin. There is no democracy without freedom of the press, he was quoted as saying.

3. Attempts of Brazilian Consul's Wife to Raise US\$1 million for His Ransom  
supposedly

After/receiving from Uruguay's Tupamaros the demand that she raise US\$ 1 million as ransom for her kidnapped husband, Brazilian Consul Aloisio Gomide, Mrs. Gomide met with Foreign Minister Gibson Barbosa in Brasilia on December 10 to inform him of her intention to try to obtain the required sum. According to Mrs. Gomide, Gibson told her the GOB could not take official cognizance of the subject because it was within the competence of the Uruguayan Government. But he recognized her right and duty to try to save the life of her husband.

On the following day Mrs. Gomide arrived in Rio to launch her campaign for contributions. She made television appearances, held news conferences, and met with prominent personages, traveling subsequently to São Paulo and Belo Horizonte in her efforts to raise the ransom money. Some news reports erroneously reported that half of the million dollars had been raised within the few days, and that it was Mrs. Gomide's announced hope to have her husband free by Christmas. Editorial opinion and public comment generally praised her campaign, but here and there more conservative commentators questioned the advisability of giving a million dollars to a terrorist organization in a neighboring country, both from the standpoint of the precedent it would establish and the use to which the vast sum might be put by the Tupamaros.

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Before a week of the campaign had passed, Finance Minister Delfim Neto made a point of telling newspaper reporters that legally it was impossible to take 1 million dollars out of Brazil. With those words the campaign collapsed. Potential contributors shied away, and it turned out that only a fraction of the money thought to have already been raised actually had been. Mrs. Gomide was quoted as saying she might try to take whatever money had been raised, even if it still was in cruzeiros, and attempt to use it to ransom her husband. She went into seclusion, however, and was reported to be in a state of nervous depression. Evidently at the beginning of Mrs. Gomide's campaign to raise money, the GOB had not yet formed a definite attitude on the matter and tolerated her efforts. Within a few days, however, it apparently decided to take action to obstruct her campaign. This decision was almost simultaneous with the adoption of a tougher stance on ransoming prisoners in the Bucher case.

Since the dashing of Mrs. Gomide's hopes for raising the 1 million dollars, rumors have been heard that the Brazilian terrorist movement might become involved in negotiations on the release of Consul Gomide.

#### 4. Death Squad Trials and Activities

During the month of December judicial processes against the so-called "Death Squad" members continued, principally in Sao Paulo State. However, television remarks by São Paulo Governor Abreu Sodré that the Death Squad did not exist caused considerable dismay. He called Death Squads only an invention of the press -- and referred derogatorily to the judge and prosecutor investigating them. Considering these remarks an affront to the judiciary, both court officials filed processes against the Governor with the President of the State Tribunal of Justice. When their petitions were denied, the judge, Nelson Fonseca, submitted his resignation, which if accepted could set back the Death Squad investigations considerably.

In Espirito Santo another policeman charged with Death Squad activities whose trial ended during December was declared innocent. Of the eighteen policemen originally charged with murder in that state, only five remain to be tried, the others (including the Governor's brother) having been absolved in various preliminary proceedings.

In Rio State efforts reportedly will get underway once more in February to try two alleged Death Squad members whose two previous trials (last July and August) ended in mistrials when jury members were threatened. It appeared during December that the Death Squads once again were becoming more active in Rio State, with 9 victims found within a period of several days, all bearing marks of Death Squad murders except for the traditional death head calling card, in apparent revenge for the death of a policeman the previous week.

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5. US-Brazil Relations

Since the Ambassador's initial arrival in Brazil in November, there has been an intensification of top level US-Brazil contact on a broad front. The GOB appears to be making a special effort to get relations on a friendlier footing. During the Ambassador's first calls, the Foreign Minister and the President set the tone by stressing the value Brazil places on cordial relations with the United States. Foreign Minister Gibson Barbosa was particularly pleased that the Ambassador had arrived first in Brasilia and was establishing his official residence there. In the Ambassador's subsequent calls on other officials, emphasis was placed on the common interests that bind our two countries, rather than the specific issues on which we have differences.

Quite apart from the numerous protocolary calls that a newly arrived Ambassador normally makes, high Government officials appeared to be unusually accessible during these first two months, allowing the Ambassador to review with them various existing bilateral problems at length. This good start portends a better climate for resolving future problems in relations between the US and Brazil.

6. Brazil-Chile Relations

Brazil-Chilean relations during the month continued to be correct but cool, and there appeared to be some effort by the GOB to prevent them from deteriorating further. Despite Chile's diplomatic gaffe of allowing information to leak out on December 7, prior to acceptance by Brazil, that it was seeking an agrément for its new Ambassador to Brazil, Raul Rettig, the GOB without taking ostensible offense issued the agrément in only three days. Three times President of Chile's Radical Party, Rettig reportedly was one of the principal advocates of the party's joining the Popular Union coalition which elected Allende. Rettig's selection continued the tradition of selecting as Chile's Ambassador to Brazil politicians of national prominence, as was the case with outgoing Ambassador Hector Correa Letelier. Letelier, who had been closely identified with ex-President Frei, was given a royal send-off by Brazilian Foreign Minister Gibson Barbosa in a luncheon at the Foreign Ministry.

The problem of the six Brazilians in refuge at Chile's Embassy in Rio also was resolved in early January, when the GOB granted them safe conduct passes to leave the country. They departed on January 11.

In part, the GOB's correct attitude toward Chile may have been due to its realization that it might wish to send the 70 prisoners ransomed for Ambassador Bucher to Santiago, as it finally did on January 14. Why the GOB chose Chile for their destination, rather than more distant Mexico or

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Algeria, is still not certain. There were press reports that the Algerian Government would accept the prisoners only on the basis of a written petition, which the GOB was reluctant to furnish. Possibly there was the feeling that the Chilean Government would exercise more care in keeping the released prisoners from making political statements or engaging in other political activity, to prevent damage to fragile Chilean-Brazilian relations. If this was the GOB's expectation, it was quickly disillusioned. Despite a request by Chile's head of police on the prisoners' arrival that they abstain from any statement which might damage Brazil-Chile relations, two days later they held a three hour press conference denouncing the GOB (see SANTIAGO 296).

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II- Chronology of Events for December

Dec. 1 Regular Congressional recess begins for a period of 4 months.

Dec. 4 President signs a decree altering the structure of the National Security Council. (Rio A-531)

Dec. 7 Swiss Ambassador Giovanni Bucher is kidnapped in Rio by terrorists. (Rio 8542)

Dec. 9 Ministry of Justice issues a note that it is awaiting a message from the kidnappers giving their nominal demands as well as a letter in Bucher's handwriting attesting to his state of health. (Rio 8636)

Governor of São Paulo Abreu Sodré says in a television interview that the Esquadrão da Morte is an invention of press sensationalism, and he refers disparagingly to the two São Paulo court officials investigating it.

Dec. 10 President Médici issues a message, on the occasion of the death of the police agent shot during the Bucher kidnapping, in which he says the GOB will not deviate from its course of guaranteeing peace and progress to the nation.

Dec. 11 Mrs. Gomide arrives in Rio to launch a campaign to raise \$1 million demanded by her husband's kidnappers in Uruguay for his release. (Rio 8743, 8791)

Dec. 15 Superior Electoral Tribunal determines that all new state governors will be inaugurated on March 15. (Brasilia - A-77)

O Pasquim's publication suspended by order of the Federal Police. (Rio 8820).

Dec. 16 Finance Minister Delfim Neto tells the press that legally it is impossible for Mrs. Gomide to take \$1 million out of Brazil. (Rio 46).

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- 21 GOB, acknowledging receipt of an authenticated kidnapper's note the previous day, ~~and~~ announces that it cannot release 19 of the 70 prisoners demanded for Ambassador Bucher's release. (Rio 8910)
- Agence France Pressedirector François Pelou is arrested and held for one day, for having divulged a list of prisoners to be exchanged for the kidnapped Swiss Ambassador Bucher. (Rio 8910)
- Dec. 22 O Pasquim received notification from the Federal Police that it can resume publication the following week. (Rio 0067)
- Dec. 23 Director of France Presse in Rio is expelled from the country on the grounds that he was involved in activities against the national security. (Rio 8953)
- Dec. 26 GOB vetoes the release of 13 prisoners on the new list of 70 submitted by Ambassador Bucher's kidnappers, but says it will allow the substitution of an equal number. (Rio 9009)
- Dec. 29 GOB publishes in Diário Oficial an instruction modifying pre-censorship legislation, to require periodicals to submit already printed editions to censors for their approval. (Rio 0067)
- Dec. 31 In a New Year's speech President Médici states his belief that during 1971 the Revolution finally will reach all of the states and territories of Brazil. (Rio 9096).
- Eight of nine O Pasquim staff members imprisoned since early November are released. (Rio 0067).

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