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NO.

TO : Department of State
Info : Amembassy Brasilia
Amconsul São Paulo

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FROM : Amconsul PORTO ALEGRE

SUBJECT : Serious Conflict Occurring Between Rio Grande do Sul Governor and Vice Governor

REF

With the beginning of the administration of Governor Euclides Triches on March 15, 1971, Rio Grande do Sul also had, for the first time, a Vice Governor. This position had been added to the State Constitution during the previous government, since there had been some recognized problems over succession when Governor Walter Peracchi Barcellos had to leave the state. On those occasions, the President of the Legislative Assembly assumed power. This proved particularly awkward for the Governor and ARENA, since there were times when the MDB controlled the Assembly and their leader, Carlos Santos, thus became Acting Governor.

In addition to selecting Triches, then a Federal Deputy, to be Governor, President Medici decided that the number two position would go to Edmar Fetter, Mayor of Pelotas. In terms of balance for the new government this seemed a good choice, since Fetter, a former PSD member, had long been involved in southern Rio Grande do Sul politics and is a German-Brazilian, in contrast to Triches, an Italian-Brazilian formerly of the PDC who had been away from the state for eight years and represented the northern serra.

As Triches began to assemble his government and work on future programs during the year before he took office, a great dislike began to develop, not so much between the two men, but between their personal staffs. Fetter realized very soon that although the Constitution had provided for a Vice Governor it did not provide any functions for that

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position except to replace the Governor when the latter was absent from the state. According to various Consulate sources, the men around Fetter began to convince him that the Governor was attempting to keep him on the periphery of virtually everything important, even events involving his area of the state. Similarly, the Governor's staff began to feel threatened by the Vice Governor and his group. Especially notable in this is Victor Faccioni, Chief of the Civil Household, who can be regarded somewhat as a protege of Triches'. Faccioni, at 31, has been a State Deputy for several years and is regarded as one of the most ambitious and fastest rising politicians in Rio Grande do Sul. As Chief of the Civil Household, Faccioni sees himself as being the second most important civilian leader in the state and felt that the presence of a Vice Governor took away from his traditionally powerful position.

Politicians in both ARENA and MDB feel that after the Triches government took office, Faccioni persuaded the Governor that even when Triches had to leave the state he should not pass on the office of Acting Governor temporarily to the Vice Governor, although this seems to be standard practice in all other states of Brazil and even in the presidency. Since the Governor would be away with no other person officially in charge, the obvious person who would be filling the vacuum was Faccioni himself. After this occurred several times Fetter began to protest, but was ignored and the conflict began to receive publicity. In August, President Medici came to his home state on a semi-official visit and secretly met with the Governor and Vice Governor. He told them that there were quite often quarrels in his own cabinet and among his own staff but they were never known publicly, which should serve as a guide for them.

As a result of the President's visit, a "gentlemen's agreement" was worked out whereby Governor Triches would transfer the office when he was absent from the state for more than three days. However, there was still no effort made to give Fetter any real duties and he continued to be excluded from all real decision-making, even in the Governor's choice of Ary Alcântara, a Federal Deputy, to be the ARENA candidate for Mayor of Pelotas in November 1972. Fetter was particularly displeased at this recent decision since he had put forward his brother's name for the office. This latter incident further angered Fetter. However, the situation worsened in late January when Governor Triches went on a brief trip to Rio de Janeiro and did not pass the office of Governor to Fetter. The latter complained publicly that the Governor's absence had been for three days and, according to their agreement, he should therefore have assumed office; the Governor's staff maintained that the absence had to be over 72 hours, which it was not.

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During the Governor's absence, an employee of the Legislative Assembly who was making a telephone call accidentally got switched into conversation between Faccioni and Triches. He related to the reporting officer that Faccioni was telling the Governor of further provocations by Fetter as the result of his not taking over the office and that it would be impossible to continue with Fetter as Vice Governor, to which Triches seemed to agree.

Upon Triches' return from Rio, Fetter appeared at the Palacio Piratini with a letter for the Governor. Triches refused to accept it personally, so Fetter sent it through official channels. The following day, Fetter's staff made public parts of the letter, in which Fetter stated that he had "been patiently tolerating innumerable examples of disrespect, humiliation and being kept out of events" by the Governor. Further, he stated, this was giving the MDB an opportunity to create dissension within ARENA.

In fact, this was occurring, since the opposition had started a movement in the Representative Commission of the Legislative Assembly to give the Vice Governor, through the Assembly, all that he had been asking for. Pedro Simon, the MDB leader in the Assembly and their leading candidate for Governor in 1974, had been angered that Governor Triches had never consulted either the legislative or the judicial branches of the state in this matter. After it had been discussed for several days, a split began to appear in ARENA's ranks. Deputy Alexandre Machado openly supported the Vice Governor and three other ARENA deputies have quietly gone along with him. If the matter ever came to a vote in the Assembly as the opposition wishes, this could be enough to give MDB the majority.

On February 3, former Governor Walter Peracchi Barcellos, now a director of the Bank of Brazil, arrived in Porto Alegre as a representative of President Medici on this matter. During the time that Triches was waiting to take control of the government, he and Peracchi developed a strong antipathy toward each other, which has been furthered during recent struggles over the control of the Rio Grande do Sul ARENA. It was also rumored that he had allied himself with Fetter. Therefore, it seems rather odd that he was the President's emissary. After his meeting with Triches, however, Peracchi again stated that the Governor is the head of the state ARENA, a doctrine which has been enunciated a number of times by the federal government as applying to all state governors.

At this point, Fetter does not appear to be holding a winning hand in the least. Discussion continues in the Assembly, but most people feel that a

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clarification of the situation will result from President Medici's visit to Rio Grande do Sul on February 18. Out of this, it seems very possible that Fetter will be asked to resign at some time in the relatively near future.

Comment: No matter what the result of the Triches-Fetter disagreement, it is felt in Rio Grande do Sul that the pettiness and lengthiness of the quarrel has diminished the Governor's personal stature. Even some of his staunchest supporters are having difficulty sounding completely enthusiastic about Triches' stand. Secretary of the Interior, Octavio Germano, who is the Governor's principal political man in the state, told the reporting officer that he cannot understand how this has occurred and why it cannot be resolved. His defense of the Governor seemed rather half-hearted as did that of Nelson Marchezan, ARENA's vice-leader in the Assembly and a fervent Triches follower.

If Triches and Faccioni do succeed in eliminating Fetter, it will be helping them to consolidate their power base in the state against the more established leaders such as Peracchi and Senator Tarso Dutra, who are backing Fetter.

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