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Amembassy RIO DE JANEIRO

March 7, 1968

Editorials Attack U.S. Views of Militarism

The leading newspapers of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo recently carried two editorials objecting to the lack of American understanding of Latin America in general and Brazil in particular. More specifically they criticized what they regard as a distorted view of the military in Latin America held by members of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

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The theme is not new, but it is interesting that both papers hit upon it almost simultaneously. Apparently they were stimulated to comment as a result of recently divulged studies on Latin America by a Senate subcommittee in which views of professors from Stanford and New Mexico were aired. Each editorial mentions Senator Fulbright and implies that he is one of the persons who holds misconceptions as to Latin America.

A translation of the Jornal do Brasil editorial of March 1 is enclosed. In summary it states that Americans frequently lump all areas south of the Rio Grande together and have an erroneous stereotype notion of the characteristics of the Latin American countries. It criticizes the American notion that Brazil is living under a military dictatorship which interrupted the reforms of the Goulart government.

It is time, according to the editorial, for the U.S. to realize what has happened in Latin America. The Brazilian military, with the support of public opinion, prevented a Goulart-inspired Castro type movement, it states, and goes on to express irritation at the pontification of American leaders in regard to Latin America and its so-called military regimes. It concludes by saying that if American senators who are so closely connected with American Foreign Policy understand Viet-Nam as well as they do Latin America "it is not difficult to understand why President Johnson is in such difficulties in Southeast Asia."

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The O Estado de São Paulo editorial appeared March 3 and is entitled "Militarism and Optical Error." The newspaper is no friend of the revolutionary government, but its editorial states that Professor John Johnson of Stanford, who wrote a book on militarism in Latin America, "should know that the military here as in many of the so-called third world countries, are the middle class or at least its backbone, and that particularly in Brazil where the military have a democratic and civilian orientation, they maintain contact with public sentiment. "The elimination of this optical error would enable certain American elites to be in a better position to judge the very diverse situations in Latin America." (These statements emerge a bit strained from the "Estado" editorial columns since that newspaper has been very critical of the militaristic features of the current regime. Apparently it feels that militarism is fair game for domestic critics but not for those abroad.)

The editorial goes on to attack Senator Fulbright's use of Mexico as an example of democracy in Latin America. While there is no militarism there in the view of the Senator, it states, there is a civilian dictatorship of an institutionalized, one party system in charge of one of the most corrupt oligarchies known in recent Latin American history.

The editorial states the Senate Sub-Committee has proposed the elimination of military aid as a means of fighting militarism, and says that if Latin American countries buy arms elsewhere, the official circles of the United States feel offended. It comments that fighting militarism is not a historical task of the United States; it reflects an outdated paternalism.



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Enclosure:  
Translation of the Jornal do Brasil  
editorial

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Following lead editorial titled "Underdeveloped Concepts" appeared in March 1 Jornal do Brasil:

A curious phenomenon which occurs in the United States is the absolute incapacity to understand Latin America, to analyze in depth its problems, to evaluate each and to formulate a sensible policy in its continental relations in light of objective and realistic data. Certain Americans are not aware that the immense world that stretches to the south of the Rio Grande offers a stunning diversity of regional and national problems which cannot be treated with general and schematic formulas.

Without even talking about the existing contradictions among the Hispanic-American complex, Brazil, with a language, culture and a formation entirely different from its neighbors, could never be focused upon with the same simple and stereotype formulas, which the formulators of foreign policy in Washington indiscriminately apply to the whole of Latin America. For the American political analysts the typical Latin American society is an oligarchy of half a dozen powerful families, owners of enormous "latifundios," exploiters of all sources of national wealth, dominating political life through the instrument of pressure which is the military, oppressing almost all the population which is made of Indians and "mestiços", without land or food, vegetating in blackest misery.

It is necessary not to forget that where the father figure prevails, as occurs in some Central American countries, there also are inserted the presence of all-powerful American companies like the United Fruit whose activities should also be an object of preoccupation on the part of those who demonstrate so much concern in providing Latin America with norms to promote the restructuring of its anachronic society.

News from Washington reveals that a U.S. Senate subcommittee, in which Senators Fulbright and John Johnson pontificated, has just completed yet another of those traditional exercises examining the whole of Latin America. Everything was measured against and weighed by the simple criteria of general solutions. After much mouth flapping and much rhetoric, the eminent senators concluded that what is lacking in Latin America are basic reforms. For them, the "military wave" which overthrew legally constituted governments, detained the reforms already begun by those governments.

As could not occur otherwise, Brazil was the butt of critical comment during the work of the subcommittee. For the American congressmen, examining the present Brazilian situation, the program of military aid and the consequent strengthening of our Armed Forces were the ones responsible for interrupting the reform programs in which the government of Mr. Joao Goulart was engaged. In short, the members of the Senate subcommittee found that the only thing to do to save Brazil would be to return to the "reforms" at that point in

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which Mr. Joao Goulart left them when he departed so hastily from the Palacio Laranjeiras that he forgot his coat. For their tastes, President Costa e Silva should immediately recall Mr. Joao Pinheiro Neto so that he could again begin seizing of land by force, dutifully assisted by Congressman Juliao and other "progressive" leaders.

It is time for the United States to shake off once and for all those stupid speculations about Latin America's reality. Mr. Joao Goulart and his partisans wanted to accomplish no reforms whatsoever. They wanted to definitively install in the government an imitation of beardless fidelismo. The Brazilian military, with the support of public opinion, avoided this occurring, after practically unleashing the Communist movement with rebel sailors and the president of the republic participating in meeting of the Club of Corporals and Sergeants.

No one wants the implantation of military regimes in Latin America. We have always prayed for the full restoration of civilian power. But the insistence of some American leaders to pontificate on what they do not know is irritating. We need reforms, yes, even agrarian reform, but reforms that are planned and executed seriously in such a way as to preserve and revigorate the structure of our agricultural production, taking into account all the specific regional and local data which Brazil offers in such diversity.

If those senators who are also responsible for the conduct of American foreign policy understand as much about Vietnam as they do about Latin America it is not difficult to understand why President Johnson is in such difficulties in Southeast Asia.

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