

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BRIEFING PAPER

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RECEPTION FOR BRAZILIAN CONGRESSMEN

Brasilia, March 14, 7:45 p.m. to 9:15 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS

US

The Vice President and
Mrs. Mondale

Official and Unofficial
Delegates

Ambassador and
Mrs. Robert M. Sayre

BRAZIL

ARENA (Government Party)

Senator Jose Sarney, President
Senator Jarbas Passarinho, 1st
Vice President (also Senate
Majority Leader)
Deputy Nelson Marchezan, Secretary
General (also Chamber of Deputies
Majority Leader)
Deputy Prisco Viana, 1st Secretary

MDB (Opposition Party)

Deputy Ulysses Guimaraes, President
Senator Paulo Brossard, 1st Vice
President (also Senate Minority
Leader)
Deputy Thales Ramalho, Secretary
General
Senator Lazaro Barbosa, 1st
Secretary

Congressional Leaders

Senator Luiz Viana (ARENA)
President of the Senate and
Congress
Deputy Flavio Marcilio (ARENA)
President of the Chamber of
Deputies
Deputy Jose de Freitas Nobre (MDB),
Chamber of Deputies Minority
Leader

SETTING

Ambassador Sayre proposes to invite some 100 guests, principally from the National Congress, including both the pro-government National Renewal Alliance (ARENA) and the opposition Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB). Other guests would be drawn from the Vice Ministerial level of the various Brazilian ministries and from third country embassies.

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CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

-2-

The reception thus will be an opportunity to meet the leadership of the Brazilian Congress and a wide spectrum of Brazilian Congressmen from both parties. It will be your only opportunity to discuss substantive political issues with representatives of the two legal political parties.

The 1964 revolution severely limited the powers of the legislature. For some years now, however, the Congress has been an important platform of political debate and thus helped shape the political environment in which the executive must operate. As a result of the political opening and the institutional reforms (especially the expiration of Institutional Act number 5, under which the president had the power to close Congress and deprive individual legislators of their political rights), the Congress which took office on March 1 of this year has a potential for exerting political influence unprecedented since 1964.

The next few years are also likely to be active in terms of the organization of political parties and the election procedures. Recent reforms will facilitate the creation of new political parties and the two-party system (imposed on Brazil's multi-party tradition by the 1964 revolution) will be tested as dissident factions seek to organize into separate parties. There is also considerable criticism, particularly in opposition sectors, with current indirect elections for one-third of the Senate, state governors and mayors and we would expect pressure for reform in this area as part of the ongoing political liberalization process.

The new Congress has a significant number of new members, many of them from the opposition left, and appears to be generally more assertive than its predecessors. As at your meeting with Vice President Chaves, your meeting with the Congressional leadership will give you an opportunity to express low key encouragement for the process of liberalization of the Brazilian political system. The Brazilian Congressmen will be aware of your background as a legislator and your political philosophy and your words will thus carry special weight. (Because of competing demands during the inauguration period on the Congressional leadership, especially ARENA members, attendance by all of the invitees cannot be assured.)

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

-3-

The Arenistas present will want primarily to explain to you what the political liberalization process is all about and how they intend to go about achieving it. The opposition legislators who attend will also focus their comments on this topic, stressing that the process is all right as far as it goes, but also indicating what is missing and how the political opening in some areas could be faster or more comprehensive (e.g., by a grant of political amnesty). Both parties will be forthcoming in giving their views on how they think the process will unfold, at least in the near term, and what some of the pitfalls are. They will also insist on the larger role that must be accorded to Congress. On this there is likely to be more agreement than disagreement, although the MDB leadership can be expected to be relatively more pessimistic over the short term.

Brazil and the United States participate in the International Parliamentary Union (IPU), although Brazil has not been a particularly active member. The U.S. Congress has a number of bilateral exchange programs with counterparts in other countries, but not with Brazil. We understand that the U.S. Congress has a freeze on new bilateral programs.

TALKING POINTS

You may wish, for openers, to comment on the importance we attach to the role of the Congress in free government and then encourage the Brazilian Congressmen to give you their views on the political situation and its prospects.

Some questions you might ask:

-- What is the proposed pace of political reform? Will it be suitable in terms of conflicting pressures from outside and within the system?

-- Will the body politic, especially the opposition, remain relatively cohesive through at least the next year or two, or are existing strains -- especially within the MDB -- likely to adversely affect political behavior?

-- What are the next steps of the liberalization process? How close, or how far away, for example are direct elections of all officials?

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CONFIDENTIAL

- 4 -

-- Is it likely that there will be a civilian presidential candidate in 1984? (Or recognizing the difficulty of zeroing in on this question, is a civilian president the ultimate aim of political reform?)

-- How will the Congress reflect, or file, or channel, interest group opinion? Is a consensus on what are national interests obtainable and suitable?

POINTS TO BE MADE

There follows a checklist of points to be made. Background and position statements have been omitted since they are covered in other briefing material.

Congress' Role

-- We are watching the evolution of the liberalization process closely and sympathetically, and hope that the government's intention and the people's hope, as reflected in the Congress, coincide more often than they diverge.

-- The role of the Congress will be very important to the development of the process, and a posture of constructive cooperation or criticism is most likely to lead to an increase in its influence.

-- We would welcome visits to the US by key elements of the Congressional leadership, as well as by promising newer members.

-- We hope your group will accept -- and convey to the membership -- the sincerity of our good wishes for a fruitful congressional session and a continuation of the process of liberalization to which the Congress can make important contributions.

-- I hope that the Brazilian Congress will play an active role in the International Parliamentary Union (IPU) session scheduled for this fall in Caracas.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

-5-

Human Rights

-- The United States' worldwide support for human rights remains a central element of U.S. foreign policy, and one we consider in relations with every country. I have been particularly pleased by the trend toward political liberalization in Brazil.

-- We wish the Brazilian government and people well in their efforts to consolidate legal and institutional safeguards for individual rights, and to achieve political liberalization and social and economic development. We are sensitive to the fact that the government of President Figueiredo, indeed any government in today's complex world, will face serious challenges (e.g. inflation and balance of payment problems) as it seeks to meet its goals.

Nuclear Energy

-- The U.S. recognizes the right of any country to help meet its energy needs through nuclear power. In fact, the U.S. is the world's leading participant in the transfer of nuclear technology.

-- We do not challenge the right of Brazil and West Germany to cooperate on nuclear matters. As a friend of both, however, we should have the right to make our concerns known. We think prevention of the spread of nuclear weapons, and of sensitive technology that could be used to manufacture weapon-grade material, is a common responsibility.

Trade

-- President Carter is committed to maintaining the U.S.' traditional support for liberal trade and access to the U.S. market.

Brazil Emergence as a Major Global Power

-- The U.S. does not oppose, on the contrary supports, Brazil's emergence as a major global power. We recognize that in the process there will be differences. But

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

-6-

we also see Brazil as part of the West and believe that its growing strength will serve larger, positive interests of a peaceful, multi-polar world.

-- Because of Brazil's importance, we want to strengthen our relations with Brazil and to maintain close communication. We believe the high-level Brazil-US consultative process serves a highly useful purpose, and we look forward to continuing to cooperate with the new Figueiredo Administration in this area and in the various sub-groups on trade, energy, agriculture and policy planning that have been established.

US-Brazil Relations

-- We believe the state of US-Brazil relations is good and we want them to continue to be good. Our desire is to strengthen these relations and to be helpful by the policies we pursue.

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