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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

INFO : BRASILIA, BELEM, BELO HORIZONTE, CURITIBA, PORTO ALEGRE, RECIFE, SALVADOR, SAO PAULO

Amembassy RIO DE JANEIRO

Agrarian Reform

December 2, 1968
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For the information of end-users, attached is our translation of the presentation of the National Agricultural Workers Confederation of the Government of Brazil Working Group on agrarian reform recently established by the President. The document contains a number of comments and difficulties in implementing agrarian reform and recommendations for action on this problem.

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Attachments:

1. Unofficial Translation: "Obstacles to the Implementation of the Agrarian Reform"

STATE DEPT
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15 copies to
Rio de Janeiro
w/Enclosure

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LAB:LMegerian  12/2/68
(in draft)

LAB:JJSnyder 

AGRIATT:JMcDonald; ARDO:ALBrown;UCB:SPanagides

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UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION

OBSTACLES TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGRARIAN REFORM
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Having been called to actively participate in the Working Group established to examine several aspects related with the Agrarian Reform so as to accelerate its planning and execution, the National Confederation of Agricultural Workers - the CONTAG, legitimate defender of the rural workers interests and rights in Brazil, has brought forth a few considerations on the present obstacles to the implementation of the Agrarian Reform as well as, in the face of the peasant's problems, to point out certain measures of an urgent nature to curb the volume of the problems that are frighteningly growing in the city and in the country.

OBSTACLES

Political Decision:

In the face of a series of facts and statements, CONTAG, together with the rural workers federations, has concluded that the greatest obstacle to the accomplishment of the Agrarian Reform in the country presently, is the lack of political decision due to the influence of land owners who see in an Agrarian Reform based on social justice, the destruction of their political, economic and social power.

We have in Rio Grande do Sul in the area of "Banhado do Colégio," a notorious example for which the Regional Office of the IBRA in that State, has worked out the Project of the South Coastal Agrarian Reform, the total implementation of which will benefit approximately 10,000 families. It is true that the region was practically of no use. However, the dredging of the Arroio Duro riverbed, the construction of the Arroio Duro Dam with under-drain and adjustable floodgates, and the installation of a complete irrigation network, made possible the economic use of an area of 40,000 hectares the soil of which, very deep and fertile, reaches the productivity of 4000 kg/ hectare of rice, and 6000 kg/hectare of corn.

We also know that in that area, there are sharecroppers who for several years, have been using up to 90% of tillable land while their large landed estate owner neighbors exploit only 13%.

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We also know that in Rio Grande do Sul, 25, 000 new couples of rural workers are added annually and finding no more land, they migrate to other areas; lately, in great proportion to Paraguay.

Therefore:

Considering that Rio Grande do Sul is the State with the greatest number of small farmers (435, 000), and that the large landed estate owners occupy 63% of the area;

Considering that the "Banhado do Colégio" is an area improved by important public works and can be expropriated according to Article 20, II of the Land Statute;

Considering that the migration of the rural youth will cause the decapitalization of agriculture in Rio Grande do Sul and in Brazil;

Considering that the small farmers who are settled there, have given proof of the productive, creative capacity of the rural worker;

Considering that the leader of the government, defending private interests in the "Banhado do Colégio" lands, spoke louder than the legitimate demands of social justice by preventing the signature of the decree on the expropriation of the mentioned area on the excuse of further studies;

Considering that the Brazilian Northeast is an area of social tension; that there has been no settling of sharecroppers in Rio Tinto and Mamanguape in Paraíba; a slowness of land distribution in Caxangá, Pernambuco; and that there is no pressure from the central government toward the local courts to speed up the judicial process;

Considering that the same lack of attention is noted in relation to the expropriations and settlement in the State of Rio de Janeiro;

We conclude that: Implementation of the Agrarian Reform in Brazil at the moment, is a question of wanting or not wanting to do it and placing the interests of the economic powers above the principles of the social function of land ownership as described in the Brazilian Constitution and the Land Statute.

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Lack of Definition of an Agrarian Reform Policy

There cannot be an Agrarian Reform without a policy of Agrarian Reform. However, after the statements and documents from competent authorities, we have noticed fundamental deviations from what Agrarian Reform is:

- a) In the document approved at the II Congress in Brasília, "Agrarian Reform and the Rural Modulus," the Minister of Agriculture says explicitly on page 10 that "...to practice Social Justice with the best distribution of land, means to make it available to those who can better exploit it with a high yield." "...so that, if Justice implies merit, Social Justice, in terms of Agrarian Reform, implies better utilization of the land."

This understanding, in addition to contradicting the Constitutional principle of equal opportunity for all by favoring the individual contrary to the common welfare and to social justice, also goes against the Constitutional principle of ownership's social function. It inverts the concept of Agrarian Reform established in Article 1, §1 of the Land Statute that in consonance with the Brazilian Constitution, Agrarian Reform is defined as "a complex of measures aimed at promoting a better distribution of land, through modifications in the method of its ownership and use, in order to satisfy the principles of social justice and the increase in productivity."

Social Justice, in the Land Statute, is the first priority - the increase in productivity being the result of the application of this complex of measures.

Social Justice in an underdeveloped country is to immediately give land to the rural worker who has no land, thus avoiding the rural exodus, the proletarianization of workers, the disaggregation and the marginalization of their families.

- b) Agrarian Reform is also confused with colonization which according to the Land Statute, is designed for the economic utilization of the land and does not fulfill that basic objective which is the essence itself of the Agrarian Reform concept - that is, the correction of land ownership structures and use of the land by breaking the political power of the latifundium, an undeniably stagnant power in our economy.

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- c) The then president of the IBRA in June 1967 at the Superior War School, declared that "...taxation is no doubt the most efficient instrument to correct at long term, the agrarian structure." Everything indicates that this policy has prevailed to this date, in the official organ of the Agrarian Reform despite the World Congress on Agrarian Reform held in Rome in July 1966, having concluded that "...taxation is not a substitute for Agrarian Reform."
- d) Some say that the present function of the IBRA is to elaborate a technical register of properties in priority areas. This means over a million properties in nine States of the Union and for that, what will be the necessary time, the technical and financial resources, when the problem requires an urgent solution?
- e) In the name of the Agrarian Reform, action has been taken in Brazil through demonstration areas, demonstration districts, colonization districts and issuance of ownership titles over properties in frontier areas, surveys of natural resources, other disparate activities, and some diffident and disordinate attempts at expropriation.

Under this scheme, land was distributed to some 400 families over a period of four (4) years.

- f) Agrarian Reform has been equally confused with assistance and protection to the rural economy, technical assistance, agricultural mechanization, production and distribution of seeds, raising, sale and distribution of reproducers, and use of artificial insemination, cooperativism, finance and credit assistance, assistance to marketing and industrialization of agricultural products, rural electrification and agricultural insurance, which are necessary steps within a complex for implementation of the Agrarian Reform, but only after the land has been distributed to the peasant.

The magnitude of the Agrarian Reform process is measured by the number of families settled. If we consider that in Brazil, it would be necessary to have 200,000 families per year settled so that the Agrarian Reform might be accomplished in twenty years, and if we consider the above objectives of the Agrarian Reform, we are forced to conclude that in terms of Agrarian Reform, nothing has been done in Brazil so far.

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The misconception that the peasant is ignorant and incapable, leads to a series of serious consequences insofar as having the rural workers participate in many of the programs in which they should take part, including those of IBRA itself. It is very sad that experts and people who should be enlightened, ignore the capacity of the rural workers leadership and forget that in the millions of rural workers - barefoot, undernourished, in shabby clothes, with verminosis and parasites - lies a gigantic force of organization and transformation which, if its innate ability of thinking is once awakened and developed and if it is united and producing, we shall have a power that will change the basic structures and will accelerate the process of social and economic development. Some people fear this, and insist on stating that the peasant is a sub-race and that "... the rope breaks off at the weakest point."

The peasant is qualified to receive his land and the land is his school. No one can flunk him before he goes to school.

The technocrats executing projects with such excessive perfection that all settlement of sharecroppers will be beyond criticism, and using it as a model of Agrarian Reform implementation, fosters paternalism, just because nobody believes in the creative capacity of the peasant.

Government authorities talk about the need to educate the peasant for the Agrarian Reform and that the proper pressure should come from the country. However, when the trade union leaders adopt this point of education and defense, they are threatened and even murdered by the owner of the land in addition to the incomprehension of the police authority, who frequently abuses his power and calls legal actions such as explaining the Land Statute to the workers, subversive.

### PROBLEMS

The rural workers live in abysmal conditions, though they feed the nation. Though they produce the foodstuffs consumed in the cities and greater part of the raw materials utilized by the national industry, they still remain today, as the great victims of the colonization system established 400 years ago when our vast territory was divided into gigantic districts, inherited from father to son, thus generating the cancer of the latifundium. These huge districts had as their owner, the master of men, money and power. And today, the lands are the property of a minority which forms the group of the powerful in the political, economical, and social circles.

At the time of the colonization, the owners of the land also appropriated the slaves. In the present days however, slavery is a shame on the civilized peoples - we consider ourselves as possessing a high degree of morale and

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civism; for that matter, instead of "masters of slaves," we have the rural employers. However, to own land and have men serve you, is considered reason for praise under our present structure.

The society recognizes as its benefactor, the owner of the earthy and human gold. Being so highly considered they forget their duties as management; if reminded, they try to justify themselves and if contradicted, they take brutal attitudes. In this manner, the rural worker is just as much a slave as the negro of yesterday. Before, he was a slave with food; today, he is a slave without food. Before, he was a slave with a place to sleep; today, he is a slave without a place to sleep. Before, he was beaten, but had a home and food; today, he is not beaten, but has no home nor food.

He works the land without owning it. In the majority, he is a casual wage worker in the sugar cane, coffee and cacão zones. A great number is included in the lease and sharecropper system, paying rent, income, half-shares and other arrangements. Some are small owners, hardly owning more than 10 hectares with no conditions to obtain credit, to save or to improve their standard of living, condemned to multiply their poverty when they divide their small land among their children. To the former is denied the minimum wage which well expresses its meaning - the smallest amount with which a human being can live.

This wage, however, virtually individual, is applied to the needs of a whole family normally constituted of more than five people. The latter pays high rents for his land and gets a reduced term for planting and harvesting. Very often, the cattle are placed before the end of the contract and if the sharecropper fights for his rights, the easiest course of action for the landowner is eviction, disregarding the legal means, with belongings in the street and the sky for his ceiling; in many places, this has been the most favorable solution.

The situation is serious and the popular saying is applicable to the rural worker: "If he runs, the beast catches him; if he stays, the beast eats him. If he goes to town, he does not find protection; if he stays in the country, he is evicted."

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The labor demand is less than the supply. Surplus labor increases frightfully as factories and mills are modernized. No doubt, legislation had made progress in favor of the rural worker, but paradoxically has also provoked a negative attitude from employers who, fearing to lose their vast territories and economic power, put an end to the old paternalistic attitude which kept the man an unconscious slave, but up to a certain point, participating in his table. They turn to an authoritative position, taking back the "gifts," closing the door to new conquests of workers who are left at the mercy of fate - without land, without salary, without technical assistance, without financing outfits, without participation in society, without the social contact with the family of the boss (who erects his mansion in "Copacabanas" and Boa Viagens"), without a house to live in, offended, humiliated daily, by the administrators or agents of mills and farms.

MEASURES

Considering the mass eviction of the rural workers, without indemnity, is a crying situation of injustice;

Considering the exodus to the cities, swelling the slums, proletarianizing the man, prostituting and marginalizing the youth, disaggregating the family;

Considering that no measure of social justice has been taken in this regard;

Considering that loans from international banks are granted to national cattlemen, the social function of land ownership not being taken into account;

Considering that Brazil is becoming a great pasture, where the man is driven out by the ox from the source of his subsistence;

Considering that the paths of a possible agrarian reform only leads to the economical aspect of rural productivity;

Considering that the interference of the political power of the latifundium in political decision in agrarian matters is quite clear;

Considering that agrarian reform in Brazil should be massive, immediate and drastic, so as to conform with the exigencies of social justice;



The National Confederation of Agricultural Workers - CONTAG, proposes the following measures:

1. To prohibit for ten years, the eviction of rural workers as well as to freeze land rent.
2. Concession of agricultural-cattle loans from competent organs only to owners, farmers, proprietors of plants and mills, or employers who prove to be paid up on their labor commitments, as stated in the Land Statute and in Decree 57.020/65, proved through a statement of the Rural Workers Union or the next higher entity of the class.
3. Immediate and massive distribution of land to peasants with the necessary financing and reimbursement of the land price and other benefits at long term.
4. Rural workers participation in all phases of the Agrarian Reform process:
  - a) Appointment of rural workers representatives to the Technical Council of IBRA;
  - b) Immediate establishment of Agrarian Committees in Rio Grande do Sul, Rio de Janeiro, Brasília, Pernambuco, Paraíba and Ceará;
  - c) Participation of sharecroppers in the settlement process, in infrastructure work, not only as a method of education, but of simplifying and reducing implementation costs.
5. Opening for another form, speedier too, of implementing a massive and immediate Agrarian Reform which could be the Camponesa Enterprise: upon expropriation of an area, the peasants who work there, form a board of directors with technical aid from IBRA, and continue to produce.

After thus managing the enterprise for a few years, the peasants themselves, will decide if they prefer the division of lots. At this stage, the landed property structure will have changed, the peasants will have acquired cooperative and managerial experience, learned to manage the new agricultural systems which the Agrarian Reform introduced and will surely be in a level of income well beyond that of the salaried worker.

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6. Simplification of the present projects of settlement of IBRA, without irrelevant details that may be flexible and in conformity with local conditions. This will reduce expenditures incurred in the physical infrastructure when the sharecroppers participate with their labor in works such as opening of roads, construction of their homes, bridges, etc., avoiding paternalism and showing confidence in the creative ability of the peasant. Costs will also be reduced when local material from the area is used for construction and when the worker is permitted to build his house, at least in the beginning, in the best way he thinks it possible. To him, the essential is land and financing.
7. Regulation of the National Fund of Agrarian Reform so that two or more rural workers who get along well, may acquire landed property superior to the modulus, under common administration or in form of cooperatives.

Rio de Janeiro, October 1, 1968

LAB/LBrissac:lb:lm  
October 22, 1968

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