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AmEmbassy RIO DE JANEIRO

AmConsul BELEM

February 6, 1970

Federal Police Confiscate February 5th Edition of O Liberal

Federal Police entered the O Liberal Building in downtown Belem at approximately 10 a.m. on February 5 to prevent further printing and distribution of the Thursday edition of the newspaper which carried a front page headline article announcing that Governor Alacid Nunes was of the opinion that the crisis between his government and the Comissao Geral de Investigaçoes had been surmounted. Newspaper employees were herded into the basement pressroom by the police who then proceeded to remove and destroy the plates of the edition as well as removing all copies from the premises. Copies already on the street sold out like hotcakes at the inflated price of 2 contos.

Almost two weeks ago, the Governor had reportedly learned that the Para Comissao Geral de Investigaçoes (CGI) had been investigating the Accounting Division of the Para Secretariat of Works and other executive offices without his knowledge or consent. Dismaying the covert action of the local commission, the Governor held that it did not have the legal jurisdiction to do so. Last week he had hurriedly departed for Brasilia and Rio after receiving a telegram from the Minister of Finance requesting his presence ostensibly to discuss financial arrangements and problems between Para and the central government. He has since spent his time in Brasilia and Rio closeted with various officials including Minister of Educati n Passarinho, Minister of Justice Buzaid, Vice President of the Central CGI General Oscar Luis da Silva and the head of the Paraense CGI Air Force Col. Fernando Palermo.

The newspaper headline would lead one to believe the matter had been resolved in the favor of the governor while the article indicates that such was not the case (see attached copy). The gist

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of the article was that the Minister of Justice, Prof. Alfredo Buzaid, had informed the governor that the Paraense CGI would continue to carry out investigations of state executive offices as before in order to prepare denunciations for corruption and illicit enrichment against public servants and that the Para Governor considered the problem between his administration and the CGI resolved to his satisfaction and favor.

Friday's Belem papers report that the governor planned to return to Para the next day and would be going back to Rio after Carnival!

Comment

It is not clear as to who gave the order to confiscate the Thursday edition of "O Liberal". However, indications are that the misleading front page headline angered the local air force whose man heads the local CGI.

Newspaper owner Romulo Maiorana spent six hours with the police "fazendo esclarecimentos" over the case. Reportedly, the police wanted to know from where the news came. Maiorana said it came from one of the agencies in Rio. The article lists "Rio Press" as the source at the beginning of the article.

One can hardly give much credence to the Governor's statement that he was unaware that the executive branch was under investigation by the CGI. In all probability, the remark was prompted by political considerations once Alacid was aware the CGI was uncovering the skeletons in his executive closet.

Belem and Para are similar to New Orleans and Louisiana in that both love a good scandal and, if the rumors are to be believed, Para and Belem are in for a good one. Ever since the governor left for the South, the city has been alive with stories and public officials et. al. at the Governor's Palace have been tight-lipped and nervous as have a number of AREMA state deputies. Optimistic tidbits on the developments in the talks between the governor and the federal authorities appeared daily in O Liberal confirming the special relationship between it and Nunes who has favored the paper over the other two major dailies in the city (which by the way have carried little or no news or comment on the matter) and who has received support in kind as the recent headline shows.

The rumors boil down to four basic points, or maybe four and one-half. Firstly, it is held that the governor has illicitly enriched himself and has been purchasing large tracts of land on Marajo Island and in the Paragominas area of south Para in the name of his not-known-to-be-wealthy father-in-law, Abel Figuerido, State Deputy and Legislature Vice President. Secondly, reports have been circulating that all state public works projects, including the new Justice Building and Bank of Amazonas skyscraper, were awarded on the basis of personal favoritism instead of by public bid with the contract going to the lowest bidder. Thirdly, a number of state

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